



Stalked by the Cornerback (Obsessed Alphas #8)

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Category: Sport

Description: My life has always revolved around football.

From one field to another the goal was always going pro. But just as my junior year was coming to an end, she walked into my life.

One glance at Mattie Fuentes enchanted me, she casts a spell that made the sane part of me slowly disappear.

I tried not to let the obsession inside of me take over, but it was impossible. Now I'm following her around, hiding in the shadows, crossing all kinds of boundaries but even then it's not enough when it comes to my sweet, curvy temptation.

A fight at a party, one I might have started, could have ended my chances with her before anything started. Instead, it catapults together. I can't get enough of her. I want Mattie as addicted to me as I am to her.

But what will happen when she finds out about all the ways I've been watching her?

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PROLOGUE

DYLAN MACABEE

Sitting in a class I had no interest in made me rethink life.

Why did we have to waste so much time indoors?

There was nothing more I wanted to do than hit the gym or the football field. Shit, going over a playbook I knew from cover to cover would be better than this crap. Sure, it was in the athletics area, but still. I'd learned this. I'd taken it on myself to know about physical therapy. Not only that, but I'd experienced firsthand through the years after injuries on the field.

Discreetly, I glanced at my buddy and roommate, Hector, who was already busy taking notes. The asshole was always taking notes. No matter if it was in the rare classes we had together, because the guy was smart as hell, or when we went over the playbook Sunday night in our dorm. They guy exceeded because the fucker was crazy disciplined and incredibly dedicated.

I rolled my head and felt like I'd given myself whiplash when I watched the door at the side of the huge lecture hall open and close. A curvy girl walked in, and suddenly, everything inside of me felt like it was shifting. My brows drew together. I couldn't even fucking blink. I watched the raven beauty as she searched around the room for an empty seat.

"Scoot over," I muttered to Hector.

“What?” he whispered, and I repeated myself.

“Scoot. Hurry,” I demanded with an edge to my voice I didn’t recognize. Shockingly enough, he did as I’d asked, and I lifted my hand to get her attention. When she caught sight of my hand, I was fucking lucky my ass had already moved down a seat, or else I would have fallen down with how weak in the knees I felt. Bright blue eyes caught mine. So damn blue I wondered if they were real or contacts.

A soft smile painted her lips as she mouthed a quick thank you, and just like that, I knew life as I knew it was never going to be the same. I’d chosen the aisle seat for a reason. Lecture hall seating was comfortable enough for mostly everyone, but I was a big guy. Not only tall at six three, but I was thicker and about two hundred seventy pounds of firm muscle. My knees felt like they were about to hit my gut with how I had to fold into myself, but I didn’t care. Not when she sat next to me and her sweet strawberry scent filled my lungs, making my mouth water.

“Thanks,” she whispered. I nodded, unable to get my brain to function and string two words together. Not when she was that close and so damn pretty it fucking hurt to look at her.

Mine, a voice in my head said proudly and without fear or doubt.

Mine, it repeated with as much confidence as I felt when I hit the football field.

“I’m Mattie,” she introduced herself, extending her hand. Without thinking, I took it and couldn’t stop from feeling way too big and clunky. She was curvy but so damn tiny compared to me, I worried about scratching her silky-smooth hand with my calloused one.

“Mattie,” I repeated. I’d never had such a visceral reaction to someone in my life. Her eyes glittered, and it felt like she was a ray of sunshine personified. “Dylan,” I said

my name, wincing inwardly, hoping like hell I didn't sound like some kind of idiot.

She nodded with an even brighter smile. "You're my new best friend, Dylan." She winked before dropping my hand and turning her attention to the professor.

Mine. That voice perked up louder, repeating the word over and over. Mine. I tore my eyes off her and noticed Hector looking at me with a weird expression before he turned to listen to whatever the professor was droning on about.

Something inside of me felt awake. Alive. Reenergized. Suddenly, and maybe finally, there was something that called my attention a little more than football. Mattie.

Fuck me. I am in trouble.

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CHAPTER 1

DYLAN

“Hey.” Her soft, slightly raspy voice called, just as her hands touched my back. Not like I would ever confuse her touch with anyone else’s. Or let anyone touch me now that I’d met her.

I turned and looked down at her. Like every time I saw her, something came over me. She’s so damn pretty. Her bright blues locked with mine, and everything inside of me warmed up while this dark part of me growled to life.

“Hey,” I answered tightly, my body taut. I couldn’t help it. We just sat our final. I knew our time was coming to an end. My jaw clenched, and I stepped away from her. I watched some of the sparkle in her eyes dull and hated it.

“How do you think you did?” she asked, and for some godforsaken reason, I took another step back from her before tearing my eyes off her and made a show of glancing around.

People were coming out of classrooms, making their way to the parking lot or dorms. Summer break was right around the corner, and you could feel everyone’s excitement about it. Everyone’s but mine. For the first time in my life, I wasn’t looking forward to summer break. I wasn’t going anywhere for vacation. I was sticking around knowing I shouldn’t.

All because of the girl in front of me.

“It was okay,” I mumbled. I had done better than okay. I was pretty sure I’d done fucking fantastic, and I had a feeling the pretty woman in front of me was responsible. She had talked me into studying, and it had paid off.

“Oh,” she muttered. I glanced back at her and watched her cute little dark brows bunch. “Okay is good,” she encouraged, her head tilted. I could read the concern for me in those pretty blue pools of her eyes. Jesus, how the hell can someone be that damn pretty?

“Yeah,” I grunted with a shrug. Confusion filled her gaze, and I knew exactly why. All semester long we had been close. Friends even. And now, after finishing our final, I was stupidly giving her the cold shoulder.

She had no idea that it had nothing to do with her. That I was trying to keep my hands to myself for a fucking reason. An important one. I didn’t know what kind of voodoo spell she had cast on me that first day of class, but the thing I had felt start to come alive inside of me, had been slowly taking over. As much as I hated the idea of putting some space between Mattie and me, I knew it was what had to be done. Whatever weird, overprotective, possessive, crazed crush I had would disappear once I stopped seeing her. I hoped. Kind of.

I shoved my hands into the front pockets of my jeans to stop myself from doing something stupid, like grabbing her in my arms and kissing her like I had been dying to since we met.

“Can you believe it’s summer now?” she asked, trying to make small talk. Small talk I wanted to have with her, but fuck me, I couldn’t keep talking to her.

Liar, a voice perked up in my head. Since seeing her that first day in class, I couldn’t get myself to stop thinking about her. All I wanted to do was talk to her, be around her, touch her. Own her. Claim her.

Mattie Fuentes was everything I could ever want in a woman.

Curves and sweetness. Sassy spunk and kindness. Just looking at her that first day had messed me up in the head. Made something inside of me come to life. Something dark and obsessive. Something I had tried like hell to keep at bay. During the semester, just being around her had been enough. Barely, but enough. But that thing inside me kept egging me on, wanting and needing so much of her. Too much.

“Dyl?” she called out as her hand reached for mine, and for some damn reason, I flinched my hand away from her.

“What?” I asked a little too brusquely. Something in my gut tightened as she blinked away the hurt from her eyes. I hated that I’d made her think I didn’t want her to touch me. Fuck, I loved when she touched me. Mattie was affectionate. Always touching my arm or hugging me hi and bye when we got together to study.

“You okay?” The long dark strands of her hair swung to the side of her face. The tips of my fingers itched to pull them back and tuck them behind her ear.

“I’m fine,” I clipped. Pissed at myself for acting like a douchebag. I didn’t know why I was acting this way. You know why, the small voice of reason piped up.

If I put some space between us, it would help. I’d barely been able to control myself this semester. This infatuation with Mattie had been growing out of control. I wasn’t a relationship guy.

I had never been anyone’s boyfriend. Friend with benefits? Yes! One-night stand? Of course. Quickie hookup against a brick wall of a bar? Definitely.

What I didn’t do was relationships.

Relationships were messy complications that screwed you up in the head. I knew it. Hell, I'd lived it. Watching my parents fight and argue over every little thing until they split up had been fucking hell. It's why early on, my brothers and I had decided to focus our attention on sports.

I lived and breathed football.

Always had.

Where my brothers played baseball and were fucking great at it, I excelled at football. As the school's starting cornerback, I knew I had NFL scouts looking at me.

At first, I'd taken up the sport to somehow be different and stand out against my three other brothers. The three were all baseball players who were incredibly great at what they did. As the second oldest and a Macabee, I moved my athletic endeavors to football so I wouldn't keep feeling like I was competing against my brothers.

I wasn't used to craving the things I wanted when I looked at Mattie. Wanting, shit, aching for things I had never thought I would be interested in. Mattie, who was the perfect blend of sassy and sweet. I wanted her all to myself.

And it wasn't just about getting in her pants.

"Fine, huh?" she repeated, snapping me out of my thoughts. Graciously giving me time to take back how stupid I was acting. But I didn't accept the fucking olive branch.

All I could think about was that the semester was over. That I wouldn't have the chance to sit next to her every other day for fifty-eight-minute sessions. Not only that, but everyone, for the most part, left campus during the summer. Ask her if she's going home! that possessive part of me shouted inside my head. I didn't want her to

leave for break.

“Well, umm... did you decide what you’re gonna do this summer?” she asked, and I shrugged.

“Staying on campus,” I quickly shared. I sounded like a callous dick, but what she didn’t know was that I was trying to save her from me.

To save her from the thing inside me that was starving for more time with her.

This weird, obsessive crush that wouldn’t be sated. Mattie Fuentes was more than a hook-up kind of girl. She was the kind you claimed and cherished every day of your life until you took your last breath.

That’s what I want, that obsessed part of me growled. The sane part of me that was slowly diminishing didn’t know if I could be what she needed, though. She needed someone who could give her time and attention. Worship her with every waking breath. We can, that almost animalistic thing in my growled.

“Well... that’s good, I guess. I am, too. I’m actually moving into a new dorm building.” I nodded, trying to focus on what she was saying while the sane part of me tried not to. I knew what would happen if I heard what dorm building she would be in this summer. I’d follow her around, trying to catch a glimpse of her, and inevitably find a way to make her spend time with me.

“Yeah, well, right.” Her shoulders dropped, and I lost sight of her eyes. Not because I looked away but because she did. And even though I missed her eyes on me, I kept being a jerk. It was for her own good. I was trying to save her from me. From the way I wanted her.

“Have a good one, ‘kay,” I interrupted. I hated the flash of hurt as she stared off

toward the sunny campus. I smiled tightly when her attention returned to me, and before she did something that would break the little bit of control I was holding on to, I forced one leg in front of the other.

I'm a fucking idiot. That's all I could think about as I walked away, somehow managing to hold on to the small bit of sanity I had left.

Sanity I would lose no matter what I tried only two days later.

CHAPTER 2

MATTIE FUENTES

I was an idiot.

The world's biggest idiot.

If you Googled it, my picture would be right there! Front and center. I knew better than to crush on the hot football player, yet there I'd been, slowly letting Dylan Macabee and his charming smile and easy-going self worm his way under my skin.

I was smarter than that. Or at least I had thought I was.

I had spent enough time around athletes in my life to know that the only thing they cared about at the end of the day was themselves. I'd seen it with my own eyes. From my own brothers and guys who used anyone, doing things they shouldn't just to get what they wanted or needed.

I tossed an arm over my eyes and breathed out before I looked up at the ceiling. The fan whirled and cooled the warm room down. I was in my new dorm. Everything was all moved in and settled. I was exhausted. Between the move and how weird Dylan had acted after our final, my head was a mess, and I hadn't slept well. My cell pinged, and I picked it up and rolled my eyes.

Scottie: I'm so bored! Why did you have to get a job on campus this summer! Who is going to take me to the mall?!

My little sister was the queen of drama.

Me: It's not a job; it's an internship. And a good one! I get to work with the football trainers and hopefully network enough to get a job after graduation.

I typed out, and my little sister immediately started to respond as the little bubbles bounced in our chat.

Scottie: Selfish. (Yes, I'm rolling my eyes!) Jk. I miss you.

My lips twitched, and I pushed myself off my bed. I looked around my new space and grinned to myself. I might have been crushing on a stupid football player who had apparently used me to help him get a good grade during our class together, but at least I had kept my head on straight enough to not get all girly over him and still focused on my goals and plans.

I'd not only got the internship I wanted but was going to be working closely with a seriously respected female trainer. I had that, and that's all that mattered. The thing with Dylan had been a friendship. No. It had been an acquaintanceship. He'd been pretty to look at, and I'd helped him study. Tit for tat.

Liar, a little voice I quickly ignored chirped up. I had no idea how I had actually thought a guy like Dylan would ever be interested in me! And I had been so stupidly sure of it, too. I rolled my eyes so far back I was surprised they didn't stay there. Hindsight and all that. I had spent a semester crushing and a whole day moping. I was done. I needed to move onwards and upwards, but first, I seriously needed to shower.

I grabbed my caddy filled with all my favorite toiletries before looking around. I enjoyed the extra space. Moving into the athletics dorms was incredible. It was crazy how much bigger and better these rooms were compared to the older building I had lived in the last two years. I was alone in the dorm for the summer, but come fall, I'd

have two new roommates. I took my bathrobe off the hook on my door, my keys, and headed out to the shared co-ed showers.

Even these were nice and clean. I chose the empty stall in the back and turned the water on. The stream was strong and steamy. My lips tipped upward with joy. I couldn't wait for a hot shower. I missed taking baths like I used to back home, but I would rather stay on campus after my parents split up earlier this year. Not that they didn't get along. Nope. My parents were one of those who were still friends and super amicable.

I'd just rather stay on campus. I started my internship with the football trainers in the morning, and I couldn't wait. I moved into the steaming hot shower and sighed happily. Everything about this building was a million times better. The water pelted down my back, and I shut my eyes and rolled my neck.

I should be thinking about my upcoming day. What time to wake up and what I should wear. Instead, my thoughts quickly drifted to Dylan Macabee and his stupid hot body and dumb face.

I still didn't understand.

Or maybe I didn't want to understand? My parents always went on about how stubborn I was.

Dylan and I had become friends. Or at least I had thought so. He'd started to act kind of weird during finals week, but I could have sworn that after our last study session, something was going on. Something more than friendship. Especially with the way I'd catch him looking at me. Or the way he smiled when I said something funny.

But I had been wrong.

Really, really wrong.

I glanced down at my body and fought myself from frowning. What was I thinking? I groaned and reached for my shampoo and started to wash my hair. I wasn't the typical kind of girl guys like Dylan talked to. Not outside of classes and study sessions, at least. Not that I was bashing on myself. I wasn't. I was more than okay with my curves. I had always been bigger, but I was okay with that. I wasn't small and dainty like my little sister or mom. And that was okay. I was happy with my size. And too bad if Dylan Macabee didn't like what he saw. I rinsed my hair and conditioned before shaving and rinsing off.

I stepped out and grabbed my towel. Something came over me, and I froze. Suddenly, weirdly enough, I felt like someone was watching me. Goose bumps flared to life on my skin, and I tightened the towel around me. My eyes moved to the curtain that hung between the dry space and the shower. It swayed, but no one was there. Not feet under the curtain nor a shadow of anything. Nothing.

No one was out there, and if there was, it was probably because they were going to shower themselves. Almost like they had been reading my thoughts, whoever was in the showers turned the water on, and I breathed out slowly. I shook my head, about to giggle. I was being paranoid. I quickly changed, frowning at the missing clean panties I must have forgotten when I packed my clothes. Thankfully, I was just going to put on loose pj pants and a tank. I'd be fine panty-less for the night. After towel-drying my hair, I tossed on my robe and grabbed my shower caddy with all my toiletries and dirty clothes bag before stepping out. Whoever was showering was still in there. I wanted to laugh at myself for being so weird.

I walked straight to my room. But for some reason, that feeling of being watched followed me all the way to my dorm. Something I couldn't shake off. I walked in and locked my door just to be on the safe side. I was probably overreacting. My imagination was playing tricks on me. Not to mention the fact my old roommate

loved to listen to crime podcasts when I was the world's biggest scaredy cat.

'I'm just in a new building, new room. Just something I gotta get used to,' I muttered to myself, tossing my dirty clothes into my hamper and sliding my caddy of toiletries under my bed.

"New place, new noises," I repeated to myself. I had to remember that. The University of the Desert was a division one school, and athletes, for the most part, trained all year round. Despite that, the building did feel kind of empty. I stretched and set my alarm before getting into bed.

No matter what I tried, I still dreamt of the devilishly handsome football player I hoped I didn't bump into while I was at work the next day.

CHAPTER 3

DYLAN

I wiped my face and felt like a damn creep.

A stalker.

Fucking hell! The exact thing I had been trying to avoid happened. That thing in me hadn't relaxed in the last forty-eight hours. Two whole goddamn days without seeing her, without texting or hearing her voice, and I was ready to come out of my skin.

I'd been pacing my dorm that I shared with three other guys. Crank, the linebacker for the football team I played on, and two baseball players. The way Jason and Jeremy were looking at me, I had already passed annoying them. I'd decided to get out and walk around my floor. Worst case, I could go down to a different floor and walk around there, too, or go for a run. It wasn't like I wasn't dressed for it in a black long-sleeve lightweight shirt and matching gym shorts.

When I stepped out and turned the corner, my eyes had felt like they were about to pop out of their sockets.

As if I had conjured her up with some magic spell, there she was.

Mattie Fuentes and her curvy body slipped out of a dorm. A dorm in my building and on my damn floor! I watched her close and lock her door before heading down the hall. Every step she took away from me felt wrong.

And I stupidly did the last thing I should have. I followed her.

I hadn't called out her name like some normal guy. Like the kind of guy she deserved. No. I wasn't normal. My entire life, I could have sworn I was, but this thing inside me that wanted her was so far from normal it was insane! Fucking sick and desperate with the way it needed to be around her. To look at her when she didn't know it. To keep her safe.

Before I knew which way was up, I was in the co-ed showers. The ones for the people who lived in the double- or triple-occupancy rooms. There were four of us, so we had a private bathroom. Not only that, but we were also baseball and football players, which meant we got all sorts of perks, and that included the accommodations of where we slept.

Yet I stepped inside, and my feet quietly guided me towards the back of the showers, and before I knew what I was doing, I was staring hard at the curtain she was behind. My dirty mind couldn't stop thinking about what she was doing on the other side.

She was probably naked and soapy.

Surrounded by steam.

I could imagine the way those bubbles slid down her body, and my mouth watered. Fuck, I was tempted to shove my fist into my mouth and bite down to stop myself from growling. Jesus Christ, what I would do to lick her clean. The AC kicked in, moving the curtain just enough for me to sneak a peek of her in there, and my hands fisted at my sides.

There she was. Naked. Smooth slightly tanned skin. Slick. And bent over, shaving her legs.

Fuck. My hands flexed at my sides before I brought them to my front. My cock was hard and ready, straining to get out of my pants and right into the woman it thought belonged to him. I stroked myself over my jeans to find some relief, but nothing helped.

Jesus, she was gorgeous.

Her smooth skin, slick with water and soap. Her curves on full display. My hands itched to touch her. Grip her body and hold her close to me. Kiss her under the hard pelting of the shower raining down on us until the whole building ran out of hot water. Until she begged me to do more than kiss her.

I was crossing so many lines, so many fucking boundaries, but it was like I wasn't myself in that moment. My attention moved to the bag of clothes that sat right there on a bench.

I had no idea what came over me, but the moment I saw her pretty, pink panties sitting right on top, I reached in and swiped them. Shoving them into my front pocket. The water shut off, and I moved to the side of the shower, right into the stall next to her.

My heart felt like it was going to pop out of my chest with anxiety.

Will she catch me?

How the hell can I explain this?

I wasn't dressed for a shower, not that I didn't need one. A really fucking cold one.

I heard rustling, and she was probably drying herself and getting dressed. I turned the water on in my shower to try and not get caught. She must have not thought anything

of it, because my sweet innocent girl simply slipped out, and I gave myself a moment before following her, making sure to stay out of sight until she reached her dorm.

Fuck me, Mattie, the girl of my dreams, the woman I hadn't been able to stop thinking about, had moved into the same building I lived in.

I was completely fucked.

Everything I had tried to resist had been for nothing.

Once I knew she was back in her room safely, I didn't return to mine like I should have. No, like some kind of pervert, I returned to the shower, heading directly to the one she'd used, and shut the curtain behind me. I closed my eyes and breathed in deeply. Her scent filled my lungs, overwhelming my senses.

With the humidity in the air from her shower, her sweet scent clung to the air. Vanilla and sugar and something else. Strawberries. Fuck. I moved further inside and touched the walls that had the privilege of looking at her. I tugged my jeans down and, like a fucking animal, started to stroke my dick while I breathed in the slight scent of her shampoo and body wash that clung to the thick humid air. My hand shuttled up and down my length while I imagined her. Imagined us.

Down on her knees, looking up at me with those bright blues that seemed to stand out against her soft olive-toned skin. Her pouty lips would open for me, her tongue would come out and lick me. Just the thought pushed me close to the edge. I couldn't help the deep guttural growl that escaped.

She'd lick me again.

Over and over.

Her tongue would feel like heaven on Earth. I'd be about to tell her to stop because I was too close to the line of coming, but she wouldn't need me to. She'd know. And she wouldn't stop. Her lips would part and take me between her lips and wrap them around me. I'd fucking embarrass myself and come. Hard. Fast. My toes curled inside my shoes, and I had to stifle a groan.

I opened my eyes, my breathing completely off. I looked at my release marking the tiled walls, and I exhaled. I stepped back, sprayed the shower down before getting out of there, and headed back to my own room.

But not before stopping in front of her room. I touched her door. I could knock and say hi. It would be the neighborly thing to do. I shook the thought away. Not yet. I forced my feet to move. Not yet. Soon, but not yet. I'd come off as a creeper just knocking at her door when I wasn't supposed to know where she lived.

I had an early practice in the morning and a girl to find after that. I walked into my dorm and straight to my room. When I shoved my hands into my jeans, I felt the soft cotton of the panties I'd stolen from her shower caddy. I tossed them onto my bed and got naked. I might have jerked off in the shower, but I was nowhere close to being done thinking about her.

I lay in bed and shoved a pillow behind my head. I brought the clean panties up and looked at them. I swallowed, and my jaw clenched at the sight of them. Damn, they were pretty. Made sense. Every inch of Mattie was so damn pretty it made my teeth ache. I spit on my free hand and jerked off again despite having just come. My poor dick would be raw and aching come practice, but I needed to take the edge off. The dark thing inside me, the sick, obsessed fucking thing needed it. I brought her panties to my nose to smell them, and I came on a deep groan. I used the panties to clean myself and frowned.

Why the hell do I like the idea of my seed on her panties? And just like that, my dick

started to come to life again.

Fuck. It was going to be a long, messy night.

CHAPTER 4

DYLAN

“What’s up with you?” Jason asked, never hesitating as he ate, digging into his bowl of cereal as his scrutinizing grey eyes looked over the edge.

“Nothing,” I muttered. His lips might have twitched, but my usually quiet roommate didn’t say another word. His gaze moved from mine to the TV in the living space we shared.

“Right,” he murmured. “That’s why you have been walking the halls like some kind of power-walking senior citizen at any mall in America around nine in the morning?”

“Shut up.” Seemed my quiet roommate was more observant than he let on.

“You seriously denying it?” he asked without turning his head towards me. My brows bunched.

“No,” I admitted like some kind of idiot. Did I just make Jason an accomplice? Would he turn me in?

“Good. So, who is she?” I made a growl-like sound. “Relax.” He laughed. “I’m not interested in any kind of romantic entanglements.”

“Really? Just like that?” He set his bowl of cereal down on the coffee table and turned to look at me.

“Look, you might be interested in someone, and from the looks of it, Crank is, too.” We both glanced at the shut door. The guy had been working overnight shifts at the diner a little away from town. Something was up with him, and I had a feeling it was his cute little blonde coworker who happened to be his sister’s best friend. “But that doesn’t mean love and shit is meant for everyone.”

“And you’re telling me that love is something you don’t believe in?”

“Bud, if Cupid were on fire, I would definitely second-guess spraying him down because I would be legitimately scared he’d want to thank me with one of his arrows.” My eyes widened. Not because the guy had a bunch of girlfriends but because the women came and went from his room.

“Seriously? But you bring chicks over all the time.”

“Now, that’s sex.” He smirked. “I never said I didn’t believe in sex.” I shook my head and chuckled. “Dude... plus, we’re not talkin’ about me; we’re talkin’ about you. You know me, man, we’ve been roomies for a year and are stuck with each other for one more unless Jer and I decide to get an apartment off campus, but honestly, I don’t see that happening.”

“Okay,” I sounded slowly. “Fine, I like someone,” I admitted.

“That chick from your sports medicine class?”

“How did—“ I didn’t finish asking because the jerk started to laugh.

“Man, I get you guys get hit on the head, but seriously? Neither you nor Crank are subtle. The rest of your team like this?”

“Jason,” I warned, and he chuckled.

“You talked about Mattie this and Mattie that all freaking semester long. Why haven’t you made a move?” I opened and shut my mouth. I had no idea why the hell I hadn’t. Probably because I’d fucked up.

You’re trying to save her from yourself, I reminded myself. I had been all but climbing the walls. It didn’t help that she was working with the trainers during football practices. My focus on the field had always been unshakeable. No matter what was going on in my life, I always had that.

Until Mattie.

Mattie and those damn blue eyes and pretty face. Those curves that drove me wild and made my hands ache to memorize them. Mattie. Mine. Mine. Mine, that deep primal voice in my head started to chant.

“I’m just sayin’, don’t go getting into any kind of trouble,” Jason warned, snapping my out of my thoughts.

“Trouble?” I repeated before our eyes connected. I tried to school my expression, keep it from giving me away. Does he know I keep following her into the showers? Does he know I took her keys and made a copy of it? Does he know I took her panties and had them waiting for me under my pillow?

“Yeah, man, in the heat of the moment, you don’t want to go knockin’ anyone up. I know our sports are different, but a jock bunny will chase anyone in hopes of getting knocked up and getting paid for eighteen years if we go pro. Which we will.”

“Knocked up,” I repeated, my voice sounding hoarse in my own ears. The idea grew wild and out of control in a split second.

Knocking up Mattie.

Watching her body change and ripen with my baby. Our baby.

Breeding her.

Would she be on the pill? The scowl on my face grew. Why would she be on the pill? Was she hooking up with other guys? My hands clenched at my sides.

“Relax, man, all you have to do is make sure you use condoms each and every time.” He shrugged thinking that I was freaking out about the idea of tying Mattie to me in every which way. “Oh, and be the one who brings them. Never trust some chick who just happens to have one lying around.”

“Why not?” I found myself stupidly asking.

“Again, jock bunnies. You should see an old buddy of mine from back home. About to go pro, goes to a party, vibes with a chick, she invited him back to her place, and now they have three kids under six. THREE!”

“Three kids,” I repeated, the look on my face unchanging while I imagined three kids with Mattie. Different variations of the two of us running around. I had to fight myself from smiling. Fuck me, I liked it. I liked the idea a whole fucking bunch.

“What happened to them?” I asked.

“The poor bastard is still married to her and allegedly says he’s happy, but I’m not so sure.”

“What makes you think that?”

“He’s my brother, dumbass. I know. He hasn’t been happy in a long fucking time. How could he? He gave up his dream! He lost his shot to play for the pros to stay

home back east in the same small town where we grew up. How the hell could he be happy?"

"Man." I scratched the back of my head. "Good luck the day some girl catches your eye, and you fall hard," I muttered, but the bastard wasn't even fazed. If anything, he laughed, wholeheartedly, before he shook his head.

"Never going to happen."

"That's what they all say. Look at James Montgomery!"

"Hey! Don't throw that kind of juju my way, man. I was just trying to be your friend and remind you to think with your head and not your dick when you go wherever you go." I flipped him the bird, but Jason was far from offended. Instead, the bastard laughed again before picking up his bowl and taking it to the sink. "For reals, though, just don't do anything stupid."

"Why do you think I'd do something stupid?"

"Because a guy lurking outside the showers isn't doing something on the up and up." He laid it out straight for me. I opened my mouth, but he shook his head. "I don't wanna know. Honestly. I'm just telling you to be smart. I know it's summer and the building has a hell of a lot less people living in it, but be smart. If I caught you lurking, someone else could, too."

"Why were you by the co-ed showers?"

"Want me to ask you the same thing?" My lips thinned, and I jerked my head no. "Right. Well, look, I gotta go get ready for batting practice. Wanna meet up at the wine bar tonight? Karaoke night. Heard some Kappa Sweets will be there."

“Fuck no.” I laughed. Kappa Sweets were cool chicks to hang out with, but they got rowdy sometimes. Add in Karaoke, and that didn’t sound like my kind of night whatsoever. Plus, I was hoping to catch my girl before she headed to bed. “I got an early practice,” I shared instead of telling him I had a night of following Mattie aground planned.

“Good luck with that.” He patted my back and headed to his room. I did the same, and the moment I shut the door, I frowned.

Fuck a duck! Jason had caught my stupid ass lurking around the showers. He had an idea but didn’t want to know the details. He was a good friend trying to warn me to be stealthier. I didn’t think I could follow her into her showers tonight, but as my hand slipped into my front pocket, I touched the key I’d copied. It looked like I would be sneaking into her room instead. Again.

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CHAPTER 5

MATTIE

“See,”—the trainer smiled at me—“nice and tight.” She gently patted the leg of the football player she’d just wrapped. “Now, if you can make him a bag of ice and tape it to the calf, he will be ready to go.”

“Of course.” I hurried towards the huge ice machine and started to make a bag before returning to the player.

“The trainer got a call,” he shared.

“Oh, okay.” I reached for the tape and started to tape the bag of ice around his calf like my boss for the summer had instructed.

“You’re new here,” he pointed out the obvious. I nodded, staying focused on making sure to do a good job on the ice bag. It was important for his recovery.

“New to the school, too?” he implored. I wanted to roll my eyes. He wasn’t the first player I’d had to ice, and he wasn’t the first one to try and hit on me. Though, the other ones didn’t give off a creeper vibe like he had from the moment he walked into the room.

“No.” I shook my head, keeping things short. There was no need to engage with him. I found it better to give quick and easy answers because if you were too chatty, they got the wrong idea. Too bad Dylan hadn’t been that way. Or maybe he had and used

the attraction I'd felt to his advantage so we could study together?

"What's your name?"

"Mattie, but?—"

"Mattie. That's pretty. I'm Tuck. Tucker Pearson." He extended a hand, making me look up at him. He grinned with a boyish kind of smile I might have found attractive if I had met him before Dylan.

Dylan Macabee and his stupid handsome face, who had ruined me for anyone else. Now he just looked like any other guy on the team. One I wanted to watch play and help when he got hurt, but nothing else.

"Nice to meet you." I nodded, ignoring his hand. I could tell by the look on his face that he either didn't like to be turned down or wasn't used to it. My guess, being a first-string football player, it was the latter.

"What's your deal?" He retracted his hand and rested it across his chest with the other. "I'm just being friendly?—"

"Hey, how's it going in here?" The trainer walked back in, saving me from having to try and not bruise the stupid guy's ego. "Good work, Mattie. Now, Pearson, keep that bag of ice on for at least three hours, understood? I'll see you tomorrow morning, and we will check how it feels." The trainer simply looked at me and motioned for me to follow her, ignoring the football player behind her.

"You okay?" she asked, her gaze trained on me. I nodded. "If any of these guys get weird, you tell me, okay? I got your back. I know it's not easy being a woman in this industry."

“I’m okay. I just don’t think he liked me not fawning because he was talking to me.” She snorted.

“Yeah, some guys will be like that. But in any instance, always trust your gut, and if you need me, don’t hesitate to call for me, okay?” She pushed the matter, making me feel safer and more welcome than I ever had at any job.

“Yes, ma’am,” I agreed politely, and she nodded.

“Alright, kid, you did good today. Any plans this weekend?”

“No.” I shook my head. “Not really. I might read a book I’ve been eyeing. Thanks again for this opportunity.”

“Nothing to thank me for. You earned this internship. Have some fun this weekend. Go to a party or something,” she suggested, and I laughed.

“I don’t think so. I’m not really the party type.”

“Summer is always a good time to get out of your comfort zone and go on an adventure.” An adventure and out of my comfort zone? As if.

“I don’t know about that,” I muttered.

It was a sweet sentiment, but I had already gone out of my comfort zone striking up what I thought was a friendship with Dylan, and look how that had ended up. I grabbed my bag and started to walk out, going across the field to watch a little more of the practice from the sidelines. The different teams were still practicing, and it didn’t take long for me to spot the big guy.

Standing off to the side, I watched him talk to the quiet linebacker who had been in

the class where we met. Dylan was serious, almost stoic, as they spoke. The linebacker guy patted him on the shoulder and turned to get his water bottle. That was when he looked around, and despite being across the field, our eyes connected.

I'd seen him around over the last couple of weeks. It was bound to happen since I was working for the same sports department he played in. But we hadn't locked eyes like this. I smiled and gave him a slight wave, when his brows bunched. That gaze turned intense. With his helmet in his hand hanging by his side, I could see the way his jaw clenched. Like he was irritated or annoyed.

What he didn't do was wave or mouth hi .

And that was when what felt like the last shred of hope that maybe whatever I'd felt last semester hadn't been one-sided died. I pushed my hands into the pockets of my joggers immediately turned around. Ignoring the disappointment I felt. He couldn't be bothered to say hi. Damn. The rejection of the situation stung the entire walk to my dorm and even after dinner while I sat and watched Friends reruns.

I pulled up my phone, tempted to text him that he could go to hell. But I didn't.

Instead, I was in bed by ten, still stupidly dreaming about the guy who couldn't be bothered to say hi. A dream so real that when I woke up, I could have sworn I smelled his cologne in my room.

CHAPTER 6

DYLAN

My hands hurt.

Literally ached.

An overwhelming need to touch, to caress, powered through me, but for some godforsaken reason, I didn't give in. Instead, I clenched and relaxed them at my sides. I rolled my neck side to side without tearing my eyes off the sleeping beauty in front of me.

What I am doing is wrong.

I knew it. Fucking hell, my dad had been a cop. I knew just how wrong breaking and entering was, but it still didn't stop me. It didn't stop me from watching her like some fucking creep who couldn't seem to get his fill of her.

Mattie sighed, and I knew, no matter how long I stared at her, I'd never get tired of her face. I just wish I could look into her bright blue eyes. But since I'd snuck into her room in the dead of night, I could almost guarantee it would be a bad thing if she opened her eyes.

I squatted, moving as quietly as I could to get down closer to her level without waking her up. I had no idea how I managed. I was a big fucker, but somehow, I'd managed every night for the last two weeks. Risked everything just to watch her

sleep. Knowing that if she opened her eyes, it would mess up any chance I might have had before this thing even started.

Being around Mattie Fuentes had become like a drug. I breathed in, and just like that, everything felt better. She made everything better. She and that strawberry shortcake scent that clung to her and made my mouth water.

This crush I'd had from the moment we met turned into something more. Something darker. Everything I'd done so far this summer was to get closer to her, and it had been fucking hell. She had stopped coming out to watch the practices after I didn't say hi back to her two days ago, and it fucking killed. I'd seen the way the guys were watching her. Checking her out. I'd wanted to stab each one in the gut and pull their fucking eyes out. That night, when I had slipped into the co-ed shower, I had stolen another pair of panties to take the edge off.

The more time I spent following her, the hungrier the thing inside me grew.

Needier.

Starving.

I shook my head and glanced down. Even squatting down, I was taller than where she lay. Watching my girl sleep was my very own personal heaven and hell.

She could open her eyes at any moment, scream bloody murder because she caught me red-handed. Would she scream? Would she stare back at me and ask what the hell I was doing in her dorm room? Or would she open her eyes and invite me into her bed?

You wish, dumbass! the sliver of sanity I had left whispered.

I lifted my hand, so damn tempted to touch her. To feel her smooth skin beneath the pads of my fingers. But I couldn't. I had to keep my hands to myself. She sighed in her sleep, and I dropped my hand.

My very own heaven and hell.

Heaven to be so damn close and hell because I couldn't touch her. Not yet.

Finding out we lived in the same dorm and floor snapped whatever shred of common sense and decency I had. Following her around had stopped cutting it. Watching out for her from afar. Making sure no dumbass talked to her, and if they did, to let them know she was taken.

It wasn't making me any friends on the team, that was for fucking sure. But I didn't care. I was so damn enamored. Obsessed. It was wrong. Following her into spaces where she thought she was safe, like the showers. Her bedroom.

Every damn day, I woke up promising myself I wouldn't follow her around anymore, only to do it quietly, with my heart lodged in my throat with every step I took. The thrill of excitement held me captive. Especially when I followed her into that co-ed shower. The sound of running water was now synonymous with a fucking hard-on for me. Every little sneak peek of her under that shower head. The scent of her body wash had me on edge. There wasn't a shower I missed after that first one.

Every damn day for the last month, I had watched her shower, memorizing every curve and angle of her body while I stroked my dick, making sure to come as close as possible to her as I could. There was something inside me, something I had never thought about, that kept bombarding my mind since Jason had mentioned it.

Marking her.

Breeding her.

He might have been teasing me, but what he had brought to life was very real. I wanted to do just that. Tie her to me for life. We were both way too young for that kind of shit, but it didn't seem to matter.

Every fucking night for the last six days, I slipped into her room under the cloak of darkness. Every night, I told myself it would be the last. But it wasn't. Not even close. I kept lying to myself, over and over. Like some kind of animal.

Entering her place when she was working with the trainer and coming back when she slept. The space was small but cute, and being there made me feel closer to her. I was not in a place in my life to take the love of my life as my own. And that's what she was. The love of my life. My other half. Mine.

She sighed, snapping me out of my thoughts. I watched, completely enraptured by the way her lips tipped up and the expression on her face softened. Is she dreaming of me? Does she even think about me? Does she hate me now?

Meeting her in that sports medicine class had been the best and worst thing to happen to me. Worst because after the course, summer hit, and I had to figure out how the hell to bump into her. How to find her. Not that her schedule made it all that hard to figure her out. Thankfully, she had her dorm all to herself this summer, so I could sneak in like this.

"Love you, pretty girl," I whispered roughly. "Soon," I promised.

Something came over me, something too overpowering and alive to stop myself. I leaned forward and pressed my lips to her forehead, letting them linger a little bit too long. I stood up and forced myself to walk out of her room and make my way back to mine. Thankful and disappointed she hadn't woken up.

Every step I took felt wrong, but I still managed to get myself home. No one was home. Crank was working some shift at the diner, and Jason and Jerney were probably at some party.

I glanced at the clock on the microwave when I walked into the kitchen. It was a little after three in the morning, so if they were home, they would probably be sleeping. There was no one to ask me what the hell I was doing. No one to stop me. I had a feeling Jason wasn't keeping tabs on me anymore after his warning.

No one who knew how fucking obsessed I'd grown with Mattie. No one to tell me to stop.

I grabbed a water bottle before heading to bed, then walked into my dark room and shut and locked the door behind me, setting the water on the nightstand beside my bed. I grabbed my phone from my pocket with one hand and started to tug the joggers I wore down my hips. Not all the way, just enough for my aching dick to spring forward.

"Fuck," I muttered under my breath.

I was hard. Again. Fucking hell. Since meeting Mattie, I had been in this state constantly. The monster between my thighs jerked before it bounced against my abs.

I spit on my hand, not bothering to get in bed. This would happen regardless of where I was. With how I throbbed, I couldn't wait another moment. I brought the black-cased phone up to my eyes and pulled up the pictures I'd taken of her. The hand I'd spit on glided over my dick, and I groaned.

"Mattie." Her name sounded rough from my lips. "Fucking hell, baby girl." I swallowed jaggedly, my mouth dry as I stared at her thick thighs in the image I'd snapped on my phone.

She'd worn my favorite sleeping shorts tonight. Light blue, white and navy plaid. I loved how soft and comfortable they looked. I liked knowing my girl was comfy in her bed. They were loose around her thighs, and by the time I'd snuck into her dorm room, they had already risen up her thigh. Tonight, she'd kicked off her blanket, saving me from having to pull it down slowly. I wondered if it was her subconscious knowing I would come and watch her. As if her body knew it should put itself on display for me.

My hand glided up and down my length, tightening at the base. My imagination ran wild with all the possibilities. But one stood out over the others. My eyes shut and my lips parted.

"Fuck," I growled into the darkness.

She would look so damn pretty on her knees. With her tongue out, eyes wide while she looked up at me. Pleading silently for a taste of my dick. Mattie would be hungry for it. Needy. Her soft hands would slide up my thighs, and my head would tip back, not too much, just enough for me to still look at her.

My hand shuttled up and down as I imagined that pretty tongue on my dick. Her tits would bounce before she mouthed a sweet little please. My girl would lean in, and the moment I gave her permission, she would lick me. First around the fat mushroom tip then down the shaft and back up. She wouldn't waste time teasing me, either. Not when she wanted it just as much as I did. Her lips would wrap around the head of my cock, and she'd suck me into the cavern of her mouth.

In and out.

Wet and drooling.

My hand would find the back of her head, tangle in her dark tresses while those

bright blues glazed at me with lust. I'd pull her head down on my length, pushing her to take me further, and she would happily oblige. I'd feel her squirming in front of me, needing relief. Relief only I would ever give her. Mattie Fuentes was mine.

My eyes tightened, matching the grip I had on myself while I let myself get lost in the fantasy. Her throat would contract around my length, pulling me deeper, and my girl would gag but wouldn't pull away. She wouldn't even try.

A deep groan escaped my lips. I spit down on my hand again as it glided up and down, my breathing choppy. Mattie wouldn't stop. Even as she gagged, she would take my dick in her mouth, sucking me off like the cock-hungry little slut she would be for me. My toes curled inside the shoes I still wore, and I could feel it. She would know, too. I'd warn her, tell her daddy was about to come, and she wouldn't care. If anything, her lips would close around me tighter. This image in my head, the way it would feel, tipped me over. Before I knew it, white lights exploded behind my eyes, my body went taut and then shuddered as my dick shot my release.

"Mattie." Her name sounded like a rough plea past my lips as ribbon after ribbon shot out and landed on the ground.

Catching my breath, I leaned against the wall. My eyes dropped to the milky white stain on the floor, and my jaw clenched tightly. That thing inside me burned from the inside out. My eyes locked on the cum I'd wasted.

Cum that belonged deep inside her body or covering her skin.

"Fuck," I whispered into my quiet room before ripping my sweater off, bending to clean the floor before tossing that and the rest of my clothes into my hamper and falling into my bed butt-ass naked on my back.

I stared up at the whirring ceiling fan. The idea of something so crazy, so fucking

insane took root in my head, and I couldn't wipe it away. Breeding Mattie, watching her grow ripe with my child, making sure every asshole who came across her would know she was mine and only mine had been slowly growing. I had no idea why or what the hell was wrong with me. A kid was not what either of us needed right now, but fuck if I could simply brush away the thought.

Soon, my seed wouldn't go to waste.

Soon, it would cover Mattie from the inside out because she was mine, damn it! Mine. Mine. Mine. The word repeated endlessly in my head as I drifted off to sleep only to dream of my perfect girl.

CHAPTER 7

MATTIE

“Come on! It will be fun,” my coworker and buddy pleaded with me.

“I don’t know about that, Becks,” I groaned, looking over my shoulder at her.

“Please!” She put her hands together in front of her, her dark eyes pleading with me. “I really want to go, but I hate going to this stuff alone. I’m too chicken shit,” she argued. I rolled my eyes even though my lips twitched. Rebecca ‘Becks’ Madrigal was anything but chicken shit. She was the fiercest, most fearless chick I had ever met.

“Becks—”

“You haven’t been to one party all summer long.”

“How do you know? Maybe I went to one without you,” I argued, but she shot me a look that told me she knew as well as I did I was full of shit.

“This one is chill. I promise! It’s cool people, good drinks. I’ll buy you dinner before we go!”

“You don’t have to?—”

“I know, but I want to. Come on! We haven’t hung out outside this bookstore all

summer.” She wanted us to go to a party. A frat party. I didn’t party at all, much less on Greek Row. But Becks was my friend, good people, and I knew she wouldn’t put me in a bad spot.

“Fine.” I had no idea why I agreed. Maybe because I missed having girl time and hanging out with friends since most were home for the summer and my own best friend was studying abroad in Japan for the next year, and even though we tried, we hardly ever got to talk or text.

“Sweet! I’ll pick you up at five. We can go eat and then hit the party!”

“Fine,” I grumbled playfully, both of us knowing I didn’t mean it. She hip-checked me before she walked towards a customer to help them. She left me at the register thinking about what the hell someone wore to a frat party and if I even had that in my closet.

Thankfully, despite it being summer and usually slow, the store was busy and our shift went by pretty quickly. True to her word, Becks was at my door at five, dressed to the nines. Becks was gorgeous. Petite with a toned athletic body she got from playing soccer for the longest time. “Oh my god!” she gasped, and I rolled my eyes.

“Beck—” I tried to warn, but I didn’t even get to say her whole name because she cut me off with a shit-eating grin.

“See! This is what I am talking about!”

“Beck—”

“Turn around,” she demanded, and I giggled. When I did as she’d asked, she gave a low whistle. “Gorgeous! I knew under all those baggie shirts was a banging body.”

“Thanks, but?—“

“No buts!!” she exclaimed. “I’m serious! You should show off your curves more. I would kill for curves like yours,” she complimented, and I ignored when heat hit my face.

“Oh, please.” I rolled my eyes, closing my door behind me. “You’re stunning.”

“Whatever.” She rolled her eyes. “Those frat guys won’t know what hit them!”

“Nothing.” I laughed. “Nothing is going to hit anyone because I’m just going for a drink and hang with you.”

“And meet new people,” she encouraged, because the woman was incorrigibly positive. “Please!” Her dark eyes pleaded with me, and I rolled mine again.

“Fine,” I agreed for god only knew what reason.

We hit up the cute Mexican restaurant that had just opened off the main downtown area. After filling up on guac and chips and the most delicious flautas I had ever tasted, and that was saying something because my grandma, my dad’s mom, was incredible in the kitchen, and maybe slightly bitsy tipsy from one margarita, we found ourselves at the frat house.

The place was filled with tons of people.

“I’m gonna go get us some beers!” Becks shouted over the music, and I nodded.

“I’ll go look inside. There is beer pong!”

“Check it out. You might have fun!” she suggested, and I snorted before making my

way into the main living area of the house. I sat down next to a girl with blonde hair who literally looked like a princess from a fairy tale.

“Hey.”

“Hey,” I responded, hating how awkward I was with new people.

“You look familiar,” she mentioned, and I smiled.

“I do?”

“Yeah, I think we were in an English class together.” I opened my mouth to tell her I looked about two years older than her but then stopped myself. “Richardson’s class?” I asked, and she nodded.

“Yeah,” she confirmed quietly. We started to talk, and I relaxed. She was cool. I didn’t miss the way she looked at the linebacker who had been in my sports medicine class. It was cute how they kept looking at one another. It was obvious they were together, and if they weren’t, it was only a matter of time. The way he looked at her reminded me of the way Dylan used to look at me.

Speaking of, I noticed he stood next to the linebacker, and I stopped looking in his direction. Great. The one party I decided to go to all summer, he had to be here.

Just my luck!

CHAPTER 8

DYLAN

I walked over to Crank and stood next to him.

“She looks happy,” I observed. I was fucking delighted that he had talked his girl into coming out. I was happy for the guy. He worked hard on and off the field. He deserved to have some fun.

“Yeah,” he muttered seriously. I didn’t have to look away from Libby to know that Crank looked like he was about to strangle someone. “But if that fucking rookie doesn’t back off, he won’t be pitching next season,” he added. I chuckled quietly because I’d called it.

“Relax. You look like you’re about to pop an aneurysm. He knows she’s taken,” I murmured, trying to reassure him. It was fucking obvious that Libby was all his.

Just then, she walked over. Mattie. What the hell was my girl doing here? My breathing changed. It became huskier.

“You think?” Crank asked. I tore my eyes from Mattie and watched Libby’s gaze search and find Crank’s. Watching the two of them find one another felt almost like it was something I shouldn’t be witnessing. Something intimate. And just like that, the big guy next to me relaxed.

“See how she looks at you?” I pointed out. “Not one of these motherfuckers, sober or

not, misses the way she looks at you.” I couldn’t stop looking at Maddie, who was now talking to Libby. The two of them somehow got along easily. “Question is, my man, what are you going to do about it?” Am I asking Crank or myself? What the fuck was I going to do about Mattie?

“What do you mean?” he asked and turned to look at me.

“Bro, is she yours, or is this just for the summer? A fun fling?” My hands rose between us with innocence. “No disrespect or judgment. You know I got your back either way.” I hoped he would claim her. She was good for him. I’d never seen Crank the way he was with her. He almost seemed more relaxed when he was around her.

“She’s mine,” Crank answered without a bit of doubt in his voice. He glanced back at his girl, who was still staring at him. Libby wiggled her fingers hi before turning her attention to my girl.

“Who is that?” Crank asked. I stayed quiet. “Dyl?” he called my name, but I couldn’t stop looking at her. Not that she spared me one glance.

“Mattie,” I muttered.

“Mattie?” he repeated. “We took that sports medicine course with her, didn’t we?” I grunted, hoping it was enough to confirm it for him, but didn’t look away.

The girls sat together, and Mattie said something that made Libby laugh. They leaned in, and long forgotten was the stupid rookie pitcher. Luckily for him, he left, and they just kept chatting away. They looked thick as thieves instead of two women who just met. I liked that. I liked my girl meeting someone as genuinely sweet as Libby.

“Does she know that?” I asked, tearing my eyes from the girls. Crank’s dark gaze locked on mine.

“That she’s mine?” I nodded with a shrug.

“We’ve known one another since you transferred here and been roommates for the last two years. I know you. As much as you try not to admit it, we’re even friends,” I shared, not surprised in the least when Crank rolled his eyes.

“I don’t have a problem being friends. Jesus.”

“Really?” I challenged.

“You wanna braid my hair next”? he muttered, raising the water bottle in his hand to his lips.

“Maybe later, shithead.” I laughed. “I’m just saying, girl like her? Don’t waste your time, or especially hers, by dilly-dallying.” Crank scowled at me before I turned to look at the girls. Fuck, Mattie looked good. She was wearing the sweetest little summer dress and showing off a lot of leg. Damn.

“Dilly-dallying? Is that some kind of midwestern thing?” he teased, and I playfully shoulder-checked him.

“Fuck you, man. We can’t all be cool and born and raised in Southern California,” I muttered back.

“You’re right about that.” Crank laughed and shook his head. “I get what you’re saying, though.” He cleared his throat.

“Good.” I nodded. My attention drifted back to the two women who were now talking to a third. “Lock it down because shit can change in the blink of an eye.” As if feeling our gazes on them, the girls looked in our direction. Mattie stared, and before I knew it, she mouthed hi . I nodded. A muscle at my jaw twitched before Crank tapped my

shoulder.

“So, you two...” It was obvious that he was putting things together.

“Nothing. Drop it,” I growled, glancing at him, not missing the way his lips twitched.

“Okay, then,” Crank mumbled. “Guess I’m the only one who had to share.” I knew what he was doing.

“It’s... it’s complicated.” I sighed, unable to hide how unhappy I felt.

“When isn’t it, man?” Crank finished his water bottle when we both noticed one of our teammates start to saunter over to the girls.

By the way he was staring at them, I knew exactly what he had in mind. Tuck Pearson was a pain in the ass. Rich kid born with a silver spoon who was never told he couldn’t have something. He was lazy, but money talked when your parents swung it around this way and that. Guys like him were a big reason I didn’t join a frat when I started at U of D. The guy was an entitled prick.

I watched as he walked up to the girls, but they ignored him, too invested in whatever they were talking about.

“Fucking Tuck,” I mumbled under my breath, my hands fisting at my sides. Crank grabbed my arm knowing I had a temper and that Tuck rubbed me the wrong way.

“Chill,” he muttered but still moved, and I wasn’t far behind him.

“Hey, princess, I’ve never seen you at one of our parties before,” Stupid Tucker drawled out slowly.

“Oh, umm...” Libby glanced over at Mattie, who was already rolling her eyes.

“Her name isn’t princess,” I heard my sweet girl defend her. “And this is an a and b conversation, so why don’t you see your way out of it, jock,” she continued beautifully.

“Aw, come on, Pattie,” Tuck scoffed. “Jealous?”

“You wish! And my name isn’t Pattie. It’s Mattie,” she corrected him.

“Look, why don’t you mind your own business, Fattie Mattie?” he hissed.

That’s when I’d heard enough.

Crank might have been in front of me just a couple of steps ahead, but I beat him to it. Before Crank knew it, not only was I at his side, but I picked up Tuck by his shirt. The guy was about my size, but that didn’t stop me from lifting him up and off the ground.

“What the fuck did you just say?” I growled, shoving my face in front of the douchebag.

“Relax, Dyl! Jesus. What’s your problem? She’s just some fat chick with—“ I didn’t let him say another goddamn syllable. My arm pulled back, and I punched Tuck in the face. Pain radiated down my hand, but I didn’t care. It was worth it. All I could do was see red. Who the hell does he think he is, calling my girl names?

“Fuck! What the hell, man?!” Tuck exclaimed, holding his face. He glared at me. His hand covered his nose, but he didn’t make a move to attack me back.

He didn’t have the balls.

Not when a couple of the guys on the team were already surrounding us. Standing at our sides, ready to pull us apart in case this thing turned into a brawl.

“Don’t you ever talk about her like that.” I jabbed Tuck’s chest with his finger. “Don’t even fucking look at her,” I growled. His nose flared. My hands itched to punch him again, but that’s when I felt her. I might not have seen her move, but I felt the soft heat of her body behind me. Her small hand touched my arm, and it felt like all the fight and heat in my blood started to fade away.

She soothed something in me with a simple touch, and if I hadn’t already crossed so many damn lines and boundaries, right then and there, I would have known I was fucked. Just with a touch.

“You hit him.” Her voice was whisper soft as I turned to look down at her.

“I did.” My jaw clenched. “I’m sorry.” My voice sounded raspy in my own ears. “I didn’t mean to scare you, but—” Mattie’s hand took mine, and she lifted it up between us. My heart thundered against my rib cage. Holy fuck, she was touching me.

“We should get this cleaned up,” she said softly. Mattie looked toward Libby, who I was standing next to by now, and shrugged. “Sorry. We’ll talk later?”

“Sure.” Libby nodded as she leaned into Crank.

“Text me you got home okay?” Mattie urged, and Libby nodded. I would have smiled, really liking the fact Crank’s girl and mine got along, if it weren’t for the fact that Mattie started to walk away. With my hand in hers.

Heat rushed through my body to temperatures I was unsure I had ever felt. Not even when I got a really bad flu when I was twelve. I silently let her lead me through the

house. People moved out of the way for us, not that I paid attention to them. Not when all I could do was follow her like a puppy while I watched the top of her head. She walked us towards the back of the house and stopped in the somewhat crowded kitchen by the sink. People were watching us, but I only had eyes for her through the roaring of blood rushing through my ears.

Mattie let my hand go and reached for the paper towels. Without asking, she took the roll and returned to me.

“Come on,” she said, once again taking the hand I hadn’t used when I punched Tucker, and walked us to the backyard, not stopping until she found a quiet spot, where she pointed at a bench for me to sit. I took it and looked at her, daring to tangle our fingers together. “Can you sit here while I go to those coolers to grab you a water and some ice?”

“Mattie—“

“Please,” she said, letting my hand go and picking up the one I’d punched Tuck with. “We need to ice it to make sure it doesn’t swell,” she insisted. I nodded because. As much as I hated the idea of her walking away from me, I doubted I could deny her anything. She gave me a small smile before she turned and headed towards the coolers. I didn’t take my eyes off her as I soaked in the sight of her.

There was a quiet elegance with the way she moved. Her hips swayed, almost like they did it just for my eyes. When she stood by the cooler waiting for some guys to get their beers, she glanced over her shoulder, and our eyes connected.

Mine, the voice perked up, softly, in my head. Mine. Mine. Mine. It started to chant every mine a little louder than the last. I was fucked. There was no sane part of me left. Not now. Not after her coming to take care of me. Her soft body returned and stood between my thighs. My mouth went dry.

Without a word uttered between us, I watched her get to work, tending to my reddened knuckles. She poured water on a paper towel and gently took my hand to dab the wet paper towel over my knuckles.

“Bright side, it didn’t break the skin. But we should still try and find some hydrogen peroxide and something to keep it clean with. Maybe wrap it up.” I grunted because my fucking brain couldn’t seem to function enough to string a couple of words together.

Her eyes rose and connected with mine, and fuck me, she could have toppled me over. “You shouldn’t fight. It can get you kicked off the team,” she said softly and my heart, my poor fucking heart, squeezed with joy. She cares. That fed hopes into my veins.

“You worried about me, shortcake?” The term of endearment slipped past my lips before I could stop myself. If it affected her, she didn’t show it.

No. My girl simply rolled her eyes and kept dabbing on my knuckles. “You’re talented on the field. It would suck if you couldn’t keep being great out there because you hit some dumbass douchebag.”

“He disrespected you,” I growled and winced when she rubbed ice over my knuckles.

“And?” Her eyes rose. “They were just words, Dylan.”

“Yeah, and I won’t have him, or anyone, talk to you like that.”

“You make it sound like you care,” Mattie mumbled under her breath, but I didn’t miss it.

“Hey,” I said, but she didn’t look at me. Her attention was laser-focused on my hand.

“Shortcake, look at me.”

“Why?” she asked, not doing as she was told.

My sweet little morsel had a bratty side, and fuck me, every part of me loved it. Loved that she felt safe enough to let me see it.

“Because I said so,” I quickly answered, knowing very well how much of a dick it made me sound like. When she didn’t do my bidding, my free hand moved between us. The pads of my fingers lifted her chin, and when our eyes locked, I knew there would be no one else for me. She was it. She was mine. Forever.

“Want to have dinner with me?” I found myself stupidly asking. Her eyes widened, and then these cute little lines formed between her brows before she started to laugh. “Are you serious right now?”

“Like a heart attack,” I answered, not picking up on her vibes.

“No.” She shook her head, and I blinked.

“Excuse me?” I asked, not believing she turned me down. Could I have read the vibes between us completely wrong?

“No.” She shook her head. My girl stepped back, and I sat straighter.

“No?” I repeated, my confusion clear in my voice.

“Why would I say yes? Why would I agree to go out with you?”

“Matt—“

“You haven’t bothered to say hi to me all summer. Not out on the field or when I’ve seen you around.”

“Matt—“

“Not to mention the way you acted all asshole after finals. It was like you couldn’t get away from me fast enough! Like you were afraid to be seen with me.”

“Shortcake—“

“And what’s with the nickname? Did you forget my name already? Is that what you do to keep all the girls on your roster from getting mixed up?” Jesus Christ, I was sick in the head for loving the fire in her eyes. “I don’t know what that was all about”—she waved towards the house— “in there, and right now with the whole no one is going to disrespect you,” she mimicked my deep voice. “But the facts are that when someone shows you who they are, you should believe them, and you, sir”—she poked my chest, but I’d had enough.

She was a magnificent sight to behold all riled up, but I needed to clear up this little misunderstanding, and fast. I stood and reached for her quickly, wrapping my arm around her waist and pulling her into me.

“What are you doin?—“

“Shut it,” I clipped.

“Excuse me?!” Her eyes widened, and I smiled. “Why are you smiling?”

“Because you’re fucking sexy as hell when you get pissed. But then again, you’re always sexy as fuck.”

“Dylan—“

“I fucked up,” I blurted. “I got nervous with you after finals. But let me tell you something. I wasn’t running away. I don’t think I could ever run away from you,” I admitted, and relief hit me when her body relaxed in my arms before I was done talking.

“Dyl—“

“And I’m sorry if I’ve been...” I hesitated, trying to figure out how the hell to explain to her what I’d been going through. I had a feeling if I admitted I’d been following her and stalking her, it wouldn’t go over well. “I’ve been in my head the last couple of weeks, but you need to know something.”

“What?” She scowled at me, but I could tell from the way her eyes dipped to my mouth and then back up to my eyes that she was just holding on to being pissed to make a point.

“I like you. I like you a whole fucking bunch. I’ve liked you from the moment you walked into that damn class and suddenly, a course I really didn’t fucking wanna take became a hell of a lot more interesting.”

“What?”

“I’m sorry for being quiet these last couple of weeks. And I’m sorry about that scene inside. He called you...” I shook my head and exhaled roughly, trying to let go of how pissed Tucker had made me. “That wasn’t cool, but I shouldn’t have punched him and freaked you out and make you scared of me.”

“I’m not scared of you,” she scoffed. “You were a jerk after finals... I thought...”

“What?”

“It doesn’t matter.” The hell it didn’t, but I wouldn’t push. Not yet.

“Give me one more chance,” I pleaded. My eyes never wavered from hers. “I don’t deserve it, and I know you could do a hell of a lot better than a guy like me, Mattie. But I swear if you give me one chance, I will show you I can be the kind of guy who would feel privileged to stand by your side,” I laid out, not knowing what she would say, but I needed her to know what my intentions were.

She blinked and swallowed. I watched, fully captivated as her pretty tongue poked out and glided over her plump top lip. “Dylan.” My name sounded so damn good on her lips.

“Please,” I whispered, then leaned closer. I wasn’t above playing dirty. My nose brushed against hers. “Please give me one more chance.”

“One chance?”

“Dinner. Tomorrow.”

“I don’t know.” She sighed, pulling her head back, but not enough to where I didn’t feel the soft exhale of her breath on my mouth. My dick was fucking throbbing behind my jeans. Everything inside of me yelled at me to kiss her. Convince her one way or another to give us a chance.

But I didn’t give in.

Not yet.

“Okay,” she whispered, shocking the hell out of me. She stepped away and out of my

hold. “Tomorrow. Dinner.” Her legs wobbled, and I reached for her before she slipped. I grinned at her as overwhelming joy flowed through me.

“Can I walk you home?” I asked.

If I got to walk her home, that would mean I could tell her I lived in the same building. She opened her mouth, but before she said something, a girl called out her name.

“Mattie!” We turned to watch a petite girl rush towards us. One who looked at me like she didn’t know what to make of me before her attention landed on my girl. “Oh my god! Are you okay? Someone just told me some football guy was a jerk to you!”

“I’m fine, Becks.”

“I’m the worst! I should have hurried back. I got talking to someone and?—“

“Becks, I’m good. I promise,” Mattie said, stepping away from my hold. “Becks, this is Dylan?—“

“Macabee,” she finished, and I frowned. She didn’t look familiar, but that didn’t mean I might not have hooked up with her in the past. My first year at U of D, I had been a bit of a player. “You’re a decent cornerback.” She shrugged, and I nodded.

“Thanks,” I mumbled. My hand reached for Mattie, something her friend didn’t miss. Just like that, the vibe around us changed. Becks smiled, and her dark eyes bounced between us.

“It looks like I might have interrupted something.”

“You didn’t. I was—“ Mattie started to say, but I cut her off.

“I just offered Mattie to walk her home. If you want, I can walk the two of you?—“

“Oh no! If you’re okay, Mattie, do you mind if I stay a little longer? Lee from the guy’s soccer team is here, and we were kinda vibing.”

“Oh, okay. Umm...” Mattie looked at her friend. “You sure?”

“You sure you’re okay with this guy?” Becks pointed at me, and my shortcake giggled.

“He’s harmless,” she teased.

I shoved my free hand into the front pocket of my pants. Harmless. If she only knew just how harmless I wasn’t, there was no way she would let me hold her hand, much less walk her home.

CHAPTER 9

MATTIE

Dylan was holding my hand.

Dylan is holding my hand! Almost like he knew I was thinking about the way our fingers tangled together, he squeezed, and I smiled up at him.

“You want a coffee?” He pointed with his free hand, and my eyes moved to the little coffee cart.

“Sure,” I agreed and then chewed on my bottom lip.

“What’s that look about?” he asked, not attempting to hide his curiosity.

“Would you judge me if I didn’t get coffee but maybe a hot chocolate?”

“Not at all.”

“It’s just... if I have coffee right now, I’ll stay up till three in the morning,” I shared.

“You say that like it’s a bad thing. I mean, we could have a movie night,” he suggested, and my feet stopped moving. He stopped, too, and watched me for a moment.

Not only was the seriously hot cornerback holding my hand after beating up someone

who had called me fat, and asked me out for the next day, but it almost seemed like he was trying to come up with any reason that wouldn't let the night end.

"You want to have a movie night?" I asked, and his gaze dropped to my lips.

"Yeah," he answered, his tone rough and almost gravel like. My body trembled as butterflies took flight in my stomach.

I'd dreamt of this.

I was halfway tempted to pinch myself to make sure I was awake. That's when everything he had spouted off when we argued came back to me. Every single word. The passion in his voice. The seriousness. Especially the whole him liking me thing. I like you a lot.

"You really like me?" I asked. Without a blink of hesitation, Dylan's arm reached for my waist and pulled me right to him. His body was hard and muscled and warm. My hand rested just above his abs. His body was insane. I might not have seen him without a shirt, but there was no denying the power and muscles that lay beneath my palm, especially when they twitched under my touch.

"Shortcake, I like you. A lot." His Adam's apple bobbed, and I found myself smiling.

"I feel like I walked into the Twilight Zone," I admitted like a complete nerd and winced. Not that I had time to dwell on it when his big body shook with rich laughter.

"No Twilight Zone here, baby. I promise." The sincerity in his voice made me want to believe him.

"Why do you call me shortcake?" I blurted, curiosity getting the better of me.

Dylan leaned in lower, and everything inside of me froze. Suddenly, not that there were that many people around us, everything and everyone around us disappeared. White heat rushed through me. Anticipation pumped heavily in my blood. His full lips skimmed the shell of my ear, and my skin flared up with goose flesh.

“You smell like the most amazing strawberry shortcake ever made, Mattie. Like strawberries and cream with vanilla,” he rasped, and when his lips touched my ear, a soft moan escaped past my lips.

“I don’t have a roommate,” I found myself saying, and he pulled back. Not a lot, just enough to rest his forehead on mine.

“Mattie.” I had no idea how he made my name sound like a warning and a prayer all at the same time, but it made my insides feel all gooey.

“For the movie night,” I quickly kept talking. “I mean, if you’re serious about coffee and a movie night.”

“Baby, anything that gets me more time with you, I’m good with.”

“Okay,” I breathed. “I like that.” There was a softness to his gaze that made my brain get all fuzzy and loose lipped. “I don’t think I’m ready for the night to end,” I stupidly admitted.

I should have been playing it cool.

He had ignored me after finals, after a semester of mixed signals. Now suddenly, what felt like out of nowhere, there he was, declaring he liked me at a frat party. Fighting for my honor. I should have been smarter. I had never been a playing games kinda girl. Not that I had a whole bunch of experience, but I was just me. Always. No matter what, what you saw was what you got with me.

“I’m know I’m not.” He smiled before brushing his lips on my cheek and pulling away.

Excitement prickled at the back of my neck as disappointment struck my gut that he hadn’t kissed me. On the lips, that was. But I didn’t have a whole bunch of time to dwell on it when Dylan’s hand took mine. There was something about the simple connection that left me feeling content and light. Like I was exactly where I was supposed to be.

True to his word, he led us straight to the coffee cart, where we each ordered a large coffee with milk and sugar and an almond croissant. We sat down on a bench and people watched while we ate and drank.

It was nice. More than nice, it was perfect. I’d never felt the way I did around a guy like I did with Dylan.

“This was good,” he shared, popping the last bite of the croissant into his mouth. “You sure you don’t want another?” he offered. My eyes widened and my lips twitched. I hadn’t even finished half yet.

“I’m good.”

“I eat a lot.” He shrugged, and I glanced down at the baked good on my lap and squirmed. I eat a lot. My dirty mind went to all sorts of places, and I had a feeling he could see it written all over my face. But like a gentleman, he didn’t bring it up.

“How’s practice going?” I asked, trying to make small talk and not think about how much he ate and he didn’t.

Especially since the wet heat pooled between my thighs. An image of him on his knees popped into my head. One I couldn’t blink away. Both of us exactly where we

were, sitting on a bench, but without anyone around the campus cloaked in darkness. He'd slip off the bench and kneel in front of me, his muscular body shifting between my legs, so big and tall he might be able to block me from anyone's view. I'd swallow hard, my sex throbbing for his attention. His big paw-like hands would touch the top of my thighs and leave trails of heat in their wake. His fingers would slowly, almost like the sweetest torture, move up the skirt of my dress, and without saying a word, his eyes would demand for me to open my thighs.

And I would.

Oh god, I didn't think there would be anything I'd deny him when it came to him toying with my body. Dylan would place my feet on the edges of the bench, and when he'd look down, he'd tsk at me for going bare beneath my sundress. His blue green eyes would darken like the deepest pools of island waters before licking his lips.

"Mattie?" he called, and I shook my head. Oh god! I spaced out into a dirty fantasy.

"What?" I squeaked, and his brow rose.

"I was saying practice has been good." I nodded, trying to pay attention while I ignored the heat on my face. He shrugged. "I mean, it's hard with a new quarterback, but I think the rookie will be ready by the time the season starts." I smiled. If he could tell what I had been thinking about, he didn't let on.

"I think you're right. He doesn't look bad; he just needs to grow more of a relationship with the guys on the team," I added. I had been watching every practice I could. Not because of Dylan but because I genuinely loved the sport.

"It doesn't help that he just transferred and is new. I don't think he has a crew of friends yet."

“That’s so weird, isn’t it? A player like that in that kind of position, here of all places, not knowing anyone.”

“I don’t know. Bridges and Goodwin know what they’re doing, so hopefully, it will work out. Especially coming off such a great season.” They were state champions.

“I’m sure it will be okay. How’s your internship? How do you like working with the trainers?”

“I like it. I feel right at home there. I mean, some of the players?—“

“Tucker?”

“He’s just a jerk.” I shrugged off.

“Has he bothered you before?” I knew I couldn’t lie.

“Not really.”

“What does that mean?”

“He was in to get his calf iced and...” I sighed. “He got kinda pissy when I didn’t fawn over him trying to talk to me,” I shared quietly and watched his jaw clench so tightly it was almost painful. My hand moved up between us and stroked his face. “Relax, you’re going to hurt yourself,” I whispered. I loved the way he leaned into my touch.

“Mattie—“

“I promise, I’m fine. I just worry... You won’t get in trouble, will you?” My hands dropped from his face down to my lap.

“It doesn’t matter.”

“It matters to me,” I responded. My hand sought his before I could stop myself, and his eyes turned warmer than I had ever seen them.

“You worried about me, Mattie?”

“Yes,” I admitted.

“Don’t be.” His hand squeezed mine. “If word gets to the coaches, which I doubt, but if it does, they will want to have a meeting and then probably a shitty practice, but I’ll be fine.”

“And Tucker?”

“Tucker is already on thin ice with them,” Dylan shared. It didn’t surprise me from everything I had seen out on the field. “He’s been half-assing it out on the field, and this wouldn’t be the first fight he’s been in at a party. It’s not even the third. The guy just knows how to shove his foot into his mouth.”

“I don’t know what to say about that.”

“You don’t need to say anything. Life is all about choices and the consequences of those choices.”

“Wow, I didn’t know you were a philosophy major.” He chuckled at my little jab.

“Ready to go?” I nodded.

“Yeah. You still sure you want to have a movie night?”

“More than ever.” He winked and smiled, even though my eyes dipped to the ground. We stood, and I patted down the swishy skirt of my dress.

“Where we going?” he asked.

“I’m living in the Remington Building.”

“Really?” His brow rose and his lips quirked up. “That’s where I live.”

“Small world,” I muttered because I felt a little breathless when he took hold of my hand. I looked down at our hands. Our fingers were intertwined, and my heart fluttered in the most beautiful way. I liked how our hands looked connected. My tanned skin and his lighter yet sun-kissed one from years outside playing a lifetime of football.

“What floor are you on?” he asked, and when I shared I was on the third, he stopped and laughed.

“Are you serious?” His voice was a little deeper, but something in his eyes flashed, something I couldn’t really make out.

“Yeah, why?” I asked, my head tilted

“We live on the same floor, shortcake.” I smiled. Small world.

We started to walk right over, and never, not until a week later, would I realize that he had ordered my coffee exactly how I loved it without asking.

CHAPTER 10

MATTIE

My knee bounced with nerves as he settled down, sitting right next to me on my bed.

My laptop was on a nightstand he had pulled over, and 10 Things I Hate About You started to play. I breathed out slowly, trying to calm the excited nerves that were wreaking havoc throughout my body.

It was a little after eleven. It wasn't late, but it was hardly early. We had already watched The Avengers and were on to the next movie because neither of us wanted him to leave. We hadn't done anything but sit by each other. He hadn't even held my hand since we stepped foot into my dorm.

His hands resting on his thick muscular thighs, and when I glanced at him, he seemed almost relaxed. Just chilling, sitting and watching the movie next to me. He wasn't being pushy or anything, but having a guy in my room, regardless of the building, was not my norm.

Not only that, but this wasn't just any guy.

It was Dylan!

The one guy who had piqued my interest in a way I couldn't explain. He shifted, and when his thigh touched mine, my eyes moved to his. "Sorry," he rasped and cleared his throat. "You getting tired?"

“No,” I breathed, swaying in a little closer to him.

“That’s good,” he mumbled. His eyes dropped to my mouth, and I felt that gaze like a caress. My lips tingled for his. I wanted him to kiss me more than I wanted to take my next breath. “Mattie.” He used that warning prayer tone again that made me go all warm.

“Yeah?” I breathed, noticing just how close we were. His hand slipped behind me as we both shifted closer.

“Mattie, can I kiss you?” he rasped. His words took a moment for my poor brain to process. “Tell me to stop. Please, beautiful.”

“Please don’t,” I whispered, getting lost in the blue-green haze of his gaze.

“Don’t kiss you?” Dylan froze and slightly jerked away.

It was only two inches of space, but the fact he was ready to give me what he thought I wanted, even if it cost him, made something inside of me go all warm and mushy. It made the trust I had started to have in him during the last semester keep growing.

“No.” Confusion filled his eyes, and I quickly corrected it. “Please don’t stop and kiss me. I think... I think I’ve been waiting for this forever,” I admitted. Probably giving away too much, but I was too deep in the bubble we were in to stop and second-guess myself.

“Fuck,” he cursed, almost to himself, before his big hand rose between us. His touch was so light, so tender, my eyes shut. Emotions were getting the better of me. My lips parted as my breathing grew heavier. Warmer. I soaked in every sensation of his palm on my cheek. The rough callouses, the heat of his skin on mine. It made me crave so much more.

“Mattie,” he rasped, “I kiss you right now?—“

“Please,” I cut him off, all but begging for him to touch his lips to mine. I squirmed while I waited. When he didn’t kiss me, my eyes opened. I watched his lock with mine. The intensity in that blue-green gaze made my nipples tighten even more, rubbing against the lace material of the bra I had chosen to wear under my sundress.

“Do you not want to?” I asked breathily, and he groaned as his head jerked back and forth.

“That’s not it.” He swallowed. The movement made my eyes lock on his thickly corded neck. I pressed my lips together to stop myself from doing something crazy like lean forward and lick him there.

“I kiss you, Mattie, you’re mine.” His voice sounded rich and deep. His nose brushed against mine almost as softly as he stroked the apple of my cheek. If he kisses me, I’ll be his? I am more than okay with that.

“I kiss you, shortcake, you’re mine,” he repeated in the most possessive tone I’d ever heard. One that if it came from anyone else, I wouldn’t have appreciated it, but it coming from Dylan sounded sinfully delicious and so right I found myself leaning closer to him. “And you need to know, I don’t share,” he roughly added.

My chest rose and fell, and my thighs pressed together. “What if I don’t share, either?” I watched his lips that had been set in a stern line tilt upward.

“I wouldn’t mind that at fucking all. Not when you’re the only one I want,” he admitted. An overwhelming need washed through me. Is this really happening?

He must have felt the same way. Before I knew it, the two of us closed the small amount of space between us, but even before our lips touched, he held still, holding

my face in his hand, silently giving me a moment to change my mind.

“Dylan,” I gasped.

“Baby, I’m trying to be a good guy here,” he gruffly mumbled. His hooded eyes focused on my mouth. “I take that pretty pout of yours, I find out how you taste, I know I won’t be able to stop.” He sounded so tortured.

If I hadn’t been so damn needy, I would have asked what he meant.

“You are,” I whined. “Please,” I asked again, hardly recognizing myself. All I knew was that being this close to Dylan, in my bedroom, made me ache for so much more.

The sound he made, a deep growl that was almost animalistic, made a bigger mess of my panties. Time felt like it slowed down and rushed by at the same time. His hold on my face tightened, and I lost the ability to breathe. His thumb stroked the side of my face, and my eyes fluttered shut as he moved in just that little bit that separated is.

When his lips touched mine, everything else, even my name, faded from my brain. Those first few moments were simply a pressing of our mouths. Our lips danced over one another. Sweet and innocent. Slow. Completely the opposite of how I thought he’d kiss but not any less beautiful.

Dylan’s fingers slid into my hair, and when he tilted my face the way he wanted, he didn’t hesitate in deepening the kiss. His tongue, warm and thick, skimmed the edges of my lips. I trembled, parting my lips, giving him access to my mouth.

Wet and rough.

His tongue dove into my mouth, and my hands gripped the material of the shirt he wore. I clung to him, giving him everything his mouth wordlessly demanded. It was

beautiful. Intense and passionate. Wet and deep. He tasted like coffee and almond croissant mixed with the mint I had offered him when we got to my dorm. Great thinking ahead! a little voice in my head cheered. That little voice disappeared when his free hand wrapped around my waist, and he pulled me onto his lap. I gasped against his mouth when I straddled him, my thighs going over his.

“Dylan.” I swallowed, my fingers pressed into the muscles. I hovered right above him, not exactly pressing my core to his thickness, just hovering there. Mostly because of inexperience and not knowing what I was supposed to do.

The skirt of my dress skimmed the back of my thighs, making me feel so empty. “Sit on my lap, baby girl,” he ordered, almost like he knew I needed the instruction.

“Oh god,” I cried as I dropped down slowly. My eyes opened when I felt him. “You’re hard,” I blurted out, and he groaned.

“I’m always hard when it comes to you,” he admitted. His hands on my hips tightened their grip, and something came over me. I pressed my front to his, putting us flush against one another, so close I doubted a sheet of paper fit between us. My lips touched the edge of his jaw.

“That’s not true. It can’t be,” I whispered, making my way back to his lips.

“Fuck,” he cursed. “You have no idea. Every damn day sitting next to you all semester. It was heaven and hell.”

“Dylan.” I had so many questions floating through my head, but I didn’t bother asking. Later, that little voice in my head whispered. Much later, it repeated just before my lips found his again.

This time, I was the one who was demanding and Dylan, being Dylan, gave it to me.

He let me lick and nip. Our teeth scraped and tongues dueled while my hands played with his hair. It was short and soft. I tugged at the ends, loving the sounds he made.

He flipped me over onto my back. My body bounced once before his covered mine, his big strong body between my widespread thighs. My hair splayed around my pillow, and I looked up at him.

“This is like a dream I’ve had.” My hands lifted to hold his face, and there was something in his gaze, like he was fighting something.

“Baby—“

“I like how you feel on top of me,” I admitted before lifting my head to touch my mouth to his.

“Baby girl,” his voice rumbled. My sex clenched at the term of endearment, and something else floated through my mind. I loved the way he felt on top of me. How thick and strong his body was. The way he touched me. Possessive yet tender. There was something I wanted to call him, something I was pretty sure if I said out loud would freak him out. Or make him laugh.

“I’d love to know what that pretty little head of yours is thinking right now.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” I rasped, my throat suddenly dry. He leaned down, pressing his body completely against mine, giving me his weight.

“I’m going to crush you.” He started to pull away, but I wrapped my arms around him and hooked my legs over the small of his back, pressing his sex closer to mine.

“Please don’t. I like it I like this,” I shared in a breathy whine.

“Baby,” he growled. He was sweet for trying to go slow and not want to rush me. It made me fall harder for him. He was being chivalrous and gentlemanly. Better than any Prince Charming I had ever read about. He was a king.

A daddy.

The term had never been something that called me. It had always been something I assumed would suite an older man. But even though Dylan was only three months older, it didn’t stop the term from bouncing in my head. I looked at him, licking my lips. Daddy. It fit him. Daddy. Oh yeah, it fit him. I lifted and rolled my hips against him.

“Please,” I whispered, and another deep sound vibrated through him.

“Shortcake,” he growled, almost like he was hurting. I dropped down, thankful once again for having worn a sundress to the party. My panty-covered pussy dragged against his thick almost pulsing bulge.

“Ohmygod,” I whimpered with pleasure. “You feel so good, Da-Dylan,” I quickly corrected.

His hands guided my hips as I rolled against him back and forth. Softly. Lovingly. All while our lips hover one another, sharing our breath. Making the need inside of me grow further, the ache build higher and higher. I’d heard of dry humping, and again, I worried my inexperience was going to show. But if he didn’t like something, Dylan didn’t say a word.

“Look at you,” he rasped. “Fuck, I can feel how hot you are for me. Is your pretty little kitty nice and wet for me, Mattie?”

“Da-Dylan.” His nose flared and his lips parted, touching mine. We kissed as the

moment built higher. He pulled away, and his forehead pressed against mine.

“Yeah, you are. Such a good girl. Just for me.” I nodded because I was completely his. I shouldn’t have let things get carried away so quickly, but I couldn’t get myself to think about it, much less regret it.

“Fuck.” His Adam’s apple bobbed. “I can feel how badly that little kitty needs more attention, doesn’t it.”

“Honey,” I gasped. One of his big rough hands dropped from my hip to grip my ass cheek and squeezed.

“Ohmygod,” I gasped. My body never stopped rolling and grinding against his. The tightening inside of me started. My hips rubbed against him with desperation. “I think...” my voice squeaked and my eyes hooded. I tried to keep my gaze connected with his. I loved the way he watched me. Intense. His body almost taut on top of me. He reminded me of a stretched rubber band, ready to snap.

“Come for me, shortcake. Come for daddy,” he gritted through his teeth. Everything inside me warmed at him calling himself that. I didn’t get much time to think about how right it sounded when he thrust up to make his bulge press harder against me.

“Daddy!” I gasped, letting the name tumble past my lips just as I saw colorful fireworks go off behind my eyes. My body quaked and my head thrashed back, but I didn’t need to worry about falling. Not when his strong arms held me to him while wave after wave of euphoric pleasure pulsed through my body.

His mouth latched onto my neck, and a deep animalistic sound echoed against the walls of my dorm. He sucked and bit, and I wouldn’t be even a little surprised if he’d leave a hickey behind.

“Mattie.” My name sounded violent and rough. So damn sexy, my pussy clenched.

I might have come hard and beautifully, but it didn’t mean that deep-rooted empty feeling inside of me went away. But almost like he knew I needed more, he pushed against me again. My legs spread wider to make more room for him, my legs hooked around his middle and my hands clung to his shoulders.

“Fuck, look at you.” His mouth went back to mine.

Somewhere between a blur of kisses and nips, he pulled his shirt off. His mouth left mine before moving to my neck down to my collarbone. What felt like every nerve ending from my head to my toes had come alive.

Daddy’s hands explored my body. Calloused palms leaving nothing but need and heat in their wake. First at the sides of my torso, somehow not tickling me, before they traveled lower. Down to my hips and then thighs, making their descent underneath the skirt of my dress.

“Jesus, shortcake, you’re so soft. So soft, so much softer than I thought you could be,” he praised. I felt dizzy with lust and something else.

Something so big I was afraid to name.

There was no way I could be feeling what I thought I felt when he touched me and talked to me, could I? No! It was too soon, too fast. This was just hormones and desire.

“Dyl,” I cried out, squirming under him. I didn’t still until the tips of his fingers touched the ruined gusset of my panties.

“Fuck.” he cursed, his jaw clenched. Those beautiful blue-green eyes of his flared

with heat. “You’re soaked.” His voice sounded deeper than before. “These little panties are ruined, aren’t they?” His chest pressed tightly against mine, his breathing completely off.

“Please,” I whispered so softly, yet it felt like it echoed against the walls. “Please,” I repeated, not sure what I was asking for, but I knew he’d give me what I needed. I had no idea how I knew that or where this crazy trust was coming from, but it was like all my walls had come tumbling down when it came to being with him.

Dylan made me feel safe and seen. Loved.

“I’ll give you exactly what this pretty kitty is asking for, shortcake,” he promised, and I knew he would.

His mouth trailed down to my neck, to the swells of my breasts, before he tugged the front of my dress including the cups of my bra down. “Fucking hell,” he rasped. “Look at these pretty tits.” I couldn’t even take a breath before his mouth latched onto one nipple and my back arched off the mattress.

“Daddy,” I pleaded, letting my hand dig into his soft hair. He moved his mouth to give the other side attention while his hand moved up and cupped the breast he had just left.

“Taste so good, Mattie. You’re going to be the end of me. I don’t think I’ll ever get enough of you.” He suckled on me again. “Jesus. I knew you would taste like strawberries. Strawberries and cream and honey. “

“Please—“

“Daddy,” he cut me off. The demand was clear in his voice. His eyes locked with mine. “Call me daddy,” he ordered, and I squirmed beneath him.

“It shouldn’t sound so hot.” My thoughts slipped past my lips.

“It doesn’t matter what it should or shouldn’t sound like. If it fits us, who cares about anything else?”

“Us?” I repeated, and he nodded, his face moving to my sternum, where he placed open-mouthed kisses.

“Us,” he repeated. “I told you”—his eyes moved up and connected with mine— “I warned you what would happen if I kissed you.” He peppered more kisses. “I told you, you would be mine. Only mine.”

“Like a relationship?” How the hell was this real life? Didn’t guys our age run away from the R word?

“Like forever,” he growled, and before I could string two words together, he moved.

God, the man was fast.

Way faster than I thought a guy his size could ever be. One moment he was kissing the space between my breasts, his hands cupping both breasts, and the next he was between my thighs, pushing them apart. I let him, and within the next moment, I felt his breath there .

“Ohmy!” I gasped, my head digging into the pillow.

His mouth touched my pussy, and my eyes fluttered shut as I tried to absorb every single sensation. “So sweet,” he murmured, lavishing attention on my most intimate places even though there was a barrier of cotton superheating his from my flesh. “So fucking perfect. Just like I knew you would be. Look at you.” He panted. “So mine.”

Without fumbling, his fingers pulled the material to the side, and then his mouth was on me. I whimpered and squirmed, but his arm simply locked onto my waist and held me in place. Never taking his mouth off me while he licked around my clit before pulling it between his lips. My ass bucked off the mattress and my hands clenched his hair.

“Mouth,” he warned before moving his mouth just a bit lower. His tongue dipped into my entrance. I loved how full he made me feel. How the burn of the way his digits stretched me mingled with the wet heat of his mouth. Nothing, not one thing had ever felt as close to what he was making me feel.

“Oh shit, Daddy! Daddy! I... ohmygod!” I cursed. “Please, oh please, don’t stop.”

“I couldn’t stop. Not now, not ever. You’re mine, Mattie Fuentes,” he vowed. Dylan’s free hand moved down and between my legs. My mouth parted when not one but two of his fingers started to find their way inside of me.

“Yes,” I hissed, bucking into his touch and his mouth. “More! Oh yes! More!” I begged. I had no idea who this girl was, talking dirty and unashamedly asking for more.

I’d has sex twice in my life. Both had been okay but nothing more than one-time hook-ups in the backseat of their cars. The first had been a friend whom I’d messed around with mostly because I wanted to see what the hype was about sex. The second had been my one and only time on dating apps.

Both times had left me underwhelmed.

Nothing like what was happening with Dylan.

He hadn’t fucked me yet, but what we had done so far had been so much better than

anything I could have ever imagined. Before I knew, before I was ready, I was coming all over again, but this time on his mouth while his fingers stroked the spongy part deep inside of me.

“Daddy!” I yelped, breathless from the bliss he made me feel. His tongue and fingers slowed down, but he didn’t take them away. He kept licking me, bringing my body back to the edge.

“I need more. I need you, please, Daddy.”

“Not yet.” He took his mouth off my pussy and moved to my thighs. His gentle kisses soothed me. My eyelids became heavy as I soaked in every kiss I felt. He kissed my shoulders before righting the front of my dress and cuddling his front to my back.

“What about you?” I asked, trying to stifle a yawn. Now that my body was so relaxed, I felt like my bones were made of gelatin.

“That was for me,” he whispered against the shell of my ear.

“But—“

“Trust me, shortcake. I got so much out of that.”

“But you haven’t... you’re still—“ I started to say, pressing my ass against his front, more than aware of the hard situation he was sporting.

“Mattie,” he warned.

“You didn’t, though.” I glanced over my shoulder.

“I did,” he shared. His eyes never wavered from mine. “You’re still hard,” I

unnecessarily pointed out.

“Maybe, but I did. Twice. Right into my pants.” My eyes widened and I blinked. Without thinking about it, my hand, with a mind of its own, started to move closer to his cock, but his hand took my wrist and he shook his head.

“Rest,” he ordered.

“But—“ He shot me a look that had me changing what I was going to say. “I mean, do you want to change? Or, umm, wash up?” My face started to heat up, and he grinned at me.

“Hell no. I don’t want to be anywhere but right here with you.” He pressed his lips against my temple. We spooned. “Sleep, beautiful.”

“Are you going to stay?” I asked sleepily.

“Would that be okay with you?” If I had been paying attention instead of enjoying the warm and fuzzy bubble I was in, I would have heard the edge to his tone.

“That’s perfect,” I whispered, letting my heart rest right on my sleeve, unaware that he would only take it in his hands and keep it for the rest of our lives.

CHAPTER 11

DYLAN

I was in her room, on her bed, holding her curvy, sleeping body against mine. I literally had everything I ever wanted in my arms. And I couldn't sleep.

Everything I could ever want, everything I could ever need, was in my arms. My entire world. She shifted, moving in her sleep, only to rest her face on my chest. Just like that, my heart clenched. She was so damn perfect. Her pretty pink lips parted, and I couldn't even get myself to blink. Afraid of missing a moment. An expression. A smile.

My hands stroked her hair, and she snuggled deeper. Almost like she couldn't seem to get close enough, hooking her thick, beautiful, incredibly soft thigh over my leg. I held her tighter, and my eyes shut. I soaked in the feeling of her pressed close.

Fuck, she feels good in my arms.

I liked lying in bed with her, even if we were on what felt like the world's smallest bed. I didn't mind. That only meant I could have her closer to me. I breathed in the scent of her hair, and it filled my lungs, making my mouth water.

I'd eaten her. Touched her. Pushed my fingers inside of her entrance. I couldn't believe how tight and wet she was.

For me. Only me, the thing inside of me growled. It was possessive of her. Greedy.

My lips quirked up as I thought about how good she tasted. I was a sick fuck.

The need to taste her, to smell her again, washed over me and hit hard. I looked at how soundly she slept. So damn peacefully. Only because she has no idea of the kind of man she invited into her bed. The kind of man who had been crazy obsessed with her. One who had followed her, overstepped his boundaries, and had breached moments she thought were private to her. One who had done that and more and had no plans whatsoever of stopping.

I wondered if she would mind me rolling her to her back and eating her again. How long would it take for her to wake up as I licked the heaven between her lips? Would I be able to latch on her pretty clit before she woke up? Would she ask me to stop or beg daddy for him to keep licking her?

I brought my fingers up to my nose and breathed in. A smile grew on my face. I could still catch her scent there. Sweet and tangy and so damn addicting. Mine, the voice growled inside my head. My mouth watered for another taste. I dropped my hand and glanced down at her. She is mine. Only mine . I breathed in and exhaled slowly before shutting my eyes. I would have bet big money there was no way id knock out, but I surprised myself as I held on to my woman and actually drifted off to sleep.

It could have been two hours or two minutes, I wasn't sure. But something stirred me awake. When my eyes opened, I kept my body still, trying to figure out what had woken me. Just then, I felt it. The tips of Mattie's fingers stroked my chest, moving their way through the slight dusting of dark chest hair. My eyes dipped lower to get a better view of her. Still tucked to my side, her leg tossed over my hip. I watched my shortcake stroke my skin, drawing featherlight circles of all sizes on my flesh. Fuck. Her touch had my dick waking up, getting harder than it had been while I'd rested. Her little doodles might as well have been inked on my skin.

I couldn't believe it. She was awake and petting me.

My girl was awake and touching me. Willingly.

Her head moved, and when her eyes connected with mine, they widened, and her body stilled. “Sorry,” her whispered apology drew my brows together. “Did I wake you?” The dulcet tone of her voice in the darkness of the room made my dick leak precum.

“No,” I rasped, my voice heavy with sleep. “What’s the matter?” I asked. Ignoring my throbbing hard-on, I didn’t like the fact that she wasn’t sleeping. She needed the rest, and as her daddy, I needed to make sure she got it.

“Nothing.” She half-smiled, but I could see the guarded way her eyes didn’t fully meet mine.

“Baby, talk to me,” I urged in the darkness. My hand rose between us to stroke the apples of her cheek. The thing inside of me wanted to pound on my chest like a fucking animal with the way she leaned into my caress.

“It’s nothing. I just think I’m not used to sleeping with anyone, if that makes sense?”

“Good,” I muttered. It made me a bastard, but I liked the hint of inexperience. I liked the idea of her learning and exploring things with me and only me. “But you’re gonna have to get used to this with me. I don’t think I will be able to sleep without you now.

“Is that right?” Her lips twitched, and this time, the smile that graced her face reached her eyes. The cutest little lines formed at the edges of her beautiful blue gaze.

“Very, shortcake.” My tongue swiped my lower lip as my eyes dropped to her mouth.

“You sound pretty sure of yourself,” she sassed, and I fucking loved it. It was one of the many things I had missed since I stupidly put space between us.

What the hell had I been thinking? Had I actually thought I could avoid finding myself in her bed? That I wouldn't find a way to be here and stay here until my last breath? I didn't miss the way her eyes glittered teasingly.

"You have no idea of just how sure I am about you and me and us, sweetness," I drawled slowly before surprising her.

I flipped her so she could straddle me. I loved the way her eyes flashed with heat. Mattie leaned over me, her dark hair cascaded around us, blocking everything else from view and making it so it felt like we were the only two people left on Earth.

"You're hard," she whispered adorably, as if I wouldn't have noticed that. "Again."

"I told you I am always like that when I'm around you. Fuck, Mattie, I probably shouldn't admit this, but I'm like this even when you're not." She bit down on that puffy, pretty bottom lip of hers.

"Please," she said softly, and my dick jerked. Almost like the fucking monster was trying to get closer to her.

"Please what, shortcake?" The term of endearment sounded scratchy in my ears.

"Please let me make you feel good," she whispered so sweetly I had no idea how the hell I would tell her no. Then don't, the animal inside me roared. I wanted to let him take over, to let her do whatever she fucking wanted. But I wanted her to know I wanted more than sex.

"Mattie," I groaned, pressing my lips to her temple, "You have no idea." I swallowed, my Adam's apple bobbing heavily. "You have no idea just how good you make me feel. You made me come in my pants like some teenager with a hair trigger. By eating you," I confessed. Losing my load the way I had had felt crazy. It was like my

entire body had been too amped up and needed a release. One that had made me see spots I'd come so hard.

"But you're hard," she repeated. Her eyes searched mine, and I knew she was going to say something I wasn't going to like before she said it. "Do you not want me to touch you?" The vulnerability was clear in her voice. An animalistic sound escaped from me, and my hands dug into her hair.

"How could you even think that?" My voice was rougher than I intended.

"But—"

"No buts." I pressed the pads of my fingers against her lips.

My eyes dropped to that mouth. That pouty, full-lipped mouth. Fuck, that mouth was perfect. I licked my own lips as I watched my fingers pull down on her bottom lip and back on it. Mattie's lips parted, and before either of us knew what we were doing, she pulled my thumb between her lips and sucked. The feeling shot straight through me, making my cock throb and ache for so much more. The shred of control, of decency, started to snap.

"Baby," I groaned. Her eyes widened, and then I saw it. A naughty, sneaky little smile. My sweet shortcake had a bratty side. One I was more than happy to explore. "You keep sucking daddy's thumb like that, he's going to give you something bigger to put between those perfect lips."

She didn't pop the digit out of her mouth. No, my little tempting morsel sucked on my thumb harder, pulling it between her lips. The suction shot through me, straight to my balls as they started to draw up tight. "Fuck, Mattie," I rumbled as my free hand, stroked the line of her spine.

“Please,” she whispered around my thumb, and I knew we were long past the line of no return.

“Fine,” I gritted, and she let go of my thumb with a pop. She crawled off my lap and moved to my right side. When I glanced at her, Mattie watched me, waiting for me to undo my pants, and something came over me.

“You want it?” I asked, shocked at the tone of my voice. She nodded, and my dick leaked. Fuck, she looked so happy at the idea of taking my dick. She didn’t even have to suck it for me. I was pretty sure if she touched it, stroked it once, I’d be going off like a damn bottle rocket. Just the thought had me setting my hands at my sides and resting my head against the wall.

“Take me out, baby,” I muttered, breathing in through my nose and exhaling slowly through my mouth. “Take daddy out of his pants.” My chest rose and fell heavily. Almost like I couldn’t figure out how to breathe when she scurried about and her hands undid the button of my pants and slowly unzipped me. My cock sprung out, and she looked at it with her eyes wide and greedy, the heat of her hand next to my cock but not touching it. The little minx looked up at me with an innocent blue-eyed gaze.

“What now?” she asked breathily, and my nose flared.

“You telling me you’ve never sucked a dick before?” She blinked at my crude words. Then slowly shook her head. I could see it even in the darkness that cloaked the room; the only light was a slight sliver of moonlight that filtered through from the slight crack in the curtains in her room.

“Is that okay? I mean, you might not—” I wasn’t going to let her finish that fucking sentence.

“Lean down and kiss it,” I rasped. “Kiss the tip, lick it. There is nothing you could do I wouldn’t like, baby.”

“Are you sure?” she asked, and I didn’t miss the slight weariness in her eyes.

“Positive,” I rasped. Her eyes sparkled like I had given her some kind of treasure. She licked her lips, leaving them glossy before I lost sight of her.

My girl bent over me, and my brain went haywire with visual and sensation overload. Her ass curved up, and the tips of her fingers touched the underside of my shaft. So soft and warm, close enough for me to feel her breath on my dick. My toes curled, and a deep guttural sound escaped from me.

“Mattie,” I moaned the moment her lips lightly pressed against the crown of my cock. I watched with a hooded gaze as her little pink tongue poked out and she swiped the bead of fluid that had pearled on top.

“Fuck,” I panted, trying to keep still. My hands clenched the sheet below me in an attempt not to touch her. To not grip her hair and wrap it around my fist to push her pretty mouth down on my dick and have her deepthroat me.

She looked up at me, and our eyes connected right at the moment when those plush lips wrapped around the tip, and I didn’t see another thing. Nothing. I couldn’t. My eyes shut as I soaked in the feeling of her mouth. Taking me in an inch then two. Then her pretty, little tongue started to move, and I clenched the sheets even tighter.

My ass clenched as she took me. Licking my cock and then sucking it. Her mouth was heaven, and I was about to die. Right there. On her bed. She might not have had experience, but she was a fucking natural.

“Am I doing it right?” she asked, turning her head to look at me.

“Yes,” I said, my voice hoarse. She smiled, and I felt it at the base of my spine, and my damn heart. She chewed on her bottom lip as her gaze skated to my hands. “What is it, baby? What do you need?” I asked, and she blinked.

“Nothing, I just...” She chewed on that lip again, and I pulled her close to me, the tips of my fingers under her chin.

“What is it?”

“It’s just, I mean, I’ve never... but I mean, I’ve watched, and I was just wondering...” She shivered, and my brows drew together. Fucking hell, how was she this perfect? My balls drew tight with anticipation. “I’ve watched clips of this, and, well, I was wondering... your hands... you’re not touching me. Is there a reason?”

“Baby—”

“You sure I was doing it right?”

“Baby, you’re doing too damn well,” I admitted, not giving a shit about how much it made me sound like a one-pump chump.

“Really?” Her voice perked up, and she dropped her attention back to my dick. Her hand wrapped around my cock, and I glanced down.

“Shit,” I cursed, taking in the sight. She stroked me up and down. Her soft palm glided easily with the saliva from her mouth. “Mattie.”

“You made me feel good so many times. Please let me,” she whispered, and I nodded. Unclenching my hand, I stroked her hair, and she smiled up at me like I had just handed her the world instead of the other way around.

My shortcake leaned back down and went right back to giving my cock attention. My fingers stroked her soft hair as she bobbed her head up and down. Closing her mouth around me, she sucked on me, and my eyes felt like they were ready to cross.

“Shit,” I panted. I had no idea what she did, but her tongue rolled around me, sliding around my width. My breath shuttered. “Mattie,” I groaned, deeply. “Baby girl,” I growled.

“Mmm,” she moaned around my length. I pried my eyes open, and our gaze connected. Those blue eyes of hers drew me in, and I felt like my heart was about to explode. She was beautiful inside and out, and she was all mine. My hand moved down to her ass, and I gripped it tightly, making her lips part as she took me deeper. She gagged but didn’t stop her ministrations.

I couldn’t hold it anymore.

“Baby, I’m going to come. Fuck, babe, I’m going to—” I tried to warn her, but she took my words as encouragement.

She sucked and drew me in deeper. Her saliva coated my length, and I came hard. So fucking hard, I felt my soul leave my body and drop right back down. Her name was chanted heavily until I didn’t have breath left. I watched as she swallowed me, felt her take every drop I had to give, and like my very own greedy girl, her eyes sparkled with pride. The fucking cherry on the sundae of life was the way she licked her lips before dropping down to clean off my length.

There was no way that was real life.

I couldn’t believe it.

My beautiful, sweet girl was licking me clean. I couldn’t even remember my own

name in that moment. When she was done, she kissed her way up my stomach, up my chest before kneeling beside me. Her beautiful azure gaze never wavered from mine. I didn't hesitate to draw her back to kiss me. Deep and wet. Not giving a shit of the fact I could taste myself on her. Fuck, if anything, I enjoyed knowing she tasted like me. That she had me inside her body.

It was only a matter of time until I would get my come deep inside her and start to try and breed her.

CHAPTER 12

MATTIE

“Morning.” Dylan’s deep voice vibrated against my shoulder, and I turned to face him.

My eyes were still heavy with sleep, but just the sight of him, the feel of his body flushed up against mine, made the new day so much better. This close, there was no missing the small freckles on his face or the way his gaze seemed more green than blue this morning. There was a softness in his eyes that seemed to compete with their usual intensity.

“Good morning,” I whispered softly. He leaned down, and before I could worry about morning breath, his lips were on mine, and then I was on my back, opening my legs to make space for his body.

I liked the way he felt and how he fit. Like we were two puzzle pieces coming together. I really couldn’t wait to feel how we fit in other ways. His tongue swiped across my lips, and they parted to invite him in. Dylan’s tongue dueled with mine. I bit down on his top lip. The groan made me smile, and he pulled away, resting his forehead against mine.

“Tell me to stop.”

“What if I don’t want to?”

“Shortcake,” he panted. My hand moved from his face down to his shoulders, then to his muscular upper back.

“I can’t believe you’re real,” I whispered.

“Mattie—”

“You’re so hard. All muscle. All over.” I gasped. “Wow.” I couldn’t help but compliment him. He was beautiful. Like a real-life work of art. “You’re like a sculpture.”

“You’re killing me, baby,” he groaned, nipping at my lips.

“You feel so good,” I whimpered, rubbing my body against his. God, he felt good on top of me.

“Babe,” he groaned, his tone almost pained.

“Dylan, I want you,” I moaned. “Please, I want more.”

“I’m trying to show you that I want more than just your body,” he gritted through his teeth before his mouth dropped to my neck. I shifted, giving him access to more of me. “Tryin’ to prove to you I’m good enough that I deserve you.” After each word, he pressed a wet kiss to my skin.

“You’re sweet,” I said softly, and he lifted his head. “But I don’t need that.” I just needed him.

“You deserve it.”

“But—” Before I could finish my plea, he kissed me.

I'd expected him to do it hard and hungry, but he didn't. The kiss was slow, unrushed. Passion simmered just under the surface, but I knew this was something else. Something more than anything else I had ever experienced or thought possible. His hands slid under my dress, and before I knew it, it was up and over my head. His eyes dropped and soaked in the sight of my body. I would have thought being that exposed, that vulnerable, wouldn't have felt comfortable, but under his gaze, I felt myself melt into my bed. I wanted him to look at me. He stood and took my hand, lifting me out of bed. I shivered as the cooler morning air touched my overheated skin.

"You sure?" he asked, and I nodded. "I need the words, shortcake."

"Yes," I quickly answered, "Yes, I'm sure, Dylan." My legs felt wobbly under me, but somehow, I kept standing. His hands stroked my shoulders, and I leaned in closer, so close our chests touched and I wished I had taken the bra off.

"You want to stop at any moment, that's all you gotta tell me." God, he made it close to impossible not to fall in love with him. He was so sweet and caring. I loved that he didn't hesitate to tell me how he felt and how open he was.

"I know." And I did. I knew if I wanted to pump the brakes on this at any moment, he would be okay with it. He wouldn't hesitate, regardless of how much it cost him. Needing things to move along, I didn't think; I reached behind me, but he stopped me. He shook his head, and my eyes widened.

"Let me," he rasped. He reached and undid my bra. Our eyes connected and my breath shuddered. "You sure this is what you want?" His voice sounded scratchy. I could see the way taking his time, making sure we were on the same page, cost him. His muscles flexed under my gaze.

"Positive," I whispered. His hands glided up my arms, and then his fingers toyed with

the straps. “Dylan,” I breathed.

His touch was light and teasing. Slowly driving me insane. I needed more. Who knew undressing could feel like foreplay? Not me. Maybe because both times I’d had sex in the past, neither partner, nor I, had undressed completely.

“I got you,” he rumbled with promise in his voice. He pushed the straps down without looking, his eyes burning into mine. My bra fell to the floor and my chest rose and fell heavily. “I’ll always have you, Mattie. You’re mine, pretty girl.”

My body felt like it was on fire, in need of his touch. His blue-green gaze dropped to my neck and then my breasts. They turned molten, heating up in a way I hadn’t seen before.

“Jesus Christ. Look at you.” He swallowed, and his jaw clenched. “You’re so fucking beautiful.” His hands rose and cupped my breasts, his thumbs strumming each nipple.

“You’re wearing too much,” I whined, and I caught the slight twitch to his lips before I lost his hands.

I was completely captivated as I watched him hurry in a blur of movements to take his pants off. He kicked them and what looked like navy-blue boxer briefs off, too. Leaving him naked and me in only my panties. My eyes widened at the sight of him. Proud and hard and long. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. Dylan was huge.

“You’re so big.”

“Baby—” My gaze rose, and I blinked.

“There is no way you’ll fit.” I couldn’t hide the tinge of panic in my voice.

“Baby.” He pulled me close, and I moaned softly at the feeling of being skin to skin with him. I breathed in as I looked up at him, loving the way he smelled. Earthy and masculine.

“I’ll fit,” he vowed. “We were made for each other. No way we wouldn’t fit.”

“Daddy.”

“Fuck,” he cursed, then his mouth crashed down on mine before his lips moved to my neck and breasts.

Before I knew it, he was kneeling in front of me, and I watched as he pulled my panties down my hips, then my thighs, before the material pooled on the ground. He lifted each foot, kissing the top of each one as he helped me step out of them. He stood. Tall and strong and bare in front of me. He was so incredibly big, the size difference between us was crazy. Even with my curves, I felt small in front of him. Delicate. My hands rubbed his sternum before his covered mine. He lifted it up and kissed the tips of my fingers.

“We good, baby girl?”

“Yes,” I managed to whisper. His beautifully calloused hands grabbed my ass and picked me up. My legs automatically wrapped around his waist while my arms rounded his neck.

“Fucking hell, do you feel that? How we feel pressed close without anything between us? How damn good that is?” I nodded. His dick bumped my bottom, and I swear it made me even wetter.

“Dylan,” I gasped.

“That what you call me? Or is there something else you call me?” he goaded, somehow reading my mind. I loved how filthy we could get already. How in sync we were.

“Daddy,” I whispered, nudging my nose against his. I gasped when, with so much care, he dropped me on the bed. His body immediately covered mine. “Yes!” I hissed, holding his face. I leaned forward, and our lips fused together.

Almost like two souls finding one another in a new lifetime, we got lost in the moment. Our bodies aligned naturally, beautifully. His thickness slid between my pussy lips, sawing back and forth. My wetness made it easy for him to glide against me, bumping my clit and making the need in me grow.

“You feel so good, Daddy.”

“Fuck,” he cursed roughly. His forehead pressed against mine. “I’m not even inside your tight little pussy, and you’re soaking wet. This pretty little kitty is hungry for me, isn’t it?”

“Yes.” I nodded, my lips parted.

“Please, I need you, Daddy. I feel so empty,” I whined, not recognizing myself or the words that spilled past my lips. But the reaction I got from him was priceless.

“Goddamn it.” His teeth mashed together, making his beautiful jaw even more prominent. “Don’t you worry. Daddy’s going to take care of you,” he promised.

That’s when I felt him. He lined the thick crown of his cock up with my entrance, and my heart started to pound. “Relax, pretty girl. I promise it’s going to feel good. I’m gonna make you feel really fucking good.” He pushed inside, and I gasped. The intrusion of his thick dick had tears forming on the edges of my eyes, but I forced

myself to relax. To keep taking him. There was a slight pinch of pain, but for the most part, he felt good inside me.

Inch by inch, he left me feeling complete. Once he gave me every part of him, he held his body over mine, his arms trembling. My pussy clenched around his length, and I could see the sweat start to form at his temples.

“Shortcake, please tell me I didn’t hurt you. You feel incredible.”

“You didn’t.” And it was the truth. I moved a little, and his nose flared. His Adam’s apple bobbed heavily. “Daddy,” I whined. He made a deep sound that made me slicker. The back of my head pressed against my pillow. “I need you to move. Please.”

“I don’t want to hurt you.”

“You won’t.” I trusted him completely.

“My baby believes that, doesn’t she?” he panted. I watched a drop of sweat roll down, and all I wanted to do was lick it off. What was it about him? “She believes in her daddy?”

“Yes.”

“You trust me, don’t you?” Something was happening, but I was too overwhelmed by the feel of him. Not just inside me but all around me. Like everything that surrounded me was Daddy and only Daddy. And I freaking loved it.

I loved him.

I didn’t know how it was possible to fall like this, but I had.

“You know I do. You wouldn’t be here if I didn’t,” I answered completely honestly, probably stupid to let him see every corner of my soul the way I was, but I couldn’t do anything less. Something worked behind his eyes, something I didn’t get, but when his lips pressed to mine, and his hips started to work back and forth, I knew it was bigger. Dylan Maccabee wasn’t just fucking me. He was making love to me.

Slowly.

Taking his time. His thick length would pull out until only the tip was inside before pushing back completely.

“Daddy!” I moaned. Dylan whispered beautiful words against my lips while he kissed me. Telling me how beautiful I was. How I was his. How he would never let me go.

“Fuck,” he cursed, his lips against mine, our breaths combined. “I’m too damn close,” he warned. I smiled. I loved that I could get a big, beautiful man like Dylan that close to the edge so quickly.

“Me too,” I admitted, meeting him thrust for thrust. “More. Please,” I whined, shamelessly begging. “Daddy, don’t stop, please.”

“Fucking hell,” he growled, licking the side of my face, and I smiled. Loving the way his tongue felt on my skin, loving his mark on me. “You’re all mine, shortcake. All mine. No one, not ever, will know what this pretty, little pussy feels like.”

“Oh god!”

“Not god. Daddy,” he corrected. “Mattie daddy’s going to make you feel good.”

“Please, Daddy.”

“Greedy little kitty you have, shortcake. Fuck, I could die here. I don’t think I will ever get enough of this little pussy.”

“Yes!” I gasped.

“I’m going to fill this pussy once, twice, three times a day, and it still won’t be enough, will it?”

“Daddy!”

“Going to breed you, Mattie. Going to fill you with daddy’s baby batter and get you nice and round,” he promised, and my pussy had a mind of its own. It tightened, clenching around him. He hissed. “Your little cunt likes the sound of that. Knocking you up, making sure everyone knows you’re mine, that I put my baby in you.”

His dirty words were crazy. They should have had me pushing him off me, but for some reason, they were crazy hot. I held on to him, and before I knew it, I felt it. The first wave of my orgasm slammed through me while our hooded gazes connected.

“Daddy! Dylan!” I squeaked, then I lost sight of him.

His head fell forward, but his hips never stopped. Plowing back and forth, his thrusts became erratic, pounding into me in an almost punching way.

“Yes!” I hissed. “Daddy!” I cried out. Another wave hit, and when it did, he made the most animalistic sound I had ever heard. Warmth bloomed from the inside out, prolonging my own orgasm.

“Mattie. Mattie,” he groaned, pressing his lips against my skin and scraping his teeth along my flesh. My arms wrapped around his shoulders and my legs tightened around his waist, letting the heels of my feet rest against the small of his back. We stayed

that way long after our breathing returned to normal. By the time he slipped out and I felt his cum slide out of me, I was too sleepy to think straight and come to terms with what we had just done. Not only had we made love, but it had been completely and utterly unprotected.

CHAPTER 13

DYLAN

Two weeks.

Two fucking weeks of bliss and perfection.

Best time of my damn life so far, and fuck me, I hadn't been able to shake off this feeling of impending doom. Like at any moment, Mattie would put things together and figure out I had stalked her. That I kept following her around, watching her when she didn't know it. We might have been practically inseparable, but I still couldn't get the thing inside me to stop pushing to do things. To overstep one boundary after the next.

"Tackle!" the coaches shouted, and I shook my head, trying to bat away my Mattie-filled thoughts. We ran drills like a well-oiled machine. One after another, going after another, trying to hold each other off. Sweat dripped down my back.

"Water break!" one of the coaches shouted. I rolled my neck and felt someone bump into me. I hadn't expected it and stepped back.

"Watch it, Macabee," Tucker Pearson mumbled under his breath. My hands fisted at my sides, ready to push him back.

"Relax," Crank's voice sounded behind me, handing me my water bottle. "You can't let him get to you."

I had no idea how the hell our little fight at the party didn't spread to our coaching or admin staff; but they never caught wind of it. But Pearson had been trying to rile me up on the field, trying to get his retribution these last two weeks. "He's a fucking jerk." I exhaled. It hadn't been lost on me the way he tried to talk to Mattie when she watched practices. The way he headed to the trainer's room twice in the last two weeks.

"You can't let him get under your skin," Crank noted. I tried not to roll my eyes.

"Whatever." I swallowed, knowing Crank was just looking out for me.

"I'm serious. He's been pushing your buttons at practice for a reason. He wants you to hit him here." Crank wasn't wrong.

"And he'd deserve it."

"Hey!" Crank lifted his arms with innocence. "I never said otherwise. I agree with you, man. But witnesses? Coaches seeing that? They won't be able to turn the other cheek when his daddy's pricy lawyers come after you and try to get you kicked off the team." My jaw clenched.

"It would be worth it if I got at least one more shot in," I murmured and didn't miss Crank's deep chuckle.

"Again, agreed. But you've worked too hard to give up your shot at going pro."

"What about you?" I asked, turning to look at him, "You want the scouts to come back to look at you again?" I asked. Crank had had the chance to graduate but decided to change his major last minute. Or maybe that had been his plan all along? Who knew, but honestly, the way he scheduled things out, not to mention how damn smart the guy was, I wouldn't put it past him. The asshole just shrugged.

“Come on, we gotta get back out there again.” I sighed. I wasn’t completely surprised with the fact he didn’t share. All I knew was that one day, the medical field, or whatever damn field he chose, would be damn lucky to have him. But I had a feeling the NFL wouldn’t be having that privilege.

I started to run onto the field, my eyes searching for my shortcake like they usually did. I saw her standing with the trainer she worked with. Our eyes connected from a distance, and I winked at her. I didn’t miss the slight blush on the apples of her cheeks. A blush that faded away almost immediately when fucking Tucker Pearson headed over to them. I could tell by the way he sauntered over that he was doing it to piss me off. I stopped in my tracks and watched as he stood in front of Mattie, blocking my view of her pretty face. He looked over his shoulder with a shit-eating smirk, and I felt Crank’s hand clamp down on my shoulder

“Don’t.” Crank stopped me, and my hands fisted at my sides. “You need to clear your head,” he murmured for my ears only.

I tried to contain it as I watched Tucker talk to the trainer just as a coach called for her. The trainer looked torn, and Mattie must have said something because the trainer simply shrugged and my girl nodded before waving for the son of a bitch to follow her.

“What the fuck?” I muttered under my breath.

“Dyl,” Crank warned.

I knew he had good intentions.

He was trying to stop me from doing something stupid, but I couldn’t get the idea of that asshole alone with her out of my head. “She’s going to be fine. This is her job. He’s been seeing the trainer about his calf.”

“I don’t give a fuck,” I said. I didn’t like the idea of my shortcake being alone with the asshole. If he touched her, I’d kill him. I unhooked the chin strap from my helmet. Crank’s fingers dug deeper into my shoulder.

“You should.” I turned and glared at him. “You go after them, you’re going to lose your shit like you did at the party and with it your starting spot.” A muscle beneath my eye twitched, and I knew he didn’t miss it.

“If that were Libby going into the locker rooms alone, into one of the private trainer rooms, you really telling me you would just wait out here and not give a shit? You and I both know he’s a dipshit.”

“He’s trying to get a rise outta you,” Crank reminded me. I tore my helmet off my head and handed it to him.

“And if he’s treating her in any way that’s not respectful, he’s going to get one.” I turned, ignoring him calling my name or the fact I got some of the coaches’ attention.

I didn’t look back. I jogged towards the lockers hoping to god my girl was safe.

CHAPTER 14

MATTIE

“You can close the door, you know?” Tucker Pearson said with a hint of ickiness in his voice.

“No thank you.” I sighed. This guy was a piece of work. Sleazy with a capital S. I opened the drawers of the cabinet and glanced down.

I hated being here alone with him.

I’d hated how eerily empty the walk to the locker room and trainers’ rooms had been. It was like not one other soul was down here. I shook the thought away. I had to be a professional. I could handle this. I was being paranoid.

I took out what I would need to ice his calf again. He had told my boss it was still bothering him, but there was something about the way he had approached us that set me on edge. There had been an arrogance in his tone, and then there was the way he looked at me. Like I was a piece of meat he wanted to devour. Just the thought of having to be close to him, much less touch me, made my stomach turn.

“What’s your problem with me, Mattie? Why don’t you like me?”

“I don’t not like you. I’m just not interested,” I answered as politely and clearly as I could.

“Whoa! Not interested, huh? Who said I was? You’re not exactly my type, you know?” I rolled my eyes as I reached for the K tape my boss wanted me to put on him. “Is it because of Macabee? You know he’s not the hot shit everyone makes him out to be, right?”

“Tuck—”

“I’m serious,” he cut me off, and I rolled my eyes. “He has a roster a mile long.” The guy scoffed, and I closed my eyes. I knew that wasn’t true. Dylan was only with me. Time wise, he wouldn’t have any to spare. Plus, I trusted Dylan. We’d been inseparable the last two weeks. Everything was amazing. Not that we had time to go out on a date or anything, but we had been hanging out in my dorm like crazy. “

“But then again, maybe Fattie Mattie broke him?” he teased. My teeth mashed together so I wouldn’t call him an idiot. “That why he’s been following you around?”

“What?” I turned, and my eyes widened. Shit. I realized just how much I’d messed up trying to avoid him by getting the supplies and keeping my back to him. “What the hell are you doing?” I hissed, trying to make sense of what the hell I was seeing.

Tucker Pearson’s jersey was off, something that was completely unnecessary and inappropriate for what he needed done. Not only was he shirtless, but only his pads lay beneath. He had started to untie his uniform pants, and by the mediocre tenting in the front, it was obvious he was hard. He stepped forward slowly only to stop and look at me.

“You have great tits. I get why he follows you into the showers every night.” My brows bunched and his eyes darkened. “I thought it was because you two were fucking in there. You know, a quick hook-up. But by the look on your face right now, you didn’t know.”

“You’re lying,” I said softly, and the bastard had the audacity to laugh.

“I’m lying? Why don’t you ask him?” He shrugged before stepping back. I was about to breathe a sigh of relief when he simply reached and pushed the door shut. Though, he didn’t toss it hard enough and it didn’t close all the way. He noticed it, too, and smirked.

“Maybe you like being watched?” His eyes roamed up and down my body before he started to make his way towards me. “You an exhibitionist, Mat?” My back hit the cabinet of supplies behind me, and I winced. A shot of pain ran through me.

“Look, I don’t know what you think you are doing, but you need to back the hell off—“

“You know exactly what I’m doing,” he sneered. “Come on.” His hand moved to my hip, and I smacked it away.

“I’m not kidding, Tucker, back off.” I tried to push, but he didn’t budge. Not even an inch. The guy, as shitty of a football player as he was, was still solid and strong.

“You’re giving that pussy to Macabee, you can give it to me.” He got closer, and I tried to push him off again, but nothing. Why the hell didn’t I take some kind of self-defense class? I tried to wrack my brain for what to do in situations like this. I looked around at what was on top of the cabinet. Something, anything to use as a weapon, but all I had was a handful of sports wrap and plastic bags.

“Look, this isn’t funny.”

“I’m not trying to be funny, Fattie Mattie.” He laughed sardonically. “He follows you around.” He glared. “Everywhere you are, he’s there. Always. And you never seem to notice. You didn’t know that, did you?”

“That’s not true.”

“Before the party, too. To the showers. Your dorm. Fuck, even work.”

“You’re lying,” I whispered. My body shook slightly.

“Really?” he scoffed, running his fingers through my ponytail. Bile rushed up my throat when he wrapped it around his hand and tugged it back, pulling my head. “He does. You should ask him. Ask him if he sneaks into your dorm late at night when you’re sleeping or when you’re not there.”

“He’s never!” I defended. “He doesn’t even have a key!”

“You sure about that?” His head tilted, and he leaned down closer. “Ask him about his black phone.”

“His phone isn’t black,” I pointed out. He had a blue iPhone.

“Ask him about the black phone,” Tucker sneered. “Everyone thinks he’s so fucking great. He’s not the nice guy you think he is. He fucks everything, you know? You think you’re his one and only? Please.” He laughed evilly before he growled. Looking down at me with disgust as he pushed his dick against me.

“Back away, Tucker. This isn’t cool!” I gritted through my teeth. “You need to let go of me, right now or—“

“Or what?” he called me on my bluff. We both knew no matter how hard I tried, I wouldn’t be able to push him off. There was no one in the locker rooms. No one would hear me scream for help. “What are you going to do? No one is down here. Everyone is busy at practice,” he goaded.

“Stop it.”

“You don’t believe me.” His head dipped down, and I pressed my lips together, trying to get as far away as I could from him. I really didn’t want him to kiss me. Thankfully, he didn’t try. His nose skimmed my neck, and I whimpered with fear.

“Ask him about it,” he repeated. Before I could react, I heard it.

“What the fuck!” Dylan bellowed along with someone else. I heard footsteps rush in, and thankfully, Tucker was pulled away from me.

When I looked behind him, I saw not only Dylan there but my boss and Red Bridges, one of the coaches. “What the hell do you think you’re doing?” Coach Bridges screamed at Tucker, who looked like he was about to shit himself.

“Nothing! She came onto me and we were just—“ Dylan moved so fast I shut my eyes, sure that he was going to hit Tucker again. Instead, he hurried over to me and wrapped me in the safety of his arms, and my body sagged in his embrace.

He’d come. He’d saved me from Tucker.

He’s been following you.

Watching you in the showers.

Sneaking into your dorm room when you’re not there.

Tucker’s words bounced in my head, but I still held on to him. “Bridges, you have him?” my boss asked.

“Yeah,” the coach rumbled.

“You’re hurting me!” Tucker whined, but I didn’t look. I didn’t move from Dylan’s arms.

“Your dad is not going to be able to get you out of this one,” Red Bridges.

“Macabee,” my boss called, “let me see Mattie,” she urged him, but he didn’t move. His arms simply wrapped tighter around me. “Hun, I gotta make sure she’s okay.” That loosened his grip on me. “And if you don’t mind, Mat, let’s go ahead and write up an incident report right now, okay?”

“I want school police to be called, too,” Dylan growled at the top of my head but didn’t let me go.

“They will be,” Coach Bridges promised before shoving a complaining, arguing Tucker out.

“Macabee,” the trainer called, and he sighed. He pulled away, and I looked up at him. Ask him, Tuck’s voice whispered in my head. Ask him about his black phone.

“You okay?” His blue-green eyes searched mine, but I quickly looked down at the ground. Had Tucker been lying? He had to have been. Right?

“I’m fine,” I quickly answered, trying to get out of his arms. “I’m sorry. I just need a little space.” His brows bunched with obvious concern. I could tell he didn’t like my answer, but being the daddy he was, he gave me what I needed. Why are you still thinking about him in that way? I wondered to myself. He could have been stalking you this entire time!

The next two hours were a blur of questions and paperwork.

I had no idea how or why the three of them had rushed down to the trainers’ room the

way they had, but I was glad. While I gave my statement, the school police shared a couple of things about Tucker Pearson. It seemed I wasn't the only one he had ever cornered that way. Unfortunately for those others, no one had stopped him before it was too late. Somehow, those incident reports female students had reported had mysteriously been swept under the rug or blocked by his attorneys.

By the time I was done with everything, my boss offered to drive me home, but I shook my head, telling her I was okay walking back.

Not that I had to.

I wasn't surprised when I saw him standing there, his arms crossed over his massive chest while he was waiting.

Dylan stood just outside the conference room where I had been questioned and my statement had been taken. Dressed in gray joggers and a U of D blue shirt with his hair damp from a shower. When our eyes connected, something inside of me loosened up. He was exactly what my soul needed to look at.

Without saying a word, Dylan took a step forward, then stopped. Emotions got the better of me, and I blinked away tears. I knew exactly why he wasn't rushing towards me. I'd asked for space, and he was still giving it to me, respecting my needs above his.

Ask him about the black phone. I shook away the thought and ran towards him, slamming my front to his, but Dylan didn't seem to mind. His arms wrapped around me, and I felt so safe. Loved. Protected and cherished.

What if he has been watching you? Stalking you like Tucker said? I glanced up, and his hand cupped my face.

“You okay? What do you need?” Do I care if he has been doing all the things Tucker accused him of?

“I’m okay,” I whispered. My nose stung with unshed tears. “Can we go home?” He nodded, and before I knew what he was doing, he lifted me up like a groom would his bride.

“Dyl!” I squeaked. “What are you doing? You’re going to hurt yourself!” I hissed, looking around. If anyone was surprised by his antics, they didn’t show it. He tsked and pressed his lips against my temple.

“Shh, relax. Put your head on my shoulder and breathe. I got you,” he promised, and I knew he did. No matter what, I was safe with Dylan. He wouldn’t let anything happen to me, and today proved it. I was his, and he was mine.

Even if there was a possibility of him stalking me.

CHAPTER 15

DYLAN

For two days, I was keeping a close eye on Mattie.

Closer than usual.

After that mess with Tucker, she had been off. Quiet and deep in her head. Not that I blamed her. That fucker was lucky that Bridges had followed me in just as her boss went to go look for her.

I still couldn't believe what the asshole had tried to do. There was no missing the fact he had been half dressed, with his pants untied like he was ready to tear them off. If he had, I would have ripped off his dick and shoved it down his throat. Thankfully, we didn't have to worry about him any longer. He had not only been suspended, but the dick was behind bars, waiting, since bail hadn't been granted. It looked like Tucker's past caught up to him. Just the thought of what he had wanted to do to my shortcake, what he had intended to do, made me see red.

For my girl's sake, I didn't let my mind wander down that path too much.

But for the last two days, something else had been going on. Hell, I'd expected her to be quiet, but it was something more. Something my gut kept yelling at me about. There were moments when she would look at me in a way she hadn't done before. Almost like she was seeing me in a different light.

I'd asked her time and time again if she was okay, if we were okay, and she would just smile and say we were. Now I was in my bed waiting on pins and needles for her to text me. As if reading my mind from down the hall, my phone pinged.

My Shortcake: Hey, I was wondering if you would like to go to dinner? I'm just going to shower first, and we can go, if you would like to join me.

My nose flared. That obsessed possessive being inside of me rolled his neck. He had been harder and harder to temper down after what went down. She'd all but pushed me out of her dorm, telling me my roommates probably missed me with how I had been hovering over her. It still didn't stop me from sneaking into her place last night while she was sleeping. I'd knelt by her bed for almost two hours.

Just watching her sleep.

Listening to her breathe.

Taking pictures of her resting and dreaming about me.

Me: Of course, baby. See you at six.

I hit Send and stayed lying on my bed.

The ceiling fan whirled above me as I counted to a hundred. Then again. I fought the need to get up and head over, to wait for her in the shower to watch her. Fuck, I missed her. We hadn't slept together the night before, and I missed her. I missed holding her. Being in her space, having her eyes on me.

Still, I waited. Giving her time to get her things. I could see her, clear as day in my mind's eye. Walking around her dorm, grabbing her things and getting ready to head down to the showers.

The clock couldn't tick fast enough for me.

Especially when we weren't together.

After giving her ten minutes, I got up and ran my fingers through my hair. Something inside me tried to stop me, to not go, but I couldn't help it.

I missed her.

I hadn't taken her since the incident, but I'd cuddled with her, and we had made out. But my dick was fucking addicted to the snug warmth of her body, and I ached. I should have just jerked off in my room. But I didn't.

Instead, I grabbed the extra phone from where I kept all the pictures and videos I'd taken and made my way out of my place and down the hall. The entire time, a little voice told me to stop and go back, but I ignored it.

I glanced around the hall as I made my way towards the co-ed showers. They were empty, and I wasn't surprised there wasn't a single person out and about. People in this building were either at practice or hanging out somewhere, if they hadn't gone home for the summer. Come a couple of weeks, the halls would be busy with people constantly coming and going at all hours.

Something I didn't like to think about.

How the hell would I be able to sneak into her place when she finally had roommates? How the hell would I watch her shower? I breathed in as I carefully opened the door to the co-ed showers. That would be a problem for another day. I'd come up with different plans, but I couldn't exactly roll them into motion just yet. My top choice would be for her to move into my dorm or for us to rent an off-campus apartment. I just worried that we were too new and too fresh for me to suggest living

together. Would that scare her off? I shook the thought away, and relief washed over me as my dick started to harden beneath my gym shorts. The back shower, the one she preferred, was running.

And by the sound of the showers, we were in there alone.

Quietly, I walked over to the one and only stall being used. The air in the room was steamy. Almost like the water had been running for a while. Standing off to the side, I waited. My ears strained to hear her. To listen to the way the water sluiced down her curves. My body vibrated with unfurled need. The curtain was shut, not giving me a sliver of a peek. Every single one of my senses was on edge, every nerve ending on high alert. My heart felt like it was about to pound out of my chest. I needed to see her skin dripping wet and tinged with pink from the heat of the water more than I needed to fucking breathe. My hand rose, and I pushed the curtain slightly to the side. Not hard enough for her to notice but enough to where it would look like a natural movement.

But I hadn't done enough to see her lovely body under the cascading water. I tried again, and this time, I frowned. "What the hell?" I rumbled. The shower was empty. I pulled the curtain all the way and looked around the dry area only to see her caddy there. My heart already pounding rose to my throat and lodged there when I turned around to see her standing behind me. That look in her eyes, the one that felt like she wasn't sure who she was looking at, was back in her gaze.

"Mattie."

"It was true," she whispered.

"True?" I repeated. My voice sounded like gravel in my ears. My breathing was choppy as heat and sweat started to form at the back of my neck, and it had nothing to do with the rising temperature and humidity of the still running shower.

“Tucker said you’ve been watching me. Before the party.” That little fucking asshole. Shit, maybe Jason hadn’t been the only one to catch on to what I had been doing.

“Mattie—”

“How did you get a copy of my key?”

“I don—“

“Don’t lie to me,” she interrupted. Then she shocked the hell out of me. Her small, beautiful hand reached for mine, and our fingers tangled up together.

“If...” She swallowed hard, and her cute little chin rose until her blue eyes locked with mine. “If there is any chance for this, for you and me”—she pointed between us— “to work, no more lies.”

“Mattie.” I said her name like a prayer. I was ready to fall to my knees and beg her to forgive me, to tell her I wouldn’t do it again, but I knew in the pit of my gut and at the base of my heart we would both know I was lying.

“How did you get a copy of my key?” Shit, shit, shit! Not only had that fucker told her, he’d known all of it.

There was no turning back now.

My mind ran wild with crazy ideas of how to fix things.

She knows. That fucking bastard told her. She’d known or suspected something for the last two days. She had been looking at me differently. It hadn’t been in my head. She had been looking at me as if she had never seen me before because she was looking at me through clearer eyes. I wanted to kidnap her. Carry her out of there,

hide her away in my room, and tie her to my bed until she forgave me. Until she gave me a chance I sure as fuck didn't deserve.

She knows.

The only thing that gave me any kind of sense of faith was the fact that she hadn't called the cops on me. Fuck, she was holding my hand. If she had any kind of sense, she wouldn't be touching me. She wouldn't be looking at me like she still had faith in me.

And maybe that's why I answered honestly. Who was I kidding? I was incapable of lying to her beautiful face.

"I took yours when you were in the shower," I confessed. My tongue felt too thick for my mouth. She blinked, and something tightened inside of me tightened as the fear of losing her prickled through my whole body when she didn't react. Her expression was clear of emotions.

"Do you have a black phone?" My jaw clenched at her question. Jesus Christ! That fucking asshole seemed to have been paying close attention. Damn. I nodded, and she licked her lips.

"Can I see it?" she asked just above a whisper. I am fucked. Fucking hell, I am so damn royally fucked.

"Mattie—"

"Show it to me," she demanded sweetly.

With my free hand, I reached into the pocket of my gym shorts, pulled out the small older iPhone, and set it into her waiting palm. She looked up at me, and I spoke,

answering the silent question without her needing to say a word.

“Eleven, zero, one.” Her eyes widened, and it was the first time she seemed to actually look surprised.

“My birthday,” she said softly. My head jerked stiffly with a nod.

I watched as she one-handedly unlocked my phone, noting that despite confirming what I had been up to, her hands were unusually steady. Her eyes rose to mine, almost as if asking daddy for permission. Jesus, I was a sick fuck if I thought there was any chance of her still seeing me that way. I nodded again then lost her eyes.

She scrolled through the folders on my phone as if she couldn’t hear my heart beat so hard it was ready to leap out of my chest. Like she couldn’t tell my entire body was vibrating on what felt like pins and needles. I forced myself not to blink while she scrolled through the endless images I’d taken of her. As she watched the videos I’d taken of her while she slept and worked.

For a moment, I wondered if it was my imagination or if her breathing actually changed. Her lips parted and her eyes turned dreamy. Almost like she was turned on. Is she turned on? By the things I’ve done? Hope stirred hard inside me.

The front door to the co-ed showers opened, and her eyes connected with mine. Before I could ask her what she wanted to do, she pulled me into the shower that was still running and shut the curtain behind her.

“Sit,” she ordered, and my hand itched to spank her petty little ass, to tell her she wasn’t in charge, but I had to give her this. I sat down on the bench next her things, and she continued to go through my phone. When eyes rose and met mine, she looked almost confused.

“Why?” she finally asked in a hushed tone, breaking the deafening silence between us.

“Why?” I repeated, reaching for her, needing to have her closer to me even if it meant this would be the last time. Never. She’s ours, the voice in my head growled fiercely. Forever!

“Why me? Why... why all this, Dylan?” she asked quietly.

Her eyes searched mine, and I couldn’t help myself. I stood and walked towards her. Matching her step for step until her back touched the tiled wall and my body pressed against hers. My hands gripped her hips to keep her in place.

It was so fucking wrong.

I should have given her space, explained things clearly, calmly. But I couldn’t get myself to calm down. To breathe, much less think straight, without having her close to me.

“That’s daddy to you,” I growled. She bit down on her bottom lip.

That’s when it hit me.

She set me up.

My sweet little walking, breathing temptation knew exactly what she had been doing. Set me up to catch me red-handed. My eye twitched as I took in the sight of her.

I had no idea how the hell I’d missed it.

She wasn’t dressed in regular clothes or like she had been ready to do some kind of

stakeout. No. My sweet little shortcake was wearing that sexy robe and flip-flops. Like she had been dressed and ready to go straight into the shower. “Dyl—“

“What did I say?” Her eyes bounced to the shut curtain and her lips parted. I felt her pretty little nipples tighten against my chest. “Say it. They won’t hear you,” I drawled in a low tone.

“Daddy.” Her eyes hooded as I tucked my thigh between her legs.

“Good girl,” I praised. I leaned down, hovering my forehead over hers but not pressing them together. “One look at you, and I was a goner, Mattie. I’m not bullshitting here, either. You walked in, and it was like a fucking arrow shot right through me. I scooted down in hopes you would sit next to me. And, fucking hell, you could have tipped me over when you did.”

“Daddy.”

“I fell in love fast and hard, and I won’t lie. I tried to fight it,” I confessed. “I tried to save you from me.” I wasn’t able to hide the tortured tone in my voice. “Something came alive inside of me. Something that wanted you any way he could have you. I couldn’t stop. After finals—“ My voice cracked, and it was her who pressed her forehead to mine, wordlessly encouraging me to keep talking.

“After finals, I tried to put space between us. I wanted you too damn much, and I’ll be honest, I didn’t know if I had it in me to claim you.” Her eyes hooded at the use of the word, and even if she didn’t know it, her body pressed closer, like she enjoyed the idea of me doing just that.

Claim her. Own her. Breed her! the thing in me shouted, and as if needing to confirm she wanted just that, her hips rolled against my thigh. I knew by the wet warmth that she was naked under her terrycloth robe.

“I started following you. Then”—my Adam’s apple bobbed—“then, by accident, I saw you. In the hall when I went for a walk. Seeing you there coming out of your dorm, heading to the shower, snapped something inside me. Before I knew it, I was standing outside your shower peeking through the curtain to look at you.”

“But you did?” she asked, licking her lips, leaving them glossy and inviting.

“I did.” I nodded. “And I kept doing it. Every damn day, I would tell myself I wouldn’t, but being away from you was fucking killing me. I even took things,” I admitted.

I knew I was making my case worse, but fuck, I couldn’t help it. I needed her to know. I needed her to see the thing inside me that wouldn’t be sated.

“What kind of things?” My nose flared.

“Your panties. I stole a couple of pairs.” Her eyes widened but not with disgust. No. My girl liked this. A lot.

“What did you do with them?” she asked hoarsely.

“Oh, baby girl, I’ll show you exactly what I did with them.” She trembled in my arms, and I was done waiting. My hands skated from her hips to the front of her robe, and I pulled on the thin belt that held it shut.

“I love you, Mattie. I love you more than I thought was possible. I live and breathe for you, only you.”

“Dyl—“

“Do you know why Coach followed me into the trainers’ room?” I asked, my voice

unrecognizable in my ears.

“Why?” She pressed harder into me, her hips moving back and forth against me. Only the thin material of my gym shorts separated us.

“I saw you head towards the locker room, and I ran off the field. I followed you in and ignored everyone shouting for me to get back to practice.” My breathing felt unsteady. My body shook with uncontrollable need. “The idea of that dick being alone with you, of anyone being alone with you, made me see red.” I shook my head. “If I had walked in without Coach and your boss, I would have killed him. Not for only touching you but for breathing the same air as you.”

“Daddy,” she whimpered. That soft little daddy snapped the last bit of my control. I pulled the belt open, and my eyes feasted on the sight in front of me.

“Fuck,” I cursed before our eyes connected again. “Tell me to stop now. I don’t know if?—“

“Don’t,” she cut me off, shaking her head, nuzzling her nose against mine. “Don’t stop, please, Dylan.” Her hands rose to my face, and I closed my eyes. I trembled at her touch. “Please look at me, baby,” she urged softly, so damn sweetly it made my heart turn over inside my chest.

“Fuck. Fuck. Fuck,” I cursed, and she held my face tighter.

“Please.” That one word from her lips had my eyes opening and looking into the prettiest blue gaze to ever exist. Into the eyes of my forever.

“I love you, too, Dylan,” she said with an unshakable confidence. Her stare never wavered from mine. Everything ceased to exist for me in that moment. It was just her and me and the fucking future we would have.

“I don’t deserve you,” I rasped, and the thing inside me groaned. Stop trying to talk her out of this, he complained.

“You do. I fell in love with you, too. Maybe not that first moment, but I knew before the semester was over that all I could think about was you.”

“You really think you can be okay with how I’ve followed you? Watched you? Crossed boundaries?” I needed to shut the fuck up, but the tiny sliver of common decency inside me grabbed hold. I needed her to be sure. After this, after her telling me she loved me, there would be no going back. Not now. Not ever.

“I think with us, maybe there aren’t supposed to be any boundaries. Maybe that’s how we’re supposed to be? Because if I’m being honest, once I started thinking about Tucker’s accusations about what you had done”—her words clung to the wet air around us—“I liked the idea of you wanting me that much.”

“Mattie,” I growled, pressing my lips against hers before forcing myself to pull back.

She started to speak, and what she said undid me. It let the primal animal, demon-like thing inside of me loose in a way I knew I wouldn’t exist without a part of him inside of me.

“I was awake when you walked into my room last night,” she confessed, and my dick turned into granite. My balls drew up.

“You knew?” I panted, letting my hands skim her bare flesh. “You knew I snuck into your room and let me watch you?” I couldn’t catch my breath.

“Yes,” she confirmed, and it felt like fucking brain exploded.

Yes? She’d known I was there last night!

She pretended to sleep. I swallowed hard. That piece of information did it. I lifted her up, pressing her back against the tiled wall, but this space wouldn't do. Fuck no. I stepped back, holding her in my arms, and walked us right into the shower. Cold water pelted down on us, but it didn't cut the need flowing through our veins. It didn't dampen the heat on our overheated skin, either.

I pressed her back against the tiled shower and looked at her. The material of her robe quickly became soaked through, so the thin cottony fabric clung to the side of her tits and curves.

"Fucking hell, little girl. You knew," I rasped.

"I did." She nodded. Our lips crashed. Deep and wet. Hungry. No. Starving. We devoured one another before I pulled away just enough to speak.

"You love me?" I groaned when I felt her smile.

"With all my heart." She had no idea what her words were doing to me. Breaking me, shattering me into a million pieces only to come back together stronger and belonging to her and her alone.

"Fuck," I groaned, holding her against the wall with one arm.

Breed her! Claim her! Own her! the voice in my head chanted on repeat. I used my other hand to pull my shorts down to my thighs. My dick sprung out and bobbed between us.

"I'm going to take you, shortcake. It's going to be hard and rough, and I'm going to leave a thick creamy surprise inside of you," I promised filthily, and by the look on her face, she didn't mind whatsoever.

“Daddy,” she whispered, driving me crazy.

“I’m going to mark this pretty little neck, too.” My nose skimmed up and down the graceful line of her neck. “Leave it so anyone who dares to look at you knows you’re taken.” I thrust inside of her the second I lined myself up with her entrance, and she gasped a little too loudly.

“You’re going to have to be quiet,” I roughly rasped. “Daddy’s a jealous asshole, baby girl,” I rumbled against her mouth before my lips slammed against hers.

I swallowed every moan and whimper while my hips worked in and out of her body. The wet, tight clenching of her muscles felt too damn good. She was my very own heaven. I knew in my heart and soul I could never get enough of Mattie. I was a greedy bastard; all I wanted was a million lifetimes to spend with her and then some.

The water pelting down over us was nowhere close enough to cool us down. I used her like my very own little fuck doll. Leaving her mouth, I sucked on her neck. An overwhelming need to see my mark on her skin drove through me as I bounced her on my dick. I looked at her, and my pretty Mattie pressed her lips together, trying to stifle her sounds. For me. For her daddy. Fuck, she was perfection.

“Such a good girl for me,” I rasped, needing to praise her. She clenched her muscles around my length, and my head dipped back with how damn good it felt. “Such a good girl. Mine. You’re all mine,” I panted, and my eyes connected with hers just in time to see her nod.

I kissed her again, loving the way she whimpered against my lips. All too quickly, I could feel it. Her perfect little cunt started to tighten around me, pulling me even deeper, if that could be believed, and I couldn’t hold back my own release. Almost simultaneously, we crashed over the edge of bliss and came together. Ribbon after ribbon shot through me and deep inside her waiting pussy as our foreheads pressed

together. My head dropped to her shoulder as I tried to catch my breath. My sweet girl stroked the back of my neck, pressing me closer into her while her pussy kept milking my cock.

“Goddamn,” I rasped quietly and felt her body shake with gentle giggles. A dreamy look stayed on her pretty blue gaze.

“That was...” she started to say and then giggled again.

“It was,” I confirmed. We didn’t need to finish that sentence. We both knew how amazing it had been. I kissed her cheek, then the tip of her nose, then the other side of her face.

“I love you, Mattie,” I said, unable to stop saying the words that meant everything yet didn’t feel like enough.

“I love you, Dylan.” Jesus. She was going to unman me with how fucking sweet she was. And I couldn’t wait for a lifetime of that sugary goodness.

“Tell me you’re mine.”

“Only if that means you’re mine.” That’s my sweet, sassy shortcake.

“Oh, baby, I am yours. Completely. This thing between us? It’s forever. A game changer. You get what I’m saying?” I was worried I was pushing her too far, but being Mattie, she was perfect for me. The most beautiful smile painted on her face, and her eyes were sweet and kind when her hands reached up and cupped my face.

“I’m yours. All yours.”

“Fuck yeah, you are!” I kissed her softly before carefully slipping out of her body.

There was a softness in her eyes that made my cock want to wake back up.

I reached behind us and turned the water off. Shrugging the soaked robe off her body, I toweled her down, helping her with her clothes before righting my dripping shorts and tucking my dick back inside of them.

“What about you?” she asked. I was shirtless, and my gym shorts were soaked through.

“It’ll be fine.” I winked, taking her caddy and wet clothes with one hand and tangling our fingers with the other. “We’re going to my place,” I announced, and she didn’t argue. Thankfully, no one was in the hallway, not that I would have cared if anyone saw me dripping wet.

We walked in, and I was thankful none of my roommates were home. Wordlessly, in the most comfortable silence, I led her to my bedroom and straight to my bed.

Because having her in my space knowing she knew everything and still loved me, still wanted me in her life, only added to the need inside of me. Needless to say, it was hours before I ordered pizza and we had dinner only to stay up all night lost in one another.

And fuck me, it was a great way to get lost.

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MATTIE

I stretched and smiled. My body was sore in the most beautiful of ways. Quietly reminding me of the night before. I was tempted to lie back down on Dylan's side of the bed and snuggle into the pillow he used that smelled like him, but we had a lot to do.

"Why are you awake, little girl?" he asked, walking in with a tray. I grinned at him. I loved it when he woke up playful like this. I knew that edge in his voice, and my thighs pressed together.

Daddy is in a mood.

He was also freaking hot.

I still couldn't believe this was my life. Dylan was wearing navy boxer briefs and a smile. Every movement he made showed off the definition of every muscle throughout his body. He turned and set the tray on the top of our dresser that sat in front of our bed. And I couldn't decide what sight I liked better. The front of him or the back. His muscular ass and back muscles clenched and flexed. Our eyes connected in the mirror that hung above the dresser. Oh yeah, Daddy was definitely in a mood.

An eyebrow rose on my face as I looked at him wondering what he was up to. He turned, his hand adjusting the ever-growing length that had started to tent his boxers.

"I was going to bring you breakfast in bed, but turns out daddy's feeling hungry."

“Hungry, huh?” I pressed my lips together.

It was our last semester. Graduation was only a couple of days away. We were not only living together but in the family athletics building. We qualified because about a month after I had confronted him about stalking me, he had tricked me into marrying him. Just kidding. Not really tricked. I was more than a willing party.

“Hungry,” he repeated. “Get comfortable, little girl,” he ordered, pointing towards the back of the bed. I scurried back and waited.

I loved when Dylan got in this mood, and he got in it a lot. But I had a feeling I knew why it had been happening what felt like more often.

We were about to graduate. The draft was only a couple of weeks away, and we both knew he would get picked up. After the amazing season they had and his stats, there was no way he wouldn’t.

But not knowing bothered him.

A lot of things were up in the air, and big changes were coming. But the biggest one was one he had no idea about. I was pregnant. The timing wasn’t great with everything being so up in the air around us, but Dylan and I were good. More than good. We were seriously solid and happy. His blue-green gaze ate me up as I waited. He crossed his arms over his chest, making his biceps even bigger.

“Is there anything you wanna tell me, shortcake?” I tilted my head. There was no way he could know. Is there?

“Like what, Daddy?” I asked softly, almost innocently, knowing how much he enjoyed it when I did it.

“Anything.” His knee touched the mattress, but he didn’t move any closer.

“I need you,” I moaned, giving him a little smile. His eyes dropped to my breasts and lower before returning.

“Oh, you’re going to get me, baby. That is a definite. But first, you need to tell daddy what this is.” He uncrossed his arms and reached behind him. My eyes widened at what he held in his hand, and automatically, I chewed on my lower lip before sitting up.

“Dylan—“

“Nu-uh.” He shook his head. I didn’t like that I couldn’t read what he was thinking or feeling. “Are you pregnant?” he asked, still holding the positive pregnancy test between his fingers. I licked my lips and tried to swallow.

The moment I confirmed it, our life was going to change again. Don’t get me wrong, I was excited about starting a family with Dylan. We talked about it all the time. I was just worried about the timing. But even with all the worries and plans up in the air, I knew everything would be okay.

“Yes,” I whispered. His other knee hit the bed. The mattress groaned beneath his weight. Dylan moved closer, and my thighs spread to give him space.

“Come here.” In one seriously swift move, he had me straddling him, my thighs over his, our chests pressed close.

“Are you mad?” I asked. His manly brows bunched.

“Why would you think I’m mad? I’ve wanted to knock you up since the first time I took you.” I bit the inside of my lip.

“You just look upset,” I shared quietly, and his eyes softened. Little lines formed on the edges before he shook his head.

“No, baby. I’m not upset. Not even close. I can’t believe this is our life. I’m so fucking happy. Honestly? I’m scared.”

“You? Scared?” I repeated, completely shocked. “You’re never scared of anything. Daddy never gets scared.”

“I am. I’m scared of how happy I am. How…” His voice cracked.

That’s when I saw it.

The emotion in his eyes. The unshed tears he was trying to hold back. My arms wrapped around him and my face rested on his shoulders.

“Everything is going to be okay,” I reassured him and felt a rough chuckle burst from him just as his own arms locked around me so tightly it was almost hard to breathe. Almost.

“Fuck yeah, it is! Jesus, shortcake. You just keep giving me more and more.” My man’s voice gruffed against the top of my head, and my own tears slid down my face. His hand slipped between us, and his open palm rested on my abdomen.

“I bred you,” his voice rumbled with masculine almost primal satisfaction.

“You did,” I whispered back. It was crazy. We had been together less than a year, and we were married and about to start a family. But instead of the freak-you-out kind of crazy, it was just plain crazy beautiful.

“Fuck, how the hell did I get so lucky?” he asked, almost to himself, and I just breathed in his scent. It was familiar and masculine, and there was nowhere in the world I’d rather be than with him. No one in the world who I’d ever want to share in everyday ins and outs of life with.

Just Dylan.

Things hadn't changed between us. He was still obsessed with me. Following and watching, taking endless pictures on his secret black phone. But now I knew about it. I relished it. There wasn't a day that passed when he didn't tell me how he felt about me. How he couldn't get enough of me. Of us.

"I love you, Dylan."

"I love you, Mattie. I love you so damn much. I can't believe this is our life." He grinned, holding my face, and I laughed then sniffled. He wiped away the tears with the pads of his thumbs. "I love you so damn much, and I love our life and our little baby you're growing for us. I swear I will do anything you need. I'll be there. If I get drafted?—"

"When," I corrected, pulling away and staring into his eyes. "When you get drafted."

"I'll be there. No matter what." I knew what he was saying. When he was drafted, there would be a lot of traveling and practices, and he'd be crazy busy. But I wasn't worried. Dylan was a great partner and husband, and I knew in my heart that he would be a great dad.

"I know you will," I whispered before his lips touched mine and everything around us faded. In that moment, it was just the two of us. There was no tray of food waiting for us or the fact we had to be on campus for some of the senior activities. Just us. And damn, if that wasn't perfect on its own. Everything else was a beautiful extra.

Life was funny in a lot of ways.

It took you on highs and lows that in the moment, when you were living in them, you didn't know how life could get any better or worse. Like a rollercoaster where you never knew what was coming and all you could do was either brace or let go.

But when you had someone by your side, someone who clicked with you and helped you and supported you to be a better version of yourself, always there to help you reach your dreams, it didn't matter what was around the corner.

Because even in the bad times, as long as they had your back and you had theirs, life could be pretty amazing.

Just a little bit over year ago, I had stepped into a classroom, rushing in because I had been late after getting a flat tire. One I had no idea how the hell I would pay for to get a new one, not knowing that by getting there just at the right time, I would meet the love of my life.

A little over a year later, I was married, pregnant with my seriously handsome husband's baby, and about to graduate. So much of our life was ahead of us, and I couldn't wait to see what happened next!