



Stalking the Bride

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Category: Dark Erotica

Description: Belle. My dangerous obsession. Promised to another man.

As an ex-Marine, I swore to protect her. So then why am I spying on her when I'm off duty? Why am I stealing mementos from her home and sneaking into her bedroom while she sleeps?

Are these the acts of a sane man? Or the acts of a stalker?

Is my addiction to Belle driving me over the edge?

Belle is engaged to the man who hired me, but I know he's not the man for her. And if I'm to truly protect her, then I have one task ahead of me: stop Belle's wedding and claim her as my own.

Author's Note: Like Stalking His Prey, this is an over-the-top, insta-love, wonderfully smutty romance featuring an irresistible ex-Marine stalking the innocent heroine he's sworn to protect. If you want lots of steam, sweltering heat, and pure-escapism with fated romance and a fantastic HEA, this is the book for you!

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CONRAD

I have my sights trained on her as I watch from afar. My body is aching, straining to be close to her.

The glass of my sniper scope brings her beauty closer to me, blessing my retinas with every inch of her heavenly body as I obsess over her inches while she tries on her wedding dress, blissfully unaware of the fact that her every move is being surveilled.

I've cemented each delicious morsel of her body into my mind, from the hair she always tucks behind her ear, to the bountiful curve of her hips, to the dance of freckles across her chest which sit just above her pert cleavage.

Beauty can reach no higher heights than her.

Belle Hartley. Eighteen years old. My deadly addiction.

She'll be the end of me, I know it. And I'm okay with it.

I have eyes on her all day from nine to five. That's my job. Watching her off the clock is my one and only extracurricular activity.

Last night, she was hidden from my gaze while she spent time with her fiancé in the bedroom they will share after the wedding tomorrow. And I have never experienced such pain in my life.

Away from my eyes. Away from me ...

Furious jealousy stabs my chest like a flaming spear thrust through my heart by an angry god. I grind my teeth and groan at the blistering sensation, clenching my left hand into a fist which I pound into my leg, invoking enough physical pain to temporarily distract me from the emotional torment I feel when I think about what could have occurred in that bedroom with him while I was not there to protect her.

Protecting Belle is my job.

My one and only concern.

And as an ex-Marine working private security, I should have my shit together. But when I took this job, I had no idea I'd be guarding a goddess. Normally I'm guarding a politician, a CEO's family while he's out of country, protecting a diplomat's children. But this is different. This job was meant to be standard security for a high-profile wedding, Fitch Cooper of the wealthy Cooper dynasty, but when I set eyes on Belle, his bride-to-be, everything changed.

Observe and protect. Act when required. Never get emotionally attached to a subject.

That's what I'm hired to do, and that's what I'm great at.

Or I was...until now...

I'm supposed to be doing everything in my power to make sure Fitch and Belle's wedding goes off without a hitch, yet all I want to do is tear her fiancé apart with my bare hands. When he looks at her like she's already his possession, I can barely stop myself from grabbing my gun and ending him. It may sound like tough-guy talk, but I can back it up. I've killed when I was deployed overseas. I am a killer . And I wouldn't think twice about killing again if it meant protecting my angel.

Zero emotional attachment. No commitments.

That's what they teach you when you become a sniper.

And that came easily for me, especially after my ex cheated on me with my best friend the first week of my first deployment. I saw the deception in her e-mails to me, and when I confronted her, she admitted everything. She said she'd be gone when I got back, and she was. After that, I turned my back on females. On everyone. I became cold, a rock planet alone in the far-out blackness of space, orbiting no one. No connections. No emotions. Nothing.

Then Belle walked into my life and changed everything.

Now I'm like clay being reshaped by her delicate hands, twisting into something new.

My resolve is slipping. The iron will that made me one of the deadliest US snipers is cracking.

I'm no longer Belle's security...I'm her stalker...

I watch her at work, never letting her out of my sight. And after, when I'm technically off the clock, I go to the home where she still lives with her parents and spy on her with my scope from across the street. I break in late at night and lie at the foot of her bed and listen to her breathing, basking in her scent that soothes me like a mother's kiss.

Christ, I'm completely losing it.

Belle is engaged to the man who hired me. That should mean something. I should be professional. Do my job. Observe and protect. But I just can't help myself when every fiber in my body is screaming out in desperation for this girl. It's only been

three weeks since I was hired, but it only took two days for me to become her stalker...

If I ever let myself slip, forget my duty, my job, I'll lose complete control.

And that would destroy her.

Why? Because I'm broken. Scarred. Incapable of having a real relationship with a girl. And what does a busted-down jarhead like me have to offer Belle when she's marrying one of the wealthiest men in the country? In the world?

I know I can't give in. But that doesn't matter as I watch her through my lens while she undresses, causing my cock to pulse with unbounded excitement. I watch as her future maid assists her with the back of the dress, then leaves the room to give her some privacy.

If only she knew...

With a sharp tug, I pop the buttons on my jeans, releasing my throbbing cock. I spit on my hand and grip my hard shaft, working it slowly as Belle carefully slides out of the white dress, which leaves her standing there in a crystal blue lace bra and matching panties. Even with my close-up spy angle, that tiny piece of fabric still conceals her virgin cunt from me.

How do I know she's a virgin? Well, one of my little bugs told me that.

Two days into this job, I placed hidden microphones everywhere she spends time. Her house, her car, several rooms at the Cooper mansion. I listen in live when I can and scour the recordings when I get home, the sound of her voice getting me higher than any drug ever could.

One night, I heard her arguing with Fitch. He was trying to get into her pants, saying she owed it to him as he was her fiancé, but Belle told him that she wanted to wait until after the wedding. And boy did that make him mad.

What's the difference? he asked her. We're already fucking engaged! You're already mine!

Hearing him say that instantly wiped the smile off my face. I wanted to grab my gun, drive straight to him, and blow his pompous head off.

No one owns Belle.

No one but me.

Beads of sweat fall from my forehead and onto my lap as I watch her, my eyes locked on to every mouth-watering curve, every tender place to put my hands.

My cock pulses, and I slam my thigh again to drive down my arousal, but it doesn't work. I'm stiff as a board and about to go off any second. If I could only touch her...

She's passed me many times in the halls, sat beside me while I drove her home. But I've yet to actually put a hand on her. I doubt I would be able to handle it. Even the feeling of her soft skin on my callused hands would be so delicious, so enticing, that I would probably just blow a load right there in my pants.

I'm grunting now, twisting my palm over my spit-covered hard-on as Belle walks to her dresser and opens the bottom drawer. She bends over, and I see the sweet junction between her thighs and the sculpted curves of her ass, as if she's presenting her innocent mound to me like she knows I'm here. My jaw is clenched as I imagine sliding inside her tight channel, taking her roughly, letting out all my pent-up cravings on her.

Shit, I'm about to come—

And that's when my phone rings.

“Damn it!”

I glance down and see the name: Fitch Cooper. Technically I'm off the clock, but he's my client. I have to answer.

“Fitch,” I say, lifting my phone with my spit-covered hand. “W-what's up?”

“Get over to the house,” he barks with that authoritative tone so many wealthy people have. “We have an issue.”

I swallow hard and do my best to force my cock back into my pants, blasted with guilt as reality hits me like a crashing garbage truck. I'm supposed to be a professional, not some sick son of a bitch stalking and jerking off over the girl he's been hired to protect.

“What kind of issue?”

I open the glove box to stash my scope, and a cascade of photos waterfall out onto the floor. Pictures of Belle that I've taken over the last three weeks when she didn't know I was there. In her bedroom, tanning at the mansion, and even one topless photo of her back when she was changing but was turned away from me the entire time. There's a tiny hint of side-boob that still gets me hard as a rock. I can't imagine what effect a full-frontal would have on me.

Fitch shouts angrily at someone before replying. “A bomb threat was called in for the wedding tomorrow!”

The edges of my mouth twist up on their own. Even with all my military training, I can't stop the smile from taking over.

“Jesus, a bomb threat?” I ask, feigning ignorance.

“That's right. Now get your ass over here and do your job!”

Fitch angrily hangs up, and I let out a single laugh as I put the car into gear and pull out into the street.

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BELLE

A bomb threat? At the wedding?

Fitch tried reassuring me that these kind of security problems happen often with his family and that everything will be fine, but that did nothing to quell the terror that's gripping my chest.

I've been engaged for a month, under constant surveillance from a private security firm for the last three weeks, and yet I'm still terrified as I pull up to the Cooper mansion with the man assigned as my driver this evening. He looks tough and has a gun, but he's just not him.

Conrad...

I'd feel so much better if he was here.

The man who drives me home at night, who tests my drinks for drugs, who double-checks the security of my doors and sweeps all the rooms for bugging equipment. The man who bought me keychain-mace and showed me how to use it if any man tried to assault me. He might as well be my savior.

When I'm around him, the ground I walk on feels much more solid. And without him here, I feel lost. Vulnerable.

I've been doing my best not to let my feelings show, but when we pass in the hall or I sit beside him when he drives me home, that's when I feel safe. Like no harm can come to me.

Now as I'm escorted into the manor, I feel exposed. My skin is cold. I'm quivering as I'm taken into the lounge where Fitch is waiting. I see he's scared too but desperately trying to hide it. I try not to recoil as he wraps his arms around me and not let on that I'm revolted by the fact that we're going to be married.

Pretend you like him, Belle . That's what my parents say.

I grew up poor like you read about in books. Chewing through stale pasta, eating overcooked expired meat and lots and lots of dried noodles. When I was fourteen, my dad got his dream job as a paralegal for Fitch's father, Daniel. Don't ask me how, but he managed to convince Daniel that I would be a great match for his son. And like medieval times, tomorrow I'm being married off in an arranged marriage that I either go through with or my parents cut me off and throw me out on my ass.

One terrible family to the next.

"Everything will be okay," Fitch whispers into my ear, his voice quivering like a stalk of wheat in the wind.

I don't believe him.

The door opens, and Conrad strides into the lounge like a gladiator. My entire being relaxes. I instantly feel better. Relieved. Safe. Protected.

He is built like an Adonis, standing heads taller than his men, making him at least six-foot-four with broad shoulders, striated forearms, and the thick, callused hands of a working man. He's also mind-numbingly handsome. And not in a girly, pretty-boy

way either—like the recent wave of male movie stars—but in a classic way, with a chiseled jaw and knife-sharp cheekbones. Knowing he was a Marine just makes him that much hotter.

It's nearly impossible for me to hide my attraction from him, so I make it a point of simply trying to avert my eyes whenever I'm around him. I don't want to give him any ideas. After all, he's a seasoned veteran, hired to protect me. What would he want with an eighteen-year-old virgin who has zero experience with men?

The female staff all talk about how sexy he is. One of them even made a pass at him and was devastated when he immediately turned her down. I tried not to smile when I heard her screaming about it out back.

I want to rush over to him now and hurl myself into his massive arms, but that would be a major red flag. Not only to Fitch but to Conrad too. So I wait and inch slowly closer to him, like a moon being pulled by its planet's gravitational force.

"Don't be afraid, Belle," he says, fixing his cinder-gray eyes on me. "I'm sure this is nothing. I'll take care of it. You're safe."

I don't know why, but I'm nearly crying as I smile back at his stoic visage. "I know you'll protect me." I feel Fitch's jealous eyes on me and quickly correct myself. "Protect us."

He shifts his eyes to Fitch, and I feel a welling loss that nearly knocks me down. "Tell me about this threat," he says, firm and straight to the point.

Fitch has his hands on his hips, trying to look like he's in control. "It came in twenty minutes ago. I asked your tech guy to trace it, but he said it came from a burner phone—"

Conrad nods. “Untraceable. That’s typical in situations like this.”

His competence is alluring. I realize I’m still walking toward him, my feet moving on their own while my eyes are glued to his handsome face. Something I should not be feeling stirs between my thighs. I barely know this man. I’m set to be wed tomorrow. Yet he has me feeling on fire, alive, brimming with adventure.

“I bet it’s a prank.” Fitch shrugs, acting nonchalant, but his voice trembles with fear. “One of my exes trying to screw with me. I say we ramp up security tomorrow and go through with the wedding.”

The wedding. Simply hearing those words from his lips has me instantly feeling nauseous.

This last month has felt like a slow countdown to a metaphorical bomb exploding which will forever maim my future life. How ironic that the wedding might be postponed by an actual bomb threat.

“Impossible,” Conrad says, pinning his eyes back on me. “If this threat is real, you are in serious danger.”

“Why would someone want to do this?” My hands begin to shake, but Conrad moves in quickly and takes them in his, holding them with care and security.

“Is that a joke, Belle?” He shakes his head slightly in disbelief. “There are countless men who would love to have you—” He stops himself. His eyes flit back and forth as though he just snapped out of a trance and remembered where he was. His mind must really be on the problem at hand. He glances at Fitch then back at me. “There are countless weirdos who would call in a threat like this to stop your wedding.”

I’m suddenly cold, and I find myself wishing I could slip beneath his warm, muscled

arms. “You mean like...a stalker?”

Conrad nods. “I wouldn’t rule it out.”

“So what the hell do we do then?” Fitch barks. His resolve is breaking. He’s been raised with such privilege he’s never had to deal with anything himself.

“We postpone until my team has done a full sweep of the area.”

“Don’t tell me that,” Fitch groans in protest.

“In the meantime, I’m assigning a security detail to you. You’ll be taken to a safehouse.”

Fitch’s eyes widen, gawking back at Conrad like a little boy. “A safehouse? You’re joking.”

“Don’t worry,” Conrad replies firmly. “It’s five-star with all the amenities. Think of it as a mini-vacation.”

My stomach sinks. A mini-vacation locked up in a hotel with Fitch until this bomb threat is sorted out? Sounds more like pure torture to me.

“Belle, you’ll be taken to another site,” Conrad says, his voice warm like tea with honey.

“Another...site?” I whimper, confused. Conrad snaps his fingers, and three of his men enter the room and take their places beside Fitch like they’re protecting the president. “But why?”

Conrad’s Adam’s apple moves as he swallows hard. His jaw clenches tight. “So you

both are not a single target. We'll take multiple cars too. It will confuse anyone potentially tailing us."

An odd tension hangs in the air for a tense, silent moment. It's like we're all standing on a tightrope waiting for it to snap. Fitch is angrily running his hands through his hair, but Conrad simply stands there stalwart, like a broad statue.

The longer I look at him, the more the warm, tingling sensation between my legs grows and grows, embedding a yearning within my core that seems to draw me closer and closer to him. It's like the universe revolves around him. What an incredible man he must be to command all these other capable men who work for him.

"Where will you take her?" Fitch asks, but Conrad shakes his head and makes a quiet tsk-tsk noise with his lips against his teeth.

"I can't tell you," he replies firmly. "If you have a stalker, Belle, they may have bugged the manor. Until my team has swept for microphones, I can't say out loud where I'll be taking you."

The tickle between my legs expands, and I feel heat in the tips of my fingers. Don't blush. Don't blush! But it's too late. I feel the tingling in my cheeks and immediately turn away, pretending I have something in my eye to avoid being embarrassed by my reaction to Conrad's unyielding competence.

"Whoever this son of a bitch is, I want him found!" Fitch shouts, his voice nearly breaking as he rages. "So I can punish him personally!"

Luckily my back is turned to him so he can't see me scoff. If there's one thing I've learned about Fitch, it's that he likes to talk tough. He won't be punishing anyone. Now or ever.

I can't say the same about Conrad.

With a simple nod, his men professionally escort Fitch to the door. "Don't worry, Belle. This will all be over soon. I'll see to everything."

I nod. "It's okay, Fitch. I'm sure Conrad will protect me."

I'm almost sure I catch a glint of something in Conrad's eye as he glances over at me, but just as soon as it's there, it's gone.

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CONRAD

I can't believe I'm going through with this.

I called in the bomb threat, and now I'm swooping in like I'm her savior, acting noble and blameless like I'm simply protecting her as I've been hired to do.

Look at her, sitting beside me while we drive to the hotel where I'll be keeping her. So innocent. So naive. So blissfully unaware of the man I truly am. No idea that my only desire is to completely devour her, chain her to me, make it impossible for her to ever leave my side. I want to bury my mouth between her thighs and drag my tongue up her soaked channel to taste her sweet arousal. My body is begging for more of her scent, beyond the little I get from the pink pillowcase I stole from her room when I first was assigned to her.

My Marine training should have prevented all this manic behavior, but I completely lose control when it comes to Belle. Now I'm the man assigned to look after her while simultaneously being the most dangerous man she could be around.

If only she knew who I really was...the bad man I truly am.

What would she do then? Would she run?

"I appreciate you doing this," Belle says nervously, self-soothing by running her palms across her thighs, hidden from me by the sheer moss-green fabric of her yoga

pants. She's wearing a loose-fitting T-shirt as well that rises up every time she lifts her arms, revealing just a glimpse of her soft, flat tummy. I try to focus on driving, but I'm thickening rapidly as I sit beside her.

Belle. She's simply too much.

"Just doing my job," I assure her. My eyes are on the road, but I see her glancing over at me from her seat.

"And that's why you're doing this? Protecting me?"

What's she getting at? Does she not trust me? "What do you mean?"

"Never mind." She quickly averts her eyes and shifts awkwardly in her seat, causing her hips and the pert curve of her butt to twist toward me. I have to fight back the urge to slam on the brakes, grab her by the ass, and drag her into the back seat to have my way with her.

Somehow, I manage to maintain my composure, and we drive the rest of the way in silence. It's the only way I can control myself. Belle is simply irresistible, and while being this close to her has always been a painful struggle, today is even worse. When we finally arrive at the hotel, I leave the car with my men and take her up to the room myself.

"You will be safe here." I watch her as she looks around but remain by the door. I know if I get any closer, I won't be able to keep my hands off her.

She circles the room, and I drink in her curves like a man dying of thirst. She stops, nods, and looks back at me. "You've done this often."

Her statement catches me off guard. "Done what often?"

“Taken girls to fancy hotel rooms.” She flashes a cheeky grin at me, and my heart skips a beat. Christ, is she flirting with me? How crazy would that be? The one girl that’s completely off-limits has a crush on me, and it’s in my job description not to act on it.

What a cruel world we live in.

But then again, I’m the one who called in the bomb threat...I’m the one who’s been watching her from afar through my sniper scope, breaking into her house when the urge takes me and watching her from the shadows to stave off the insanity that threatens to consume me when she’s out of my sight.

“No. I don’t take girls to hotel rooms.”

“Oh, no? Not even Cynthia?”

“Cynthia? Who is—” And then it hits me. The girl working at the Cooper manor who practically threw herself at me one night before my shift ended. I told her I wasn’t interested, and she nearly had a manic breakdown.

Surely Belle knows this.

So what’s she getting at?

“Never mind.” Her cheeks are red as she spins around, causing her T-shirt to lift up, revealing the tender curves where her waist meets her womanly hips. I’m growing harder and harder beneath my jeans. Painfully hard as I watch her every move. My cock is throbbing, dying to be inside her. I can’t imagine just how incredible her tiny virgin cunt must feel. “It’s just that...Cynthia’s cute. Why wouldn’t you go out with her?”

I fight back a smile as Belle nervously eyes me for my reaction. She's teasing me, so I'm going to tease her right back.

"She is cute." I nod. Belle's eyes narrow, filling with darkness. "But she's full of herself and could never give me what I want."

I shouldn't be doing this.

I swore an oath to protect Belle—not to try and get in her pants. Oaths aren't meant to be broken. But she is steadily chipping away at me, and I fear there's nothing I can do to stop it.

Oh, angel. Send me away now. You have no idea what you're getting yourself into.

"And what is it that you want?" she asks.

Her eyes blaze with curiosity. I realize I'm moving toward her, step after step, without even meaning to. Her attraction has a hold on me. I simply can't help myself.

"I want a girl who will bend over for me whenever I want her," I growl, gnashing my teeth as my savage side finally begins to take over. Send me away, Belle. Send me away now before you're in too deep. It is my duty to obey you. "I want a girl who's okay with me knowing where she is at all times. Who knows if I want to, I will find her and use her mouth and pussy until I'm fully satisfied." Belle's innocent little blue eyes widen as I back her into the arm of the couch. I'm losing it. "I want a girl who moans for me, who comes over and over when I pound her, and who lives to service me. That's what I want, Belle."

She stares back at me, her bottom lip trembling.

I've done it. I've gone too far.

“Th-that’s pretty specific,” she replies, gripping the couch with her left hand, the light glistening softly off her nails.

“Do I scare you, Belle?”

Of course I do. I’m not right for her. Look how innocent she is. Look how frightened she is by what I just admitted.

But I can’t stop myself. My cock is burning with painful lust as the buttons of my fly fight to restrain it. It thickens more and more every second I let my eyes scour her gorgeous body. I’m salivating like a wild animal ready to feast upon its prey.

Belle shakes her head. Her tone is soft, her voice barely a whisper. “You don’t scare me, Conrad.”

I should, angel. I should.

“No? Being in a room alone with a big strong ex-Marine like me doesn’t scare you?”

Her blush threatens to encompass her entire face as she looks down and shakes her head, a lock of hair spilling in front of her eyes. “No. What would a worldly man like you want with an inexperienced girl like me?”

A jolt of excitement hits me like a dart. Belle wasn’t lying to Fitch.

She is a virgin.

“Inexperienced?” I’m pretending I have no idea what she’s talking about. But inside, my lust has reached new heights.

She nods, ashamed. “I never had a boyfriend in high school. And Fitch and I...well,

we haven't—"

"Why not?" I press her, my voice rasping with want and need. She notices and looks up at me those sweet baby-blues for a brief moment before averting her eyes again.

Send me away, angel. Your chance is slipping...

Her slender shoulders rise and fall as she shrugs. "I just wanted to save myself until the wedding. Guys like virgins, right?"

Now the pivotal moment. The crossroads.

My response. What should it be?

"Wrong." I shake my head, causing hers to rise. Christ, I'm lying again, and I'm about to lie more. What has this girl done to me? Where have my values gone? "Guys like experienced girls who know how to please them."

"Oh, no..." Her face is as red as the cherry between her legs now. "I've always heard guys say things like 'A car's value goes down with its mileage.'"

"Guys are assholes." I shake my head. "Take it from one; we like girls who know what they're doing. If a girl doesn't know how to please her husband, how long do you think that marriage will last?"

"God, Fitch is going to hate me. He'll divorce me...send me back..." Her voice is a whisper as she wraps her arms around herself, clearly embarrassed.

"That's impossible, Belle."

"No?" Her eyes flicker with wonder and fright. "He won't think he's making love to

a dead fish?”

I’m such a bastard. Belle is so sweet and innocent with all the best intentions, and here I am breaking them down because I want to be the first man to claim her.

It’s unethical. Depraved.

But I still can’t stop myself.

“I could teach you, Belle.” My hands are drawn inexorably to her waist, which I stroke gently with the back of my knuckles, pulling up the hem of her T-shirt to expose the smooth skin of her soft stomach and the sumptuous lower curves of her breasts.

“H-help me how?” The tremor in her voice is like the most delicate musical notes.

“I will show you what a man likes, Belle.” I force my legs between hers, spreading them apart. My cock is ready to burst from my pants as I lean into her, pressing my throbbing bulge against her warm mound. “That way, when you marry Fitch—” The words sting like venom against my tongue.

“I’ll have some experience?” She whimpers, her voice tender, seeking guidance.

I nod, feeling my control slipping.

If I go here with her, there will be no coming back.

“That’s right. You want to please Fitch, don’t you?” His name burns my tongue as I speak it. Thoughts of the two of them together assail my mind like invaders attempting to scale a castle’s walls.

Belle gazes back at me, her bottom lip hanging low, an open look of vulnerability glowing on her face. She nods hesitantly. “Of...of course I do...”

Pain stabs my chest as I fight back the thought of her doing her best to please Fitch.

No! That will not happen!

I want to drop the act and profess my feelings for her, but I have to keep up this ruse to prevent her from running. It’s the only way I can get my hands on her spectacular body.

I lean in, my lips desperate to connect with hers. I bring them within a hair’s breadth of her ear and whisper, “Well then, I’ll teach you.”

I can’t restrain myself any longer.

I reach around and drag my palms down the supple curves of her buttocks, clutching hard with both hands and raising her up from her seated position on the arm of the couch. A tiny gasp escapes her lips, and I’m inundated with vile, degenerate visions of all the depraved things I’m dying to do to her. I’m salivating like a wild beast.

“Fitch will touch you like this, Belle...”

My heart is pounding like a drum in my chest, its rate nearly double its norm. I want to simply spin Belle around, bend her over, tear her yoga pants down to her ankles, and drive my hard-on into her untouched little fuck hole. But I can’t. Belle means more to me than just a quick fuck. She’s my treasure. My future. It is my duty to ward off harm—even if that harm comes from me. Especially if that harm comes from me. And being rough with my angel is not what she needs right now. I see the trust pouring from her eyes, and I must respect that. Even as I lie to her, I must make her feel safe.

My duty is to the man who hired me: her fiancé. But my will as a man is screaming at me to take her. She's right here in front of me. We're alone. How hard can I, a mere man, resist against a deity of beauty?

"And I'm sure he'll touch you like this," I say softly through clenched teeth as I sweep my rough palms down the soft skin of her thighs, guiding her pants down to her knees, revealing a cute powder-pink thong beneath.

"Will he be so gentle?"

Fireworks go off in my skull, flashing like aerial munitions that sizzle throughout my body when I see the little wet spot on the cloth, signaling her arousal. My balls go tight, swollen with sperm, and I have to bite the inside of my cheek to keep myself from exploding at the sight.

"At first, yes," I assure her, even as I fight to hold myself back from roughly taking her. My abs are tight, and my blood pumps hot and heavy throughout my taut muscles. She twists her head away from me once more, causing her hair to fall across her face.

"Don't be embarrassed, angel. It's only natural."

Christ, is this really happening? Three weeks of watching her, desperate to touch her, and now she's standing here in front of me with a wet pussy, looking back at me with puppy-dog eyes. Ready to do whatever I want her to do.

But you're lying to her, Conrad. Deceiving her.

So I'm a son of a bitch. I fully admit that. But I can't help that Belle has this kind of hold over me.

“Keep going,” she whimpers. “Show me what Fitch will do.”

I push my anger down and lean in, pressing my nose against the fabric of her panties, close my eyes, and inhale deeply. Christ, I was right. She smells like heaven. A thousand times better than the pillowcase I stole from her.

“Will he like that? I always heard they don’t.”

“He will love it,” I reassure her, speaking my truth to her as I squeeze her thighs and move up to the straps of her panties. I twist them around my little finger, pulling down slowly. “You smell like a river of honey cutting through a field of lilac.”

Her panties fall from her thighs and land at her ankles, accompanied by a quiet gasp that slips from Belle’s lips, signifying her arousal. She’s eighteen years old, filled with teenage hormones, and she’s been fighting her impulses so she can maintain her virginity for a man who doesn’t even deserve her. I can hear her exhilaration from the rhythm of her breath. She wants me. She just doesn’t know how to say so.

My eyes feed on the beautiful sight of her bare, virgin slit—her lips simply inches away from my mine. I inhale another breath of her scent and revel in the rapture it brings me.

Christ, I’m in heaven.

A devil who’s found his way to the Holy Land.

I’m a bad, bad man, and I would go to the ends of the Earth to be blessed with another chance to be between her perfect thighs.

“It’s so adorable,” I tell her as my breath heats the skin around her virgin breach. “When Fitch sees this...”

Belle doesn't move at first, so I take her by the hips and set her back on the arm of the couch before placing my hands against her thighs and spreading them wide. The view is spectacular, but it's not enough. Her sweet lips are hiding the tender pink within, and my fucking cock is swollen past what I'm able to take. My mind is overrun with depraved thoughts of everything I want to do to her. The fact that I can't do them all at once has me actually growing angrier with every second that ticks by.

Why can't I have her all? Right now?

With a single tug, I pop the buttons on my jeans, alleviating some of the pressure from my bulge. I'm practically foaming at the mouth right now. If I were to penetrate her now, I doubt I could restrain myself from literally impaling her with my rock-hard manhood. I want to plant my flag on every inch of her insides. Lose all control in her sweet, soaked folds.

"No one's ever been where I am now, Belle?" I ask, my jaw clenched tight as my rough palms caress her soft thighs. I'm a terrible man, overwhelmed with a fiery ardor, all caused by this angel's sensuality. I glance up and see her shake her head, a bashful blush dancing rosy across her cheeks. "It's beautiful, angel. Soft, warm, wet..."

Only I will do this to her.

She belongs to me.

"Do you want me to keep teaching you?" I ask.

I look up and see her biting her lip down at me, her eyes blazing with longing and excitement. My cock pulses with overwhelming excitement. Belle nods, red-faced and abashed, and my lips part to make way for my hungry tongue. While keeping my eyes glued on hers, I press it tenderly against the moist shine just beneath her tight

center.

Belle gasps and grips the couch arm with both hands. She throws her head back momentarily but quickly looks back down at me, eyes wide with amazement. That's right, angel. That's the first tongue on your pussy . Ever so carefully, I pull back, drawing a sparkling line of her arousal from her that she can see. Her lower lip falls, and I nod, smiling with my eyes.

"Fitch will love this," I tell her, kissing her inner thigh like we've been lovers for years. She moans, and like that, I can't contain myself any longer. I lean in once again, yet this time I flatten my tongue and drag it up her sweet, shining, glistening slit, forcing apart her folds to reach the tender innocence inside.

"Ohhhhhh," she moans, rocking her hips forward against my mouth. The tone of her voice is music. The flavor of her juices is divine. Her tender little fuck hole is an absolute treasure, and it's dripping wet just for me. Belle glances down at me, and I see her blush has encompassed her entire face. "Will Fitch like this?"

"Of course he will," I snarl as his name strikes me like a spear in the side.

"Good," she says as I press my tongue deep into her channel. I'm reveling with delight in the fact that I've managed to make my way here. Does she not suspect what I'm doing? Is my insanity not exuding from my eyes every time I stare at her? My body is on fire. My muscles are taut and firm like I'm ready for a fight. I want to grip her thighs hard and split her down the middle so not one inch of her is left untouched by me.

"Conrad," she whimpers, pressing back against my tongue. She's loving this. "You make me feel so...so..." Good, angel? "Safe."

Christ, I'm a monster.

I'm the man who called in the bomb threat to her wedding, the man fighting to keep her from her fiancé, and she is telling me I make her feel safe. Something like my conscience is telling me I should feel shame. Guilt. That I should pull my tongue back from the golden valley where it now resides and leave this girl forever. But my thirst for Belle overwhelms those feelings in a second, and I'm back to being the fevered dog I am. Unhinged and teetering on the edge of control.

She loves it , I tell myself. Why should you feel bad?

There's no way I'm holding back now.

I reach up and lift her T-shirt, taking the bra with it, exposing her perky teenage tits. A small C-cup I would say if I had to guess, but I don't have to guess. I know. From one of the many times I broke into her room and went through her bra and panties drawer. Her nipples are hard, and if I wasn't buried between her legs right now, I would pin her down on her back and suck them and suffocate myself in her cleavage.

"So perky. So cute," I growl softly. "Fitch will love these..."

My madness is starting to take over. Fitch will never get to see her bountiful breasts. They are meant for me. Only me.

I get to my feet, snatch her around the waist, and set her down beneath me on the couch. I bend her backwards, folding her so she's almost upside down with her knees hanging toward her face and both of her pretty holes aimed straight up at me.

More...more...

I want more...

"Conrad..."

“Don’t be embarrassed, Belle.” I feel my control slipping as the seconds tick by. “Fitch will love every inch of your body.”

Her tits are two perfect, plump mounds from this angle, and my body is coursing with primal hunger as I drink in her splendor. Using my thumb and index finger, I pull her pussy lips up toward her stomach, causing her swollen pink pearl to emerge from its hood. She’s open wide for me, submitting and waiting for my next move, her breasts rising and falling with each of her deep breaths.

“Should I teach you more?”

Belle gazes up at me, her lids low and her eyes soft, drunk with lust. She nods tenderly, and that’s all I need to move in. I lean down and take her sweet little bud between my lips.

Her body twists, and her hips buck back against my jaw, but I hold her firmly and tightly as I suck her delicate bundle of nerves, simultaneously applying pressure with my tongue. Her hands slap against the cushions as she searches for something to grab on to, eventually settling on a throw pillow, which she clutches tightly as I torture her with an onslaught of pleasure.

I’m dying to fuck her. To tear through her cherry and stretch her to my fit. It’s all I can do to hang on to the one ounce of restraint I have left while I focus on pleasuring her. A wonder this innocent must be warmed up, right?

“Conrad,” she whimpers, her hips jerking to the rhythm of my gentle tugs from my lips. “I...I think I can feel it...you know...what’s supposed to happen now...”

My eyes gleam back at her as I swell with pride. That’s right, angel. Come for Daddy. That’s what I want to say, but my tongue is on a mission right now, and any interruption could completely throw off the oncoming orgasm I’m about to give her.

I'm fighting against all odds to maintain control. To keep myself from pulling out my cock and thrusting it into her. Filling her with my cream that's causing my balls to painfully swell. I'm a hair's breadth from abandoning any morality I have left and forcing her to become mine by geysering my load into her unclaimed cunt and impregnating her right here and now.

But some ounce of morality reminds me that I can't do that, and I apply more pressure to her bud, lapping like a hungry dog at her slick sweetness. She tastes like wickedness and vice. Abandonment of duty and morality. Her flavor is like a golden hook imbedded in my chest, pulling me in, deeper, deeper, and deeper. Her rouge face tightens, and her plump lips part in a silent scream.

It's happening.

Her hips tilt down, and her entire body shakes as her first true orgasm sweeps her into a realm of quivering bliss.

"Yes!" she cries out, reaching up and snatching fistfuls of my hair, holding me tightly between her legs like she thinks I might go somewhere. I'm not leaving, angel. There's nowhere in the world I'd rather be. I ravage her sopping hole, her juices spilling out around my lips and dripping down my chin and back onto her cute little asshole. "Oh, wow! Wow! Wow! Wow! Wow!"

Her breathy moans drive my lustful pride to a new level, inflating me with fiery arrogance like nothing I've felt before. I am superhuman. A false, depraved teacher. A giver of pleasure, but only for her. My Belle.

She gasps one final gasp then releases her grip on my hair and slumps back onto the couch, panting heavily, her entire body radiating heat like a bonfire. Her cunt is glistening with my spit and her slick, and her inner thighs are gleaming from the spillover.

That's it. I can't take it any longer.

My desperation is overwhelming. I need her.

I rise up on my knees, reach into my briefs, and tug out my manhood. I'm so turned on that even my slight touch causes my shaft to flex with a near-orgasmic twitch. Sensitivity is pulsing through me. My cock is throbbing with brutal desire. I ball my hand into a fist, driving my nails into my flesh, searching for a painful distraction to bring me back down to Earth.

"I'll kill you if you leave me." The words rumble from my throat before I know what I'm saying.

Belle's eyes widen. "What did you say?"

"I said, he'll kill you if you leave him." Keep it together, Conrad. She blinks nervously. Slides her lower lip across her teeth. "Once he has had a taste of you, he will be addicted. He will always want more...more...more..."

"Oh..." she says quietly, pushing herself into a seated position. Her eyes travel down to my cock, doing a flagpole from between my legs. "Maybe we should take things a little more slowly."

Her words cause the moment to freeze and threaten to fracture every bit of progress I just made with her. She's moving now, like she wants to get up, but I lean down on top of her and bring my lips close to hers. Being this close to kissing her heightens everything I'm feeling already. My cock flexes again, and I know there's no holding back.

"I have so much more to teach you, angel," I whisper, tracing the line of her neck with my lips. I stop just below her earlobe and inhale the multitude of scents. I'm

behaving like a wild beast. “To prepare you for your wedding night.”

“My wedding night...?” Belle whispers as I begin grinding my shaft against her slick mound.

Christ, even without being inside her, the feeling is truly wonderful. I shouldn’t be doing this. I should be giving her time to recover from her release. Hell, I should never have even started any of this with her. It’s wrong. I’ve been hired to protect her, not defile her innocence like the bastard I am.

But I just can’t help myself.

Her scents invade my nostrils, swirling with godly feminine energy, wrenching a climax from me as my shaft slides against her wet folds, which spread slightly each time I grind against her. My cock erupts, splashing my seed across her soft ivory belly, pooling in her pink belly button. It just keeps coming and coming, the most powerful orgasm I’ve ever experienced erupting out of me like a volcano. It’s so intense it hurts, and I’m gripped with a dizziness so powerful that I’m forced to slump down beside her, gasping for air like I’ve almost drowned.

I lie beside her, shaking, wrapped up in the overwhelming amazement of her perfection. I fight to regain my composure as my hand explores her body, caressing her breasts and her delicate neckline. My brain is barely working, like a computer that’s short-circuited and needs a full reboot.

“You’re a quick learner,” I mutter, barely able to find my ability to speak. Words scatter through my mind here and there with no real connection between them. I want to simply give up my ruse and profess my love to her now, but that would be a major risk. Or an outright catastrophe. “And I have so many more things to show you that Fitch will like—”

“I need to use the restroom,” Belle interrupts, sliding out from beneath me. “You know...to clean up...”

I sit up, feeling like an idiot. When was it that I forgot how to be a gentleman? Has my madness seized me and jerked me back down into the pits of pure depravity? “I’m so sorry,” I say quickly. “Let me get you a towel.”

“No! It’s okay.” Belle smiles, backing up toward the bathroom. “You stay right there and relax. You did all the work. I’ll be back in one second.”

I smile, smitten by her beauty that warms me to my core as she vanishes behind the door to the bathroom. I close my eyes and expel a deep breath, dropping my head onto the throw pillow Belle was holding while I licked her pure little pussy and watched her squirm. It smells like her. The mere scent begins to hypnotize me with satisfaction.

That is until I hear a sound from the bathroom.

A window sliding open and the clatter of the street spilling in from outside. Instantly, I’m on my feet, striding over to the door.

“Belle?” I call out, knocking just loudly enough not to scare her. No response. “Belle, are you in there?”

I test the handle. It’s locked.

My heart leaps as I realize what’s happened. Adrenaline surges, and my primal nature takes over. I back up, brace myself, and drive my heel into the latch, nearly knocking the door off its hinges as it bursts inward.

The bathroom is empty.

I race to the window and look out.

There she is. Belle, the girl I'm supposed to protect, scaling the fire escape down to the street, wearing nothing but a bathrobe.

"Belle!" I shout, snatching my clothes and sliding into them as I race out the door after her.

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4

BELLE

I drop from the fire escape onto the sidewalk, pushing my robe down as it threatens to fly up and expose my nakedness to everyone walking around in the cool evening air. Then I start to run.

My face is flushed and my body is overheating from the most incredible experience of my life, but a chill wave of guilt and regret is swiftly taking over as I slowly regain my senses and realize what I've just done.

"Jesus, Belle!" I snap at myself as grit and stones stab into the skin of my bare feet. "You're engaged!"

So what if it's an arranged marriage? So what if I'm basically being forced into it? Does that mean I can break a promise I made simply because I let myself be overwhelmed by a moment of immense, glorious passion that is still singing in my head like a choir of angels?

You cheated!

"No, I didn't!" I snap back at myself, drawing odd looks from a group of guys chatting by their car.

I never wanted to marry Fitch in the first place. My parents are forcing me to. Technically, I may have said yes to him, but it wasn't a yes that came from my heart.

It was a yes that came from pure self-preservation. To keep me from being tossed out onto the streets by my father.

Fitch thinks I want to marry him. And so does Conrad.

That's why he volunteered to teach me. So I'd have experience for my husband. Not because he's actually interested in me. He turned down Cynthia, and she's way prettier than I am. Why would he want a no-nothing virgin like me when he has tons of girls fawning all over him? My lack of experience must have had him rolling his eyes. I didn't have a clue what to do when he had me on the couch back there. I wasn't even thinking about what was happening. I was simply lost in the moment—the wondrous, magnificent moment that seemed to bend space and time around us so the rest of the world was gone and only we remained.

It's not really cheating if you're not in a real relationship, is it?

“Belle! Stop running, Belle! This isn't safe!”

Conrad's voice from behind me snaps me back to reality, and I look back to see him sprinting after me. He's gaining on me at such speed that I know I can't compete with, so I slow and stop beneath a tree, so embarrassed I wish I could just wink out of existence.

“I'm sorry...” I say as he reaches me.

“Don't apologize, Belle. Just tell me why you were running. Did I upset you somehow?”

“Of course not!” I groan, leaning my head against the tree trunk. Great, now I've upset him. Made him think he's done something he shouldn't have. Why couldn't I have just been a good girl and never let him touch me? Or never have run off after

our incredible moment? Now I'm blushing and look like a fool in front of this magnificent man. "I think I'm just...overwhelmed. And I'm also engaged to Fitch..."

Maybe I'm imagining things, but I could swear I see Conrad's eyes narrow and his lips purse when he hears Fitch's name. But I could also be imagining things. After all, my head is still spinning from the blissful moment we both just shared.

Conrad stares at me. His chest rises and falls with a deep breath. "We should get back. It's not safe here for you."

"Not safe?"

"The bomb threat, Belle," he reminds me. God, I'd completely forgotten. "You can get your head straight back at the hotel."

He extends his hand, and without even thinking, I take it. My reaction actually shocks me. It was pure instinct. A simple reflex as my body saw a sign of safety and reached out for it. And as I look up at his broad shoulders and thick chest, an odd thought enters my mind: This must be how girls feel when they have a father who actually cares about them and would hold their hand while they grew up. That's something I never had.

"I apologize," Conrad says once we're back in the room.

I feel my cheeks beginning to prickle again. "Why?"

"I overstepped my duty. I never should have put my hands on you like that."

A knot forms in my throat. "You were just teaching me."

He shakes his head, a low growl rumbling in his throat. "Still..."

“Do you regret it?”

He scoffs, shakes his head, and places a hand against the wall. “Of course not! I just—”

“You don’t find me attractive?” I’m starting to get teary-eyed now. God, what is wrong with me? Conrad spoke of duty; what of my duty to Fitch? How am I letting my heart slip like this?

His gaze snaps up, and he focuses intently on me as if he can’t believe what I just said. “Don’t be stupid, Belle. You’re the most gorgeous—” He stops himself again, balls up his fist, and slams it into his thigh. “I shouldn’t be saying things like this. You’re engaged.”

“Sort of...” I breathe, my voice barely a wisp on the air.

His brow furrows, drawing a line above his nose. “What do you mean?”

“Nothing.” I’m a hot mess. Saying things I shouldn’t say. Betraying feelings I should not be having. Why can’t I just be stable and in control of myself?

Suddenly, I’m in Conrad’s arms, being carried into the bedroom. I’ve never felt so tiny before. It’s like I weigh nothing to him. The hotel robe falls from my body, leaving me naked and flushed as Conrad stomps forward like a raging bull.

He sets me down and presses me into the mattress.

His eyes are fevered, filled with what looks like desire.

What is happening now? He just said he shouldn’t be speaking to me like he was, and now he’s stripped me naked and is getting physical with me again? Is this another

lesson?

The tingling feeling returns between my thighs, only twice as intense as before. I look down at his pants and see his bulge is back. Yes, take my virginity, Conrad. Let me pleasure you like you did to me. That's what I want. My protector. My guardian. He should be the man who claims my V-card. Not some arrogant prick who happens to be my fiancé because he's basically buying me from my parents.

"You can never do that again," he growls, firmly pinning my arms back over my head. "Do you understand, Belle!?"

"Do what?" I gasp as the tingling sensation between my legs continues to grow.

There's a fever in his eyes I've never seen before.

What's happening? Is he angry? Have I ruined things between us?

"Leave my sight," he says, scouring my body with a frenzied glare. "I've been hired to protect you. Do you understand that?"

"Yes. I do—"

"So you understand that when you're out of my sight, I'm no longer doing my job?"

The dark room is fraught with tension as his grip tightens on my wrists like handcuffs, truly demonstrating just how much stronger than me he is.

Even if I wanted to run away again, it would be impossible.

"I—I'm sorry," I whimper, a heat rising up from within my chest to capture my cheeks in a fiery grasp.

“You’re sorry,” he groans, shaking his head. I knew it, I’ve ruined everything. “Belle, your safety is all that matters. There are predators out there who would do anything to get their hands on your young, sweet, sexy body. Do you realize that?”

I know he’s just scolding me to make a point, but the look in his eyes has me wondering if he really believes what he is saying. Does he actually find me sweet and sexy? Or is he just saying some men will be attracted to me? And he’s only afraid that if he lets something happen to me, he’ll lose his job? But he was hard earlier, and my stomach is still slick with his spend. So that must mean something, right?

“Predators,” I say simply.

“That’s right, Belle.”

“Like lions, tigers, and bears?”

A warm hint of a smile appears on his lips. “Those do qualify as predators.”

“But not the kind you’re talking about.” I giggle as he presses his body down against mine, the chill of the evening on the denim of his pants and the cotton of his T-shirt, drawing goosebumps from my skin.

“I’m talking about man ,” he growls, moving against me, circling his hips and pressing his bulge between my legs as though we were grinding on the dance floor. “A man who would be entranced by your beauty, stop at nothing to have you. A man who would give up his pride, his dignity, even his sanity, if it meant simply getting a hint of your scent...” Conrad inhales deeply against my neck, his chest expanding against mine. “If it meant being able to caress your soft skin...” Gripping my wrists with one hand, he uses the other to trace the curve of my right breast, causing a sharp intake of breath to catch in my throat. “If it meant simply being able to taste your sweetness...” He wraps his lips around my nipple and sucks, tugging a moan from

my lips. “If it meant being able to penetrate you, Belle...” He reaches down between my thighs and presses two fingers against my sex. My back arches with anticipation. “To be inside you while you come, over and over and over again...”

A tender shiver twists my body as he kisses my breasts, sucking each nipple while restraining me with a single hand, demonstrating the immense power he has over me. It’s only right that he should be my bodyguard. My protector.

“You sure know what to say...” My voice is barely audible as my toes begin to tingle. “But this is all hypothetical, right? Right?”

Conrad chuckles, and I feel the engorged knot of his arousal between his legs as it flexes against my thighs and mound. “You think I’m only talking about other men, Belle? Before you climbed out the window, I was grinding my bare cock against your wet pussy. Why do you think that is?”

His words embarrass and inflame me at the same time. Why am I still shy? “Because you like me?”

Again, he laughs.

Did I say the wrong thing?

“Like you, Belle? I don’t like you; I cherish you. You’re my treasure. My rare jewel. I have a duty to you—a duty I will never abandon.”

My head is spinning, and the way he’s pressing his heavy body down against mine sure isn’t helping.

So he does like me? I thought I was just a job to him.

Conrad, what are you saying!?

“So you’ll protect me?”

“Of course,” he replies firmly.

“You’ll watch over me?”

“Without a doubt.”

“You’ll find the man who called in the bomb threat?”

He swallows hard, then responds. “Of course.”

A fizzy warmth overtakes me. The sensation between my legs has risen to new heights. His two fingers are still pressed against the tender skin of my valley, but he hasn’t moved inside. A normal man would have already pushed for more by now. But not Conrad. He’s a man of duty. He’s a man of principal. And he’s waiting for me to be ready.

“Conrad,” I ask softly, focusing on the strength of his chin. “Will you...teach me more, please?”

His pupils dilate, and his lips part as he stares back at me. “You want me to show you how to please Fitch?”

No. I want to please you, Conrad .

Lying, I nod. “Yes. Show me what he will want from me.”

The urge inside me is impossible to describe. I want to give Conrad my virginity

more than I've wanted anything in my life. There's a wellspring of desire bubbling up inside me, ready to erupt at any moment. My head is whirling as I watch him reach down between his legs and pull out his massive, thick shaft, swollen with blue veins, a shiny, translucent fluid dripping from its crown.

With a single movement, he yanks his T-shirt off and tosses it aside, revealing more muscles than I can count. A sculpted physique most men would die for. Each subtle movement he makes is reflected in the countless cuts and striations that adorn his figure. His eyes search my body, reflecting countless emotions that I wish I could decipher all at once.

"When Fitch sees you naked, Belle..." His voice trails off, his eyes losing focus. Then, like an invisible force has hit him, he gasps deeply and runs his tongue across his lower lip. "He'll be shell-shocked by just how sexy you are."

"You think so?"

"I know so." He nods, pressing his staff against my slippery center. My bud is still buzzing from his previous instruction, and when his manhood touches it, my vision begins to blur. It's like I've been struck by an electrical current that's frozen me in place. "But he won't want to wait to be inside you, Belle. He'll be so turned on by you that he will want to take you as quickly as possible. So he will."

"And what do I do, Conrad?" I somehow manage to say, drifting in a cloud of spectacular sensation.

"You take a deep breath, angel. Because this will hurt at first—"

A loud digital bleating shatters the serenity of the moment, a ringtone accompanied by a vibration, causing Conrad's chest to rumble as a lioness growl erupts from his lips.

“Goddamn it!”

“Is that your phone?” I ask, desperately wanting his answer to be no. But he nods, showing his teeth like an angry animal.

“My work phone.”

“Don’t answer it,” I plead, tilting my hips up, enticing him to penetrate me. But he closes his eyes and shakes his head.

“I have to. There could be an emergency. If I don’t answer and something happens—”

“I understand.” I smile, running my fingers through his hair as the phone continues to blare obnoxiously. “Get it. Go on.”

It’s the complete opposite of what I want to say.

He presses a kiss against my neck, and I watch as he stands and pulls his phone from his pants and answers.

“Conrad. What?” His face twists in confusion, but he quickly turns away to hide it from me. My heart flutters, and I sigh deeply. Well, this couldn’t have gone any worse. “Are you sure it’s him? Well, what’s he saying? Okay. I’ll be right down.”

He’s leaving. I know it before he even says anything.

“Emergency?”

Conrad sighs and nods. He’s doing his best to appear calm, but his eyes track back and forth as he pulls up his pants and buttons them over his hard-on.

“Apparently...my men caught the guy who made the bomb threat.”

My heart sinks, tears beginning to well up in my eyes. This threat was the only thing postponing the wedding. Without the threat, the wedding is back on, and my lifelong future with Fitch is about to begin.

“Do you have to go?”

“What?” Conrad asks, looking confused. He looks at me, then shakes his head. “Yes, I have to go. But you’re coming with me.”

“I am?” I’m fighting back tears now.

“Of course you are, angel,” he says, reaching out to lift me up from the bed. “It’s my duty to look after you, remember? I’m never leaving you alone again.”

CONRAD

This is bad. I can't do my job with Belle draining every ounce of mental energy I have. I was so close to finally having her, and to be ripped away from her just like that—it's all I can do to act like I'm even paying attention to what my men are saying now.

Three of them have surrounded a twitchy blond guy they've tied to a dining room chair. My heart pounds loudly in my ears, deafening me to every other sound in the room. It's warm inside, but my hands and feet are cold, despite the perspiration on my forehead.

I'm compromised. Failing in my duties.

This never would have happened before. But then I met Belle.

One of my men steps up beside me and calls my name into my ear, causing me to snap out of my stupor. I shoot a glance at him that he must interpret as threatening, because he quickly takes a step back.

"You okay, boss?"

Shit. I've got to get my head right. "I'm fine. I was just...thinking about something." I level my eyes on the suspect. He's shaking like he's freezing his ass off, but that's impossible in here. It's possible he's strung out on something. "Hey, buddy! You

wanna talk now? Or do we have to call the police?”

Calling the police is the last thing I want to do. That would mean more people getting involved and potentially more eyes on me. What’s this jerk doing taking credit for my bomb threat anyway? I called it in, not him. How’s he even know about it?

I glance over my shoulder where Belle is standing by the bookshelves, drenching the room in beauty. It’s like being hit by a gut-punch. All I want to do is stare. I’m already losing myself as my eyes soak in her splendor.

Now is not the time for that.

Now is the time for work.

“See her?” I snap, pointing as I glance back at the suspect. “How do you know her?”

The man snaps his teeth against each other, tosses his head, and flits a few short glances toward Belle. My protective instincts flare. Even if he is tied down, he’s still a potential threat to my angel.

“B-Belle...Ha-Ha-Hartley...” the man stutters, slurring his speech with a sloppy tongue. “Married...soon.”

He looks up at her again, and I step in front of him, blocking his gaze.

No. She’s my beauty.

Christ, who even is this son of a bitch? I know he didn’t call in the bomb threat, yet he’s acting like a total weirdo, and he somehow knows Belle’s full name. Could he be a stalker who actually means to hurt her?

Does it make me a hypocrite to be worried about someone stalking Belle?

Probably. But I don't care.

I know with an absolute certainty that I would never do anything to hurt my sweet angel. I exist only to keep her safe and to protect her. No man out there would put his life on the line for her like I would, and that means every other man out could be a danger to her.

"Where's the phone!?" one of my guys blurts out. I quickly scold him with a look, causing him to go silent.

"You got a name, buddy?" I ask the suspect, drawing his attention to me. His eyes are all over the place, but after a long moment, he nods.

"B-Barry."

"Okay, Barry. Why'd you make that call?"

Barry shakes his head like it's filled with cobwebs. Goddamn it, what is this guy's game? "I-I just wanted her to...notice me..."

One of my men comes up beside me and hands me a file. I glance over it quickly and close it. "You work the grounds here at the manor eh, Barry?"

He nods, testing my patience as he continues to draw out this fiasco. I need to wrap things up here so I can get back to Belle before she slips away from me. Every second I waste on this bastard is a second I could be spending with her.

"I mow lawns," he stutters. "Trim hedges. Wash windows—"

Wash windows? Something inside me snaps as I picture him up on a ladder, pretending to wash Belle's glass, staring at her inside as she undresses. And I just lunge forward and snatch him by his collar, forcing the chair onto its back two legs.

"You been stalking her, Barry?" I snarl, gnashing my teeth as my heartbeat leaps through the roof. "Following Belle? Watching her?"

"No!" he protests. "I'm not a stalker!"

"Bullshit! Don't lie to me!" My blood is lava, coursing through my veins as I glare down at this predator. "I know you didn't call in that threat, Barry. You don't have the brains for something like that. So tell me why you're lying!"

"I just wanted to be cool with the guys!" he cries out, desperation streaking across his face. He gasps a breath, and I set the chair down, loosening my grip on him. "I heard about the threat, and all the guys were talking about it. S-so I thought I'd just take credit, ya know? It made everybody laugh!"

My guys sigh, and I take a step back, the tension slowly sliding from my body. I glance back over my shoulder to make sure Belle is okay. She looks a bit shaken up, and I rage at myself. She never should have been involved in any of this. I should have left her with someone else while I questioned Barry, but that wouldn't be possible. That would mean she would be away from me. And I can't allow that ever again.

Don't worry, angel. I'll make things all better.

"Confirm his story with the grounds workers," I tell my men. "This isn't our guy. Wedding's still off. Let Fitch know."

I stomp across the room, swelling with warmth as I grab Belle's delicate little hand

and pull her from the room, down the hall, and into the back room of the prep-kitchen. On the way, we pass Fitch's room, which I know will become their room once the wedding finally takes place. I may have bought myself some more time with my angel, but how much? How long can I really put things off before Fitch insists they wed anyway?

"I'm so sorry, Belle," I whisper as I close the door behind us. "Don't be afraid. I never should have put you in the same room with that weirdo."

She looks up at me, doe-eyed and innocent, trying to appear less frightened than she is. And I curse myself. I caused all of this, and yet still she trusts me. Looks to me for protection and guidance. She believes in me, when really I'm the one who's violently obsessed with her.

"So you don't think he was...stalking me?" Belle asks.

What a question to be asking me .

I shake my head, reaching out to tuck a loose strand of hair behind her ear.

"No, angel. He was just a weird guy looking for attention. If anyone was stalking you, I would know. Trust me."

Trust me?

Jesus, who even am I now? What have I become?

I'm working her. Making her trust me more and more, when I'm the last man in the world she should be anywhere near. I'll ruin her, like I want to ruin her virgin cunt with my engorged cock, growing quickly beneath my jeans.

She wanted me to take her when we were back at the hotel. She'd let her walls down for me, all because of a situation I put her in. The situation I fabricated. And in less than a day, I've completely abandoned my professional responsibilities of maintaining distance from the girl I've been hired to protect. And on top of that, I've been stalking her for weeks.

I should tell her everything. She deserves to know.

But she must know by now what I truly am. Or at least have some suspicions.

Then again, she asked me to teach her more. Show her what Fitch would want from her once they were married. If she mistrusted me, she wouldn't have done that. Either she's totally oblivious, or she's playing right into my game. And I don't think she's oblivious. I think Belle is looking for a way out of her marriage, and I think she knows she's found it in me.

She's twisting absentmindedly, shifting from one foot to the other, a movement which accentuates the round curves of her hips. Every motion whips a harsh craving into my mind, causing my eyes to narrow as I stare and run my tongue across my front teeth, eager to taste her again. For a brief moment, I wonder what we're even doing here right now. Why should I stay and keep trying to find ways to postpone the wedding? Why not just take her now and vanish? My life means nothing if I don't have her with me, to wake by her side every morning. I'm sure she understands that. And if she doesn't, she will.

"Are we...safe here?" Belle asks, glancing around the room.

"You're safe when I'm with you." My eyes are glued to her. She must see my obsession in my gaze. I'm not even trying to hide it any longer.

"I guess Fitch will be upset the wedding is still off," she says softly, glancing to my

left. I turn and see the elaborate wedding cake through the glass of a fridge.

“Fitch?” I glare hard at her. “What about you?”

She hides her eyes from me for a moment, and it’s like I’m suddenly denied air. My desire for her is overpowering. Even her hair over her eyes is a painful barrier. I can’t imagine what it would be like to actually have her gone from my sight.

“You know it’s...an arranged marriage, right?”

Her words hit me like a bullet. “Wait, what?”

“My parents are forcing me to marry Fitch for his money. If I don’t, they’ll cut me off completely. I’ll have nowhere to go.”

My vision reddens as my rage begins to squeeze me in a vise-like grip. My throat goes so tight I can barely swallow. What kind of parents would marry their daughter off for money? What is this—medieval times?

I look back again at the wedding cake, five tiers, elaborate flowers made from frosting, and some kind of golden chutes springing out from the top like a fountain. My chest is on fire with rage from what I’ve just heard.

“Then this cake is as fake as your engagement.” I breathe heavily.

“I...I guess you could say that—”

The fridge door nearly comes off its hinges as I wrench it open. I reach into the chill and lift the cake and set it down on the metallic prep-table. Belle is looking at me curiously like a cute little kitten as I’m teeming with lust, aching hard beneath my pants. My desperation for Belle has not abated since I was last with her. Eyes

focused, I'm walking toward her, scouring her sensuous body with my gaze.

"You know it's tradition for the groom to feed the bride a piece of cake once they're married, yes? And vice versa?"

Belle nods, confused. "Yes."

Her innocence is a drug to me, tugging at every one of my male sexual instincts. I reach out and take her by the wrist, pulling her into my arms. A gasp falls from her plump lips, sending a shock surge through me. It's like I was missing something I now have.

"Well, I see no reason we can't honor that tradition." I smile, pressing Belle down onto her knees before me. She looks up at me, still not understanding.

"But I...I'm not married, Conrad. And you're not my husband."

"I'm not?" I smirk.

With a single hard tug, I pop the fly of my jeans, then reach in and pull out my manhood, swollen and thick, nearly ready to burst. Belle's eyes go wide, following my shaft as I grip it with one hand and drag it through the frosting at the base of the cake, coating my crown like a vanilla ice cream swirl atop a cone. "Go on. Have a taste."

She fails to hide the excitement that flashes through her eyes. "Conrad..."

"Open up, angel."

Like a good little girl, Belle drops her jaw, giving me a glimpse of her glistening pink tongue. Without hesitation, I push my cock into her mouth. The sensation hits me like

a raging sunbeam, igniting my body with exorbitant pleasure. I have to bite my tongue just to stop myself from exploding instantly.

“That’s a good girl,” I groan, the muscles in my stomach contracting as I wrap my hand around the back of her head and take a fistful of her hair. I shove my other hand roughly down the neck of her T-shirt and palm the firm flesh of her breast. Her skin is so soft. Her nipples are already hard, signaling her arousal. “Keep sucking, angel. Clean my cock. Get all that sweet icing off, and I’ll give you some more.”

Belle’s eyes are wide, and her hips move in circles like she’s already grinding on my hard-on. I’m so close now. The thought of ramming my cock inside her is nearly unbearable. Unable to pull my eyes from hers, I move my hand to her other breast, causing a jolt of pleasure to lash me with such intensity it’s almost painful. I let out another groan as she twists her tongue around my crown, searching for any remaining sugar, causing me to quickly pull out of her mouth, right on the verge of coming.

“You sure you’ve never done this before?” I ask her.

“Never,” she replies, her cheeks red, her lips shining.

I snatch her by her hips and lift her, causing her to giggle and squeal as I set her down on the table, just beside her wedding cake. I simply cannot wait any longer, and I don’t even try to stop my sweaty arms and craving fingers as they grab her pants and tear them down to her ankles. I nearly have a heart attack when I set eyes on the ripe little peach between her legs, already dripping with slick.

“Was I not doing a good job?” she whimpers, submissive eyes boring a hole straight into my chest.

“You were doing too good of a job, Belle.” I snatch her T-shirt up and yank down her bra, exposing her plump, mouthwatering tits. “I need to be inside you now.”

Unable to break eye contact, I press the head of my cock between her folds, parting them with untamable desire. It's all I can do not to just ram my full length deep into her. It's like I have some kind of fever, and it's taking all my strength to go slowly with her now. It's what she needs. She's never had a man inside her before.

"Ahhh," she moans, her back arching off the table as I press inside. "Wow, that feels...amazing..."

"Take a deep breath, angel. It's going to hurt a little bit."

"Because you're so big?"

I have to smile. Even with her complete innocence, she recognizes my size. "No, angel. Because you still have your cherry. But it will be mine in a moment."

"Conrad—"

"Deep breath," I repeat, projecting my intent through my ardent gaze. "It will only be a second. Then you'll get used to me."

I watch her breasts rise as she follows my command, wrap my fingers around her delicate shoulders, then pull myself into her soaking virgin cunt. A moan escapes her lips as I feel her hymen give way. She tries to pull back, but I hold her close as I continue to drill into her, giving her the entirety of my inches. I can feel the walls of her ripe little pussy stretching to accommodate my girth. And just before I bottom out inside her, she lets out a tiny breath.

"Oh my God. That feels...it's starting to feel better now." I lean close, pressing my chest against her breasts as I trace the soft skin of her lips with my tongue. "I can handle it, Conrad. Keep going."

I clench every one of my muscles, fighting back against the intensity of sensation from her luscious pussy. The tenderness of her tight center is overwhelming as I rut into her, grinding the base of my abs against her clit, causing her to squeal like a little baby bird with every thrust. The table rocks beneath us, grating metallic sounds echoing throughout the room. My hips move in and out, up and down, my arms frame her torso and my hands clench her tender breasts as my pace grows faster and faster.

Belle rocks back against me like she wants more. She's not hurting any longer. She's loving it and signaling to me with her eyes, the pout of her lips, the way she's exploring my muscles with her fingertips. I can hardly believe this is happening. Belle. My Belle is no longer an object seen through my scope or an assignment to care for. She's always been my world, but now that I'm inside her, she's a dream come true. I always wished for this day, but I never truly believed it could happen.

"You want more?" I challenge her, driving a harsh thrust into her that moves the table several inches. I expected her to flinch at that, but she merely looks me right in the eye and nods.

"Yes, Conrad. Give me more."

"You sure you can take it?" I tease, railing her again, moving the table back farther.

"Try me." She smiles.

A thirst comes over me, and I lift her legs up over my shoulders and begin to pound her. This is not a position a virgin should be in, I think as I feel my balls clapping against her asshole with every single stroke. She should be howling, pressing her hands against my chest, begging for me to stop, but she's just taking it like a champ, bucking back against every one of my thrusts as if demanding more from me than I'm already giving. Christ, I'm tearing her future life apart with every single thrust, and I can't even stop myself. I don't even know that I want to.

The whine of creaky hinges behind me causes me to glance over my shoulder just as a middle-aged woman enters. She's wearing a uniform indicating she works for the manor, and her eyes go wide when she sees my ass moving up and down as I continue to pound into Belle. Nothing will stop me now. Not her. Not anyone.

Belle squeals when she notices the voyeur and pulls me down on top of her to shield herself from the woman's gaze. I hold eye contact with the intruder, letting her know she should get lost. After a moment, she does turn to go, but not before cocking her head to the side and flashing a thumbs-up to Belle.

"Nice catch, girl."

With that, she lets herself out. Instantly, Belle cracks up laughing. I do the same, burying my face in her neck, inhaling her scent that simply confirms I am in heaven.

"Oh my God," she giggles. "Did that really just happen?"

I nod and kiss her. "A wise woman, that one."

I'm too hard to slow down, too close to control myself any longer. Our moment was not ruined by the intrusion. If anything, we're both even hotter than before. Belle eagerly kisses me, her smooth hands against my cheeks as our tongues dances together. I've claimed her, but there's still one wall left between us. A wall I'm about to destroy.

"You love it, don't you?" I ask her. She nods thirstily.

I grunt as I plunge into her dripping cunt, grinding my teeth back against the immeasurable pleasure she's blessed me with.

"Yes," she groans, rocking against me, her juices dripping all over the table beneath

us, slicking the metallic surface.

I harden my eyes at her, cock my head to the side. “Yes....?”

It takes Belle a second, but when she gets it, her whole face lights up.

“Yes, Daddy.” I feel her cunt tighten around my shaft as she speaks the words. “I love it.”

I feel the wall crumble, blasted away by unbridled emotion. We’re both so close, and my head is already starting to spin like I’ve been shot out of a cannon and am soaring through the purest, most blissful air on Earth.

“You’re mine now, angel,” I grunt, packing her pussy with harsh, deliberate thrusts that shake her entire body. Her knee joints crush down on my shoulders as she closes in on her orgasm. “I’ve claimed you. You belong to me. I’ll keep you safe—Oh my God, I can feel you tightening up on me. You’re close aren’t you, angel?”

“Yes, Daddy.” She nods emphatically.

“So am I. I can’t even move inside you,” I confess. “There’s no way I can pull out, angel. I’m going to breed that tiny little cunt. Breed you the first time you get fucked. I’m going to fill you with my seed right fucking now.”

I go off . Hard.

It’s like an explosion that begins at my center and then expands out, encompassing my whole body. My neck muscles tighten, and my back goes tense as I unload, spraying my seed into her hole, snatching away any remaining innocence she had left.

At the same time, I feel her walls clench down on me, holding me deep inside, telling

me firmly: No. You're not going anywhere. I go empty inside her as her body writhes and thrashes beneath mine. I somehow manage to unclench my eyelids and look down at her as her climax wracks her with delight, and I know that this moment—this image—will be solidified in my mind for the rest of my life as a monumental moment never to be forgotten.

Finally, Belle's legs fall from my shoulders, and I slump down beside her, breathing heavily. I stare up at the ceiling, a smile fixed on my lips, before glancing over to Belle, desperate for the twinkle in her eyes. Instead, what I see is something else. Confusion? Timidity? Regret?

My heart jumps, and I quickly wrap my arm around her, pulling her close. "Hey, everything all right?"

"Yeah," she says, forcing a smile. She sits up, glancing at the cake, the scrape in the frosting at the base. "Just...worried about that. And the woman who saw us."

I stand, place my hands firmly on her shoulders, and look down at her. It's impossible not to be entranced by her beauty.

"Don't worry about that. The woman won't say anything, and the cake can be repaired." Why am I reassuring her about the cake? I don't want her near that goddamn thing. If she ever is fed a piece of it by Fitch...

"Okay." Belle smiles. "I won't."

I watch her as we both put our clothes back on, then take her by the hand and lead her from the room, knowing my work is still not over. I may have resolved the situation with the so-called suspect and managed to have postponed the wedding a little longer, but I'm still going to have to find a more permanent method to make sure Fitch realizes Belle belongs to me now.

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BELLE

I'm still buzzing when Conrad and I arrive back at the hotel room. I catch one of the two men he's assigned to watch the door grinning at us as we pass, as if he can see my delight emanating off of me. As soon as the door closes behind us, I'm back in his arms, lathered with kisses as his strong arms lift me like it's nothing and lay me down on the bed.

My eyes close on their own, as the blissful moment overwhelms me, and I inhale a deep breath that fills my lungs with the euphoria of Conrad's scent. His presence. His power that I seem to feel all across my body, even the places he's not touching. The tingling sensation is back between my thighs—or maybe it never left. I can't be sure. My mind doesn't seem to be functioning right now.

All I know is that I am now changed.

The girl I was before has become something new. And it's all because of him.

He taught me how to please him. How to accept him. How to take him.

And I loved every second of it.

I can still hear the growls and groans he let out when he first entered me, when he was pounding me, when he was spraying inside of me, so warm and sticky, holding me in his arms like he'd been wanting me forever.

“It was impressive how you handled that situation back there,” I tell him, thinking back to how he seemed to dominate the entire room with his presence when questioning Barry back at the manor. “I really understand why—” I stop, not wanting to say Fitch’s name out loud. “I understand why you were hired.”

That’s better.

I read something in Conrad’s eyes. Did he just catch what happened? He must have. “I was just doing my best to protect you, Belle.”

“So you can make sure the wedding happens?”

He pauses, then slowly looks away. “That’s what I’ve been hired to do.”

I reach out and take his hand in mine, caressing it gently, tracing the hard lines of his palm with the tip of my pinky. It’s a hand that shows a lifetime of work. Something Fitch would have no idea about.

Holding his hand is like holding on to a moment in time—a moment so brief where everything feels wonderful. A moment I know will be gone in an instant, but if I could only clutch on to it for a little longer, maybe I would finally be happy.

I watch Conrad’s eyes as they sweep the hotel room, noticing every detail. “Checking for stalkers?” I tease, drawing his gaze back to me.

“You mean you already see the stalker?” His response startles me, and I quickly glance around, my heart racing. I see nothing, and when I look back at Conrad, I see him smirking, aiming a finger at himself. I let out a relieved sigh and giggle.

“Oh, of course!” I reply sarcastically. “Seriously, though, you have been following my every move since the bomb threat. And you were assigned to protect me before

that. You could be my stalker.”

“I could.”

“Wouldn’t you have to have been parked outside my house and following me off-work to be a true stalker, though?”

Conrad opens his mouth like he’s about to say something but then closes it again.

Maybe he was going to make a joke and just couldn’t think of one.

“You know, I was just thinking of how pompous this room is,” he finally says.

A laugh bursts from my lips. I nod quickly. “Totally! It’s one of the reasons I’ve never been comfortable at the manor. Everything is so stuffy, uptight, over-the-top elegant. I didn’t grow up like that.”

“Me either,” Conrad chuckles. “Lots of bread and pasta when I was a kid. I don’t think I saw real meat until I was seven.”

“Microwaveable frozen fish sticks was a staple at my house,” I say. “Dad would buy them in bulk and freeze them, and Mom would serve them with apple sauce.”

“Talk about gourmet.” Conrad grins.

“Oh, totally!”

It suddenly occurs to me that I can’t remember the last time I had such a great time with anyone. What Conrad and I just did was incredible, but right now, while we’re just talking? This is incredible too. And from the way he’s looking at me right now, I have to believe he’s feeling something similar.

“I don’t know if I should say this,” I whisper timidly. “But I feel safe with you, Conrad. Especially after seeing what you did with Barry, I know that you have my best interests in mind. I know I can trust you.”

“Yes,” he replies, his voice catching in his throat. “I would never let anything bad happen to you, Belle. I swear.”

“I believe you.” I smile as the urge to leap on top of him and strip out of my clothes threatens to take me over. I realize he’s squeezing my hand very tight now. So tight it almost hurts. But I don’t mind. I know he won’t do anything to cause me pain. “But I’m still worried.”

“About what?”

My eyes fall from his as a wet blanket of reality is draped over me. “The wedding, duh.” I press my lips against each other, self-soothing my fear of the future out of me the best I can. “Eventually you’ll catch the person who made the threat, and that means I’ll have to get married to...”

Again, I’m unable to say Fitch’s name out loud.

Just picturing my life with him causes me internal pain, like the nerves in my body recoiling from a future I know will be nothing but a gray purgatory, living life in a golden cage. No doubt I’ll have everything provided for me, so I can’t really complain about that, but is it worth giving up true love and any hope of a real relationship?

“You know what I think?” Conrad asks. “I think we should get out of here.”

His suggestion stuns me. “Get out of... here?” I point around the room, and Conrad nods.

“Yeah. Like you said, it’s stuffy in here. You ever been to the pier?”

A hope inside me lights up. “The pier? Like...down by the water with the shops and the rides? That pier?”

Conrad chuckles and stands, lifting me with him. “That’s right. That pier.”

“I used to love going there when I had the money. I’d save up enough to go on Friday night and get cotton candy, Snow cones, fried dough!”

“Well, let’s go then!”

Conrad pulls me toward the door as if we’re just going to leave and everything will be fine. His hand tightens on mine, and it’s like a feeling of being possessed by him suddenly pulses through me, as if I’m growing smaller and he’s growing larger by the moment. It feels incredible, but at the same time, I know it’s not good. I’m supposed to marry another man. What am I doing agreeing to go on a date with Conrad?

“I—I don’t think we should.”

“What?” He whirls to look back at me, his hand hovering around the doorknob, his eyes confused. “What do you mean, Belle?”

“Well...didn’t you say I need to stay here? Until everything is safe?”

I’m sure I see a sense of relief wash over him as he exhales, causing my hair to ruffle and tickle the side of my neck. “Belle, you have nothing to worry about. I will be with you. Don’t you feel safe with me?”

“You know I do,” I reply quickly. He steps closer, moving in like he’s about to kiss me. But he stops short, his lips a hair’s breadth from mine.

“Everything I do, I do for you, Belle.” He traces my hip with his right hand, moving up with a gentle caress over my body until he reaches the tender spot just below my ear. “Ever since I first set eyes on you. It’s been my job to protect you, keep you safe. And now, after what’s happened between us, do you think I would ever falter in my duty to you?”

I realize my heart is racing as I trace the back of my top teeth with my tongue. “No. Of course not.” His smile warms me, and I tremble slightly as he threads his fingers through the hair at the nape of my neck. “Why—why are you so good to me, Conrad?”

He lances me with his eyes, injecting an overwhelming flood of emotion straight into my soul. I’m starting to feel woozy as his fingers caress me. For such a monstrous man, he certainly knows how to be gentle.

“Come on, Belle. You know why.”

“Be-because it’s your job?” I whimper, stumbling over my words.

Conrad shakes his head. “You think I’m this devoted to every female client I’m assigned to protect? You think I would have gone the extra...” His voice trails off. He takes a deep breath and recomposes himself. “I do this for you , Belle. Because I can’t contain myself when I’m around you. Because your sheer existence has bound me to you in a way I can’t explain. A way I’ve never experienced before. Because being with you is like finding a light in the darkness that was my life, and without you, I’d be back in that blank void, unable to touch you. Unable to hear your voice, smell your scent, see the look in your eyes. That’s why I’ve done...everything I’ve done for you, Belle. And so much more.”

I’m such an idiot. All this time, Conrad has been in love with me. And somehow, I never saw it. He managed to hide it from me. But how? I guess that’s his job—his training.

“So much more?” I ask tentatively, like I’m testing the water with my toe. “What do you mean by that?”

Conrad’s eyes drop from mine, but his grip tightens on my hand. On my neck. His chest rises and falls as the pace of his breaths increases. As though he’s trying to control himself from...doing something.

“Never mind,” he says softly.

“No, Conrad. Tell me what you meant by so much more. ”

With a deep breath, he raises his gaze to mine, and I feel my eyes widen with expectation. “Let’s not talk about it. Let’s just go to the pier and have a good time. Sound good?”

“I–” But before I can respond, he’s pulling me out the door and calling back to his men with a lie that he’s taking me back to the manor to meet with Fitch and that we’ll be back later. They don’t even question him. He wields absolute authority over them, as it seems he does in all aspects of his life. And as we step out into the warm night air and he throws me over his back with ease, I feel my head starting to spin, as though I’m somehow being whirled into a new world. A dizzying realm where I may actually have the strength to hope for a better future, instead of the one laid out for me already, which has been bought and paid for.

CONRAD

I almost slipped back there.

Words came out of my mouth that shouldn't have, and even more behind them. I nearly let Belle know that I am her stalker. And while I know it would have been an absolute catastrophe to do so, I actually wanted to tell her the truth. I wanted her to know that I've been watching her for weeks, breaking into her room at night, that I've stolen one of her pillowcases as a way of being closer to her.

Because then she would realize how truly depraved and insane I am, she would push me away, and I'd be out of her life and far away.

But that won't happen now.

I saw reciprocity in her eyes back in the hotel room. My feelings for her are not one-sided. She adores my touch. She loved how I fucked her. And by God, I know she wants more and more from me. And I have so much more to give her.

She wants me to save her from Fitch, which has been my mission all along. But is she really prepared to meet the man I really am?

How could a sweet girl like her accept me once she knows the truth?

Even if I somehow manage to stop this wedding and make her mine, there's no way

our relationship can be built on a foundation of lies. She has to know what's been going on. That I'm her stalker.

But when she learns the truth, will she leave me?

I'm on the verge of a heart attack as I park and we walk down to the pier. Belle is smiling, hanging off my arm, nearly skipping as she tells me all the fond memories she has about riding the Ferris wheel and driving bumper cars. But all I can think about are all the ways this could end in disaster.

She could expose me.

She could tell Fitch about me. Tell her parents.

She could call the police on me and destroy my career. My life. Or even worse, she could simply push me away and marry the monster she's being sold off to. Choose him over me as the lesser of two evils and force me to live the rest of my life in complete solitude and despair as she posts photo after photo online of her with her "wonderful husband," living their wonderful life together.

I could never handle that. Watching her life from a screen.

Walking with her now by my side is the closest thing I have to harmony, and without her, I would be lost. If I could somehow just stretch this moment forever. Freeze time so that Belle and I could be together without complication, without me having to confess my sins and seek penance for what I've done...

Her smile is intoxicating as I pay for our snow cones. Her beauty shines brighter than all the lights around us, which don't even come close to her radiance. I wrap my arm around her shoulder as we walk to the Ferris wheel. I pay, and we slide into our passenger car. I pull her close and we watch the lights of the pier and the silver

moonlight shimmering across the waves below.

What a magical moment.

This is what life is all about.

Belle lets out a calm breath and rests her head on my shoulder, nestling close as if she's done it a thousand times. I watch her pink tongue go in and out as she licks the colored ice of her snow cone, my cock harder than steel as I inhale a lungful of her scent. I close my eyes, basking in the perfection of the moment. I want to just relax, be calm. But the beast within me is ready to arise.

We don't have long before we reach the ground again, but I simply cannot stop myself. I toss my snow cone into the water, drawing a questioning look from Belle, then lick my finger and slide my hand into her pants. She gasps as I spread her warm, pink folds to find her pleasure pearl, then lets out a quiet moan as I apply pressure, moving in circles that cause her body to tense and tremble with delight.

"Conrad..." she whimpers, letting her mouth stay open, pressing her teeth gently against my chest muscle.

I'm powerless to resist her. I've lusted after Belle for so long, and now I have her. My thirst for her will never be slaked. My hunger never satiated.

"That's it, angel. Come for Daddy."

Her body tremors, and her teeth close down on my flesh, stinging me with just the hint of pain. I smile and move my finger faster, applying more pressure. She's already soaking wet, and I can tell by the way she's moaning into my muscle that she's close.

Her sex appeal is overwhelming. If we had more time and were somewhere more private, I'd spin her onto my lap and set her down on my cock. But for now, this is all about her.

I reach into her shirt, kneading the flesh of her plump tits as her breaths grow short and quick. She clutches my shoulders with her hands and bites down harder. I feel my skin break but ignore the pain. I've gone through worse for far worse reasons, and I'd go to hell and back for Belle. The wetness dripping from her cunt coats my fingers, electrifying me as if the voice of Satan himself was urging me to take her right here and fuck her raw in front of everybody.

"I-I'm coming, Conrad," Belle moans, moving up and planting kisses all over my neck as a shiver crashes through her body and she grips me tightly as if holding on for dear life. I slip a finger down and press it inside her just to feel her little fuck hole contracting in rhythm with the little moans dripping from her mouth. Her hot breath against my ear is like the hand of pure beauty and kindness, filling me with possessive thoughts and selfish greed.

She starts to come down, and like a man possessed, I slip my hand from her pants and plunge my fingers directly into my mouth, sucking her slick from my skin like it's the sweetest nectar in the universe. Belle's eyes go wide as she pants, clutching my shirt, still writhing from the aftershocks that have her body quivering.

"Your pussy is so much better than my snow cone, angel." We've risen past the peak of the Ferris wheel now and are on our way down. Still, I take her hand and move it to my bulge, squeezing her fingers around my terrible excitement. "See what happens when I'm around you? I'm always hard. And it's all your fault."

"Fitch would never say things like this to me," she whispers nervously. Just hearing his name causes my insides to burn. "He'd never...lick his fingers like that either."

So much for teaching Belle what her future husband will want from her. I can't keep up the act any longer. I need to make my move. I need to finally tell her everything. Lay all my cards on the table and see how she reacts. She'll forgive me for lying, the stalking, the bomb threat, right? Of course she will.

Won't she?

I don't know if I will be able to survive if she doesn't.

"No, angel." I shake my head at her. "Fitch wouldn't. But I would. What does that mean to you?"

She blinks back at me, her mind spinning. We've nearly reached the pier now and are about to be unloaded. If only we could keep this ride up forever—just me and her.

"It means...you really like me?" she finally asks. God, she's so sweet.

The ride stops, and the operator opens our door to let us out. We step off together, and I take her hand in mine.

"Like you, Belle? That's one way of putting it. Another way would be that I'm infatuated. Smitten. Enamored." I fix my eyes on hers, noting the light layer of perspiration on her rosy cheeks, the gleam of satisfaction in her eyes. "Should I go through the thesaurus for all the other words defining my level of obsession with you, angel?"

I'm treading on thin ice speaking to Belle like this. It's dangerous. One false step and I'll expose myself as her stalker. But I have to tell her. She needs to know if we're going to move forward.

"No. I think I understand...Daddy." She purrs, ducking beneath my arm, nuzzling

close like we're the happiest couple. As we walk down the pier, even surrounded by all these people, my desire is still raging for her. Belle must be mine forever. Always.

Oh, sweet thing. You have no idea.

"I wish you did," I admit. "But even before the bomb threat, I couldn't get you out of my mind. Thinking of you alone at your house, away from my protection, resting your head on your cute little pink pillowcases—it made me feel inadequate. Like I was slacking in my ability to protect you. But if I have you with me twenty-four-seven, that will never be a problem."

Everything tenses as I realize I've just slipped up. Pink pillowcases. I was so caught up in articulating my fantasy about her that I said something I shouldn't have. But it doesn't seem like Belle has caught on as she looks over my shoulder and points with glee.

"Oh, they have one of those punch machines, Conrad!" she squeals, hopping forward and pulling me along with her. "You should try it! I'm sure you could break the record!"

I chuckle as I let go of her hand and begin to loosen up my shoulder. "You think so?"

"I know so." Her smile is infectious.

I pull her close, acutely concerned that I may have just blown my cover, panicked that I'll be losing her soon. My pulse is throbbing. My body is burning for her. I'm sweating like I just fucked her hard for hours, and as I lean in and press my forehead to hers, the feelings only intensify.

"Are you sure, angel? You felt how hard I am right now. I doubt I'll be able to swing my fist like I normally can. What I can do is take you into the shadows behind one of

these shops, pin you up against the wall, and put my cock back where it belongs—inside you.” Belle lets out a soft breath as I discretely slip my hand between her legs. I can feel her wetness through the thin fabric of her pants that hides her sweet teenage pussy. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you? Fitch would never do something like that to you. But I would.”

Belle’s only reply is a nod, her teeth closed gently around her bottom lip. “Yes, Daddy. I’d like that. But you know what else Fitch would never do?”

“What’s that?” I ask.

Again, she points to the punch game machine. “He would never break the high score on that.”

I chuckle, reach into my pocket, and find a dollar to feed into the machine. “You like a strong man, don’t you?” She nods, adorable and innocent. My God, I’m going to corrupt her.

With a smile, I turn to the machine, twist my arm a few times to prepare, then put a full-force punch into the bag that would obliterate any man it connected with. The foam bag snaps back, and the counter begins to rise, the numbers ticking up and up before finally topping out at 998. Bells and whistles go off, and the machine announces: New High Score!

“Well, I guess you were right.” I smile and turn back to face Belle, but where she was standing, there is now a family of three. A mom, a dad, and a little boy eating an ice cream cone. I quickly glance to my left, to my right, but Belle is gone.

My stomach lurches, dropping to my feet. My pulse doubles. A chill shoots through me as I realize what’s just happened.

Belle did catch on to what I said about her pillowcase. She knows now that I'm her stalker, and she used the punching machine challenge to distract me so she could make a break for it. Not only have I blown my cover, but I've also completely failed in my duties of watching over her.

How could I let this happen?

How could I take my eyes off her?

"Belle!" I cry out. At this point, it's impossible to know which way she went, so I turn left and begin sprinting down the pier, scanning for any signs of her. I knew I should have installed a tracking device in her phone. Even the microphone I setup in various rooms she's always in are registering nothing right now. I was trying to hold back my degeneracy, but now I realize I've failed. I fucked up. Even the covert recording devices I installed where she goes are registering nothing. I won't find her again. Belle outsmarted me, and there's a good chance I'll never see her again.

BELLE

Tears streak my cheeks and I'm sure my heart is about to burst as I race through the night, every step taking me farther from the pier. I ran down to the beach and circled around the tourist rentals, hoping to escape with a route Conrad would not anticipate. Still, I keep glancing over my shoulder, expecting to see him hot on my heels at any second.

After all, he was a Marine. He has training beyond anything I could anticipate. There's a good chance he'll find me. But what else can I do but run?

People keep gawking at me as I pass them. What's wrong with this girl? They must be thinking. I'm sure I look panicked or wrought with despair like my boyfriend just broke up with me and I'm chasing after him to beg him to take me back. When in reality, I'm the one being chased by a dangerous, dangerous man. How could I have been so stupid? So trusting?

Conrad called in the bomb threat.

He's also been stalking me for weeks. Who knows how long?

Pink pillowcase. He gave himself away with that one. He may have driven me home before, but he's never been inside my bedroom. At least, that's what I thought until moments ago when those words slipped from his mouth.

“Thinking of you alone at your house, away from my protection, resting your head on your cute little pink pillowcases...”

Just replaying that statement in my mind now sends shivers up my spine. This whole time that he was pretending to be protecting me, safeguarding me, he was simply scheming to get close to me. Keeping me from leaving his sight. All that game of helping me prepare for my husband—that was just an excuse to touch me, to get me to open up to him so he could get inside me.

Oh God. I gave my virginity to my stalker.

This is sick. Conrad is demented.

I would never have expected this kind of lunatic behavior from a former Marine. Then again, how do I know Conrad even is a former Marine? He could have been lying about that too. And what about that incident with Barry back at the manor? Did he orchestrate that whole thing just to keep anyone from suspecting him?

I’m sick to my stomach as I order a ride on my phone while I continue to run. I put Police Headquarters under the destination. I have to report this maniac before it’s too late. Before he’s able to take cover, or go dark, or whatever terminology they use in the Marines to indicate that he’ll be impossible to find and apprehend. Which in turn means I’ll have to spend the rest of my life in constant fear, cowering behind alarm systems and locked doors, wondering when he’ll reappear and what he’ll do to me.

I reach my pickup spot and hide myself in the shadows of a pizzeria, watching my ride approaching on the map on my phone. The seconds tick by painfully as I glance around, panicked that at any moment, Conrad will appear out of the black, racing after me. And I would be helpless against him. His strength, his speed, his prowess. I simply can’t compare.

I'm debating calling 9-1-1 when my ride arrives. I leap out of the darkness, nearly twisting my ankle in the process, and leap into the backseat of the sedan.

"Um, are you...Belle?" the man asks.

"Yes, yes! I need you to drive, please. Now!"

I'm quivering as the man throws me a questioning glance in the rearview mirror, then pulls away from the curb and drives off into the night.

"Take it from me...We like girls who know what they're doing. If a girl doesn't know how to please her husband, how long do you think that marriage will last?"

That's what Conrad said to me as he manipulated me and convinced me that somehow, he was doing me a favor by getting me ready to be with my future husband, when in reality he was just tricking me to get in my pants. And I fell for it! I basically gave myself away to him like a tourist handing their passport to a scammer on the streets, only to never get it back again. And yet, I still can't think about our moments together without a tingling sensation returning between my legs. Conrad introduced me to things I knew nothing about. He changed me.

And the entire time, he was lying to me.

He called in a bomb threat to stop my wedding. And he must have broken into my house too if he knew the color of my pillowcase. Who knows what else he's been up to.

Conrad is a stalker. And now I'm on the way to the police station to report him.

"Almost there," my driver says to me cautiously, as though I'm the twisted one. Sure, maybe I was behaving a bit erratically when I dove into the back seat like I was

escaping a war zone, but if he only knew what was really going on and causing me to behave like a wild woman.

I'm fidgeting with my fingernails as he pulls up in front of the station. I can see a male officer sitting at the desk behind a sheet of glass, scrolling through his phone, a bored look on his face.

Get out, Belle. Go report the son of a bitch before he has a chance to escape!

I'm shaking like I've been out in the freezing cold for hours, and yet there's still something stopping me from getting out of the car and racing up the steps to the uniformed man. But why? It's not like Conrad and I have known each other for decades and I finally just discovered some awful truth about him. It's only been weeks since we first met, and a couple days since things got really...personal.

So why am I hesitant? Why am I thinking back to what happened in the back kitchen at the manor? To how assertive he was with me, how strong he was when he held me in his arms? Why, at the same time that I'm thinking about leaving him, am I thinking about my life with him?

The man is a stalker! An unhinged liar!

It's impossible for me to know what else he's done and hasn't told me about. And I want to know it all. All there is to know about him. He could have chosen any girl to do this to, but he chose me.

"Listen, girl, you gotta get out of my car now," the driver says, clearly annoyed. "Or order another ride."

"If you could just give me a second—"

“Out!” he shouts, shoving the rear passenger door open. “Now!”

“Okay, okay,” I mutter, dragging myself across the seat and stepping out onto the curb. Without a second’s hesitation, the man snatches his door shut and speeds off, leaving me standing beneath the cold blue of a street light, my eyes on the police station.

What can I actually tell them, though? That Conrad called in a fake bomb threat of which I have absolutely no proof? That he deceived me by pretending to protect me, while the whole time he was stalking me? Again, I have no way of proving that either. And was he never actually not protecting me? He never let me out of his sight—that is, until I tricked him at the pier. And I did feel so safe around him...

My God, what am I even thinking right now?

My nipples are hard beneath my shirt. I’m still soaked from our encounter on the Ferris wheel. And despite the chill in the air, I’m flooded with heat. I take one more glance up at the officer behind his desk and think about how our conversation would go, then turn my back on him and pull out my phone.

“You are such an idiot, Belle...”

I scroll through my recent calls until I find Fitch’s contact. I hesitate. If I make this call, things will get very complicated. Not like they already aren’t, but this will change how the rest of my life unfolds. There will be no going back if I do this.

“What I can do is take you into the shadows behind one of these shops, pin you up against the wall, and put my cock back where it belongs—inside you.”

His words ring in my head, making me aware of just how badly I wanted that back at the pier. How badly I still want it. I feel like years have passed with Conrad. I don’t

even know who I am anymore. My thinking is no longer rational. I've fallen for him, utterly and completely. But I'm also terrified by him.

So what do I do now?

I want to believe he won't hurt me. In fact, I know he won't. But how can I possibly think that? Am I just being as naïve as I was when I first fell for him? Despite all my anger from being lied to, my fury for being manipulated, my fear from realizing he's been stalking me, I still cannot resist his passion, his strength, his dominance that he asserted in the way he commanded me.

He makes me feel wanted. A feeling Fitch has never given me. A feeling my own parents have never given me, who are happy to sell me off like an old dairy cow. But none of this changes the fact that he lied to me. He hid who he truly was from me, and who knows what else he has yet to reveal?

He's going to have to understand that.

He's going to have to feel the way I feel now before I let him take me back. You can't build a house on a weak foundation, and if Conrad and I are going to have any kind of relationship at all, we need a foundation that can hold the world.

I look down at Fitch's name on my phone, take a deep breath, close my eyes, and press it with my thumb. He answers on the first ring.

"Hello, Belle? Is everything okay?"

I'm on the verge of a panic attack. But somehow I'm managing to keep it together.

No. Everything is not okay. But I keep my cool and even put a smile into my voice when I reply, "Everything is not okay."

CONRAD

Everything is collapsing.

I'm a wild beast, foaming at the mouth, suffering with desperation, possessed by a singular, desperate goal: find Belle.

I searched the whole pier and couldn't find her. I called her countless times, but it goes straight to voicemail, and every time I hear her recorded voice, a distant ghost of the real thing, it's like a venomous sting to my heart.

She's sharp. She used her little challenge back there with the punching machine as a ploy to get me to take my eyes off her for a split second, and in that second, she made her escape.

I should have expected it. I never should have turned my back on her.

My lungs are on fire from sprinting up and down the pier. I went back to the manor and checked every room under the pretext that I was just doing a final inspection for any possible explosives. So what if I drew some strange looks from the staff? I don't care. All I care about is finding Belle. Now.

She wasn't at her parents' house either, but that didn't surprise me. She knows I'm looking for her and that would be one of the first places I'd check. So it makes sense she wouldn't be there. I nearly swerved off the road into her neighbor's fence when I

peeled out and pulled an aggressive U-turn to head back to the pier. There's still a small chance that she found a shadowy place to hide and wait until she felt it was safe to leave.

But when I return and begin marching up and down the boardwalk, more and more people start throwing strange glances in my direction. I feel rabid, out of my mind, and I must look it too. If I keep this up, it won't be long before someone calls the cops on me—if Belle hasn't already.

But she wouldn't do that, would she?

She has every reason to.

I lied to her, ruined her wedding, stalked her, and she knows it all now. She must be terrified of me. But how could she be? She must know I would never hurt her. I might never let her leave my sight again. I might keep all other men from laying their filthy eyes on her, but I would never hurt her. Not my girl. My angel.

Panting like a dog, I stare up at the stars and think: where else could she be? If she rented a hotel around here, it's going to be pretty much impossible to find her. There are far too many to check, and no desk clerk is going to tell a madman man like me if she's checked in. She couldn't have called Fitch, could she? No. No way. Besides, if she were at the room I set up for him, one of my guys would have called to alert me.

I find it hard to believe she'd go to the cops on me, but just in case, I speed over to the station, my heart flaming with every beat. If she's already inside, I won't be able to get her out of there. I guess I could try pretending she's a friend of mine in the midst of a manic episode and I need to get her home, but the cops would never buy that. In fact, that would just get me into more trouble.

I'm on the verge of breaking down completely as I pull up on the opposite side of the

street from the police station. Gasping for breath, I lift my sniper scope to my eye and peer inside, but all I see is a bored uniformed man messing around on his phone.

A slight sense of relief passes through me, but it's instantly washed away by the distress of still not knowing where my angel has disappeared to.

I scratch a red patch into my skin as my anxiety levels peak.

“Belle!” I shout, slamming my fist against the dash. “Where are you!?”

My phone vibrates in my pocket, startling me like I've just been hit by a taser. I pull it out and see the call is coming from a blocked number. I answer instantly without thinking. “Belle?”

Wrong answer.

That was a mistake.

If it is her, I now sound frantic and potentially dangerous. If it's someone who knows Fitch, they'll be wondering why Belle is not with me. I could have just cost myself everything from my lack of restraint.

“No,” a distorted male voice says from the other end. Am I losing cell service?
“Conrad, I'm just calling to let you know...that a second bomb threat has been called in.”

“What!?” I nearly explode. A second bomb threat? How can this be? The first wasn't even real; it was fabricated by me. And Barry was just some weirdo looking for attention. So who is this? My body goes cold with dread. Have I created a copy-cat?
“Where? Who is this?”

I'm shouting so hard my lungs feel like they're peeling out of my chest. My head is spinning as I try to put together what's happening.

"The hotel room you rented for Belle, sir," the voice responds. Instantly, I slam on the gas and peel out, causing the officer inside the station to glance up from his boredom. Hopefully he doesn't get pissed and get my plate. This is not the time to have the cops on my ass.

"When did the threat come in!?" I shout. There's no response, and I look down at my phone and see that the call was lost. Cell service has always been spotty around here, but I've never been more enraged by it.

I call my guys at the hotel as I'm on my way there, but neither one of them answers. They are both so fucking fired when I get my hands on them. This is breaking every protocol we have for maintaining safety at a set location.

I sprint to Belle's room when I reach the hotel and see that both of the men I had posted there are gone. The door is ajar. I burst in, pistol drawn as I clear every angle. But there's nothing. No one. "Belle!" I shout, bewildered. I'm just about to turn back when I see something on the bed.

A worn cardboard box with a card on top. Beside it, a pink pillowcase.

The world seems to come to a cold halt.

My eyes move to the pillowcase, and my chest threatens to burst as my heartrate reaches a new high. This should not be here . Either it's the one I stole, which means someone broke into my apartment and took it back, or it's the matching case from Belle's, which means someone stole it from her room. And that thought absolutely terrifies me.

I holster my gun and approach slowly. Is there actually a bomb in there? And if so, where are my men? Where is Belle now? How did someone manage to get in here without being noticed? So many questions prick at my mind like a thousand needles as I look down at the card.

It reads Open Me! in big black letters.

There's absolutely no way I should touch this thing. I should be calling in an official bomb squad to come deal with this potential threat, but like the lunatic I am, I take out my phone and dial Belle instead. Of course it goes straight to voicemail.

"Shit!" I curse, tossing my phone to the floor. I gasp a painful breath and inspect the box, searching for any signs of a trigger or explosives. All I see, however, is a basic, brown cardboard box with no indication whatsoever of what it contains.

Don't touch this, Conrad. You know better.

But I have to know. I can't wait for the bomb squad.

It may be the stupidest thing I've done, but even as my hands tingle and burn, I reach out for the card and carefully set it aside.

Gently, I test the weight of the box. It's got some heft to it, which is not good. That could mean explosives. If I open this, there's a decent chance my life will be over. But if I don't find Belle, I know for certainty I will not be able to go on living. And right now, the only clue I have to finding my angel is this box. So going against all my better judgment, I succumb to my manic desire and open the top flap.

The burst from within is deafening. I close my eyes and clamp my hands over my ears in a futile attempt to shelter myself from the blast. This is it, I think. It's over. I expect to be thrown off my feet or to feel a scalding heat against my skin as a fireball

sears through my flesh.

But none of that happens, and after a moment, I open my eyes to tiny pieces of colored paper raining down all around me, blue and red pigment powder staining my clothes, the bedspread, and even the ceiling.

“A confetti bomb...” I mutter, a smile dancing its way across my lips as my ears continue to ring. My phone vibrates from the floor. I instantly grab it up and see a text from Belle: a single winky-face emoji with the word gotcha beside it.

“No way...”

Belle set the confetti bomb. She’s giving me a taste of my own medicine.

My phone vibrates again with a video message. My jaw drops at the thumbnail. Eyes wide, I press it and a video plays: me, standing at the bed, pulling open the box and the confetti bomb bursting everywhere as I flinch, sure that my life was about to end. The footage shakes, and I hear giggles from a girl filming.

I whirl, pulse racing, begging to see Belle standing behind me. But there’s nothing. Empty space. An open door. I’m alone.

The audacity. The nerve. Belle, a civilian, managed to lose me at the pier, then found a way to slip back to the hotel and set a trap for me. She also managed to record me as it happened so she would always have proof of what she’s done.

What a naughty little girl. She deserves punishment—wonderful, sensuous punishment that makes her cheeks go red. Both sets. Just wait until I get my hands on you, little girl. I’m fuming inside that I’ve been made a fool of, but I also respect the hell out of her for what she’s done. Every second that ticks by, my love for her deepens. Grows into something all-encompassing. Swallowing me up. This goes way beyond the

obsession I had when I was stalking her. Belle has become a drug, and I'm completely addicted. If I lose her, if I'm cut off from her, the withdrawals will certainly kill me.

Leaping into action, I race from the room and down the stairs. If she was filming me when that confetti bomb went off, she must still be close by. I need to find her and get my hands on her. Up her shirt, down her pants, through her hair, all over her soft skin. My need for her has reached an all-time high.

Of course I could be racing out into a fleet of police cars, but when I burst out of the hotel and onto the sidewalk, all I see is a couple walking their poodle. They glance back at me, throwing me an odd look, and that's when I remember that I'm covered in blue and red pigment powder.

I smile to myself.

Belle didn't call the cops. She pulled a prank on me.

She loves me. But first she's making me pay for what I did to her.

"Belle!" I shout, racing through traffic to the park across the street. I'm nearly clipped by a truck and am vaguely aware of the driver shouting curses at me as I leap the low stonewall and land in the grass on the other side. "Belle, come out! I know you're here!"

My voice echoes through the night, bouncing off trees, falling into silence. She must be here. She wouldn't have gone through all that trouble to just catch a ride back to her parents' house or—God forbid—the manor.

I call her name again and start feeling dizzy when there's no response. I press my palm against the trunk of a tree to steady myself and remain upright. My head aches,

as though a pressure is growing and my skull is about to burst like Belle's little trick bomb. I hear the steps of random people walking down the street behind me. Someone even calls out to me, asking me if I'm okay. I rudely wave him away before falling to one knee.

"Belle..."

My phone vibrates again, and I snatch it from my pocket, my hands shaking as I unlock it and see a picture message from Belle: a grainy zoom-shot of me, here in the park, my right knee pressed into the wet grass.

It's like a spear of electricity straight to my heart, and I look up to see a vague flicker of moss green vanishing back into the shadows. Belle's yoga pants.

Instantly, I'm on my feet and running, driven by pure adrenaline. I catch up to her in seconds, snatch her up in my arms, and press her up against the trunk of a tree. For a brief moment, her blue eyes threaten to devour me with their beauty. I simply cannot control myself and go in for the kiss.

I'm met with a fierce knee to the balls, which causes me to double over. But I tighten my grip on her and raise myself up to see her scowling at me. If looks could kill, I'd be a dead man.

"It was you! There was no real bomb threat! This whole time it was you!"

With one hand, I pin her arms behind her back. Using the other, I snatch a handful of her hair as I press my body against her, pinning her to the tree. I can feel her nipples through her T-shirt, hard like little gum drops on her perky tits. She may be mad, but she's also excited, like the horny little minx she is.

"Where are my men!? The ones I assigned to guard your room!?"

“Oh, them?” Belle laughs devilishly. “I made up a story about how you had found the man who made the threat and had him in custody at the manor.”

I can feel enamel scraping off my teeth as I grit them together in anger. “They are so fucking done after this.”

“That’s what you’re worried about right now? Not the fact that I’ve found you out! You’re the one who made the bomb threat!”

“I couldn’t let you marry him, Belle!” I snarl, my cock hard as I grind against her. My lust is painfully overwhelming. “You know I couldn’t, angel.”

“You stalked me!” She squeals as I press my nose to her neck, inhaling her scent that I’ve been deprived of for too long. “A pillowcase, Conrad? What did you do? Break into my bedroom when I was gone?”

I kiss her just below her ear, feeling her body tremble against mine. “Yes. Sometimes when you were there too. I couldn’t stand just watching you from afar.”

She gasps and tries to knee me again, but I twist and press into her with more force. She feels my arousal now.

“That’s insane!” she hisses. “You’re a stalker, Conrad! You’re dangerous!”

“It’s my job to be dangerous!” I snap. “But never with you, angel. Never. My only purpose in life is to keep you safe.”

“And lie to me, right? Trick me into giving you my virginity by saying you were preparing me for my husband? I can’t believe I fell for that!”

I lessen my grip on her. She’s struggling less now. “Come on, Belle. Let’s both be

honest. I didn't trick you! You wanted me. You don't want Fitch. You never wanted him!"

Her left eyebrow raises. Her eyes twinkle in a way that causes me to tense up. "Oh, yeah? Do you know I called him?"

The world freezes around me. My muscles go tight. Something close to fear grips me. "You did not...Please, Belle, tell me you didn't call Fitch."

Her muscles relax more, and a devilish smile twists over her plump, shiny lips. She nods, and my heart sinks. Has she played me again? Has this chase been just one long punishment, and now she's about to drive the dagger home?

It can't be.

Belle loves me. I know she does.

"I did, Conrad. I called Fitch," she whispers, causing me to deflate, loosen my grip on her. My face falls from hers, and I press my forehead against the cold bark of the tree, beads of sweat dripping from my forehead. It's over.

But then I feel Belle's sweet hand against my chin. She lifts gently, bringing our gazes to each other. "I called to tell him I'm leaving him for you."

A bolt of shock rips up my spine, forcing my eyes to narrow.

"Don't lie to me," I growl.

"I'm not the liar here, Conrad." The smirk on her lips is so adorable that I simply cannot take it. I erupt.

“Don’t lie to me!” The words emerge from my throat like the roar of a bear. I slam my fist into the tree, scraping skin from my knuckles. The pain distracts me momentarily, but not enough to matter.

“I’m not, Daddy,” she whimpers, eyeing me with that innocence that made me fall in love with her from the beginning. “You may have terrified me, but you also make me feel safe, wanted, important in a way that no one else ever has. And having known what that’s like, there’s no going back.”

“I’m so sorry, Belle,” I wheeze. “I should never have lied to you. I knew you were the lock to my key when I first met you. But my duty—the fact that I’d been hired by your fiancé—”

Belle places a finger to my lips, quieting me. “He’s not my fiancé anymore, Conrad. Remember?”

I smile fully at her, slipping my hand between her legs. The fabric is wet, betraying her arousal, and I apply pressure to the spot, causing her back to arch and her body to press back against mine. Her wet lips shine under the moonlight as I unbutton my pants and pull out my swollen manhood. She gently scratches my head, her fingers dancing lightly across my scalp as she accepts my kisses while I tug her pants down over her lush hips.

“I can’t get enough of you, Belle.” It’s confession time, so I might as well let it all out. My desperation, my addiction to her, the fact that I would do anything to keep her safe—including laying down my life for hers. “I’d die for you, angel. I’d die without you.”

I spread her folds with her fingers, causing a whimper to drip from her lips. “It’s yours, Daddy. Take it.”

I do.

I slide into her without hesitation, pinning her to the tree as I spear into her breach. I piston deep, clenching my teeth together as I feel her wetness, her tightness, her warmth. She grips my waist with her soft hands, pulling me into her like she's challenging me to let it all out on her. And God, do I ever.

I pound in and out of her like I'm possessed. This isn't just about sex. It's about solidifying our bond. It's about coupling with my angel. It's about finally being able to be my manic self around her and no longer needing to hide it.

"This is who I really am, Belle," I grunt in her ear as I slam into her. "You don't know how hard it's been to restrain myself."

The grip of her tight little cunt on my cock is sweet and dangerous, amplified by the intensity of the connection growing between us, like a chain being forged link by link with each slam of a massive hammer. My hammer.

"You love that I am obsessed with you," I snarl, slipping both hands up her shirt to cup her perky, bountiful breasts, fighting to not give in to the overwhelming pleasure of her dripping pussy. "Aren't you, angel?"

"Yes," she whimpers, wrapping her thin arms around my broad shoulders and neck. "You make me feel special, Conrad. Wanted." She leans her head forward, and I feel the warm wet of her lips against my skin. "You gave me something no one ever has, daddy. The way you care, coveted me, devoted yourself to me. You changed me. There's no going back for me now."

Her words are driving me crazy—even more crazy than I already am. And she's fucking me back, grinding her hips into mine with every stroke I give her, taking every inch I have with ripe passion.

Am I right for her? I can't say.

Can I live without her? Definitely not.

Belle is right. There is no going back from this. And I may be a twisted individual, owned by this angelic woman, or I might be just the right guy for her and her mutual malady. Maybe we're two puzzle pieces who simply needed to find each other, and the rest of our lives together will be pure dark magic.

My angel's body is shaking now, signaling to me that she's close. I grab both of her legs and lift her, wrapping them around my waist, holding her up against the tree as I speed up my strokes, taking absolutely no mercy on her juicy little cunt. I grip her breasts so hard she squeals in pain, but I silence her by devouring her mouth with mine, pressing my tongue against hers in a dance of passion.

Then suddenly, a dull explosion bursts in my ear, accompanied by a ringing sound, and I realize she's slapped me hard and has a grip on my hair. "I'm coming, D-daddy," she whines adorably, her voice a twist mix of pleasure and pain as I maintain my grip on her tits. "Come with me."

I do as I'm told and let spray my biggest load yet, filling her channel with my spend as she's overtaken with a quivering orgasm that causes her thighs to vibrate around my waist as she hangs on for dear life, the bark of the tree no doubt biting into her back as she pants sexy little moans into my ear. We come down gasping, panting, lost in each other's eyes, and I remain hard within her as I whisper to her, "I love you, Belle."

"I love you too, Conrad."

I take a full breath, filling my lungs with truth, honesty, and the bliss of the moment. I have no idea how we're going to sort this mess out, or what kind of damage this will

cause me in my professional life, but I do know one thing: With Belle by my side, I can do anything. And I cannot wait to begin my life with her.

BELLE

Five years later...

I look down at my phone and the little red dot signifying the location of my husband. Conrad installed this app for me when he first went back to work. “This way, I’ll never truly be away from you,” he told me. One look at it makes me feel so much more secure, watching the dot move around, letting me know he’s okay. At the same time, though, it fires me up, gets a hot feeling moving inside of me—that same hot feeling that led to our two children, Jane and Tom.

Once it became official that my wedding to Fitch was off, shit really hit the fan. First, my parents tried contacting me to let me know I had to marry him, but their threats of cutting me off were no longer truly threats. I had Conrad to take care of me, and he let them know that they needed to back off, and if they contacted me again, he would give them a response they would not like. I haven’t heard from or seen them since.

Fitch was also not happy. He felt that being rejected by me, a “woman of inferior birth,” was an insult to his character and made him look bad to all his rich buddies. So he tried confronting me once when I went out on some errands. Little did he know, Conrad was tailing me from a safe distance. He moved in on Fitch with such speed and intensity that I was sure he was going to kill him. But he didn’t. He simply let him know that it was in his own best interest to back off. And he did. I haven’t heard from him either.

I glance up at the security camera in the corner of the room and wink. I know Conrad is watching me now. He’s always watching, monitoring, protecting. Even if he’s not

always beside me, I feel safe. He would never let anything happen to me.

I bite my lower lip seductively, twisting my thighs against each other as I lift my shirt to show him my breasts. My nipples are already hard, and I lick my finger and gently circle each of them, wishing it was his tongue. Our sex life is impossibly incredible. Off the charts amazing. Whoever said getting married is a death sentence to life in the bedroom clearly never met us.

My phone vibrates, and I open a text from Conrad that reads: Just wait until I get home.

My center tingles, and I realize how vacant I feel without him inside me. It's only been since this morning when he left, but now that it's past dinner and I just put the kids down, I'm reaching desperation mode.

When will that be? I text back.

Soon, he writes. Don't start without me ;)

Again, I look up at the camera and ever so slowly peel aside my panties to give him just a glimpse of what he has to look forward to when he gets home. I'm already hot just thinking about it. And I run my finger up my slit, wetting it, then close my lips around the tip and suck off my arousal. I can just picture him right now, standing guard, his cock swelling beneath his tight briefs and thick jeans. I know he loves watching me when I'm like this. It gets him so horny, which is just how I want him when he walks through that door.

He and I are the only ones who can get through that door. Only we have the keycards and passcodes requires. Our entire home is like that. As soon as we bought it, Conrad worked with a contractor to turn it into a safehouse—a place where our family would be forever secure. Unharmed.

He never wants me anywhere but by his side, but he also has to work protection jobs, which are sometimes high-risk. So he found a happy medium where he felt comfortable leaving me, Tom, and Jane, knowing that no harm would come to us. We have so many cameras, locks, motion sensors, and panes of bulletproof glass that this place is probably more secure than the White House. Which happens to be where Conrad is today.

He was recruited to lead a special unit comprised of the FBI and Secret Service to secure a rally for Jimmy Newhouse, a man who will most likely be our next president. I'm not really that into politics, but I could not be more proud of my husband. He's an absolute force of nature, and he makes me feel like the luckiest woman on Earth.

I hear a timid knock on my door and quickly throw on my sweatpants and go over to it. I find Tom standing there, his brown hair all shaggy and messy, his eyes sleepy.

"Aw, what's the matter, honey?" I ask, lifting him into my arms. "Can't sleep?"

He shakes his head. "I had a bad dream."

"Well, that's no fun," I say, holding him close as I carry him down the hall back to his room. "It was just a dream, though, sweetie. It wasn't real."

"I know." I smile down at him as I set him back into bed and tuck him in. Tom looks just like his father, and Jane looks just like me. Two blessings who bring a golden light into every day of our lives.

I lie with him for a few minutes, stroking his hair and singing softly until he falls asleep. Then I tip-toe back down the hall, but just as I'm about to step through the threshold, I feel the hint of a presence behind me.

My heart leaps, but I have no chance to spin as a gloved hand clamps down firmly

over my mouth and a strong arm clamps around me, pinning my arms to my sides. I try to scream, but my cries are muffled by the stiff leather as I'm dragged into the bedroom and the door closes behind us.

Panic grips me, but it is quickly replaced by arousal when the scent of my husband enters my lungs.

I'm thrown to the bed, pinned down by Conrad's monstrous physique as he grinds his bulge between my legs. His eyes are fierce, spilling over with lust that enhances my boiling thirst that mirrors his desire. My heart is racing as he removes his hand from my mouth and captures it with his. Then he tears my shirt down the middle and begins to strip my clothes from my body.

Yes. This is what I live for .

Are the two of us normal? Nope.

But what is normal anyway?

Most people meet think we're the perfect little family. And that's how we appear from the outside. A happily married couple with two perfect children. It's only me and Conrad that know the truth—the history of how we met, our animalistic desires, and our twisted bedroom habits where we fully express our passion for one another.

But we're not hurting anybody. And no one else needs to know.

Just my husband and me. Happy as two little clams.

I feel the weight of Conrad's muscled body pressing me down into the mattress as he slides my pants off and pulls my panties aside. He wastes no time thrusting into me, filling the vacancy he left behind this morning when he set out for work. My body quivers, and I automatically throw my arms around him, feeling the taut sinews of his

broad shoulders.

“You didn’t fully close the downstairs door,” Conrad growls, driving his cock in and out of me with a force that shakes the bed. “Any man could have gotten in. Is that what you want, little girl?”

My lips twist with glee as we play out our sick little fantasy. “No, Daddy. Just you.”

“Just me?” He snatches a fistful of my hair and forces my head back to expose my neck. He drags his lips up the tender skin, halting at my lips. But denies me the kiss I so desperately desire. “With so many men out there who want your hot little body? You only want me?”

“Yes,” I pant, shaking with delight. In a blur, he has my wrists in his hand and pinned over my head. My eyes go wide with shock and stare up at his.

“What did you say!?” he growls. “You only want me...?”

“I only want you, Daddy!”

“That’s right, angel,” he breathes, reaching down between my legs, pressing on my swollen pleasure button and sending a shot of heat up my spine. I’m tingling all over now. “You want only me . Because I’m the only one who truly knows you. Who can give you what you want. Who can make you feel safe, wanted, special.” The pressure in my center is rising. I buck my hips back against him as he ruts deeper, harder, burying his inches inside me. “That’s why you tease me on the cameras when I’m gone, making my cock hard while I’m trying to work. That’s why your tight little cunt never wants to let go of my cock. And why you’re about to come all over it.”

He’s right. Only I’m not about to—I am .

My back arches off the bed, and my mouth falls open as my orgasm wracks me. My

pulse pounds through me as I take his vicious pounding. And then I feel him go off, his seed spraying inside me with such aggressive warmth. So hot and sticky, coating my walls and dripping out of me and down my ass and onto the bed.

I'm shaking. My world is blurred and somewhere just out of reach, hidden beyond the immense pleasure overtaking me. I want to scream so badly, but I also don't want to wake our babies. As if reading my mind, my husband covers my face with a pillow, allowing me to moan my lungs out while he pounds me until his balls are empty. He sinks down onto me, and I lift the pillow, gasping deep, happy breaths as I take him in my arms.

"Thank you, Daddy," I whimper.

"Don't ever thank me for that, angel. You know I love you beyond what words can say. That I want you so bad it's painful. If I could be inside you every second of every day, I would."

"That sounds awful stalkerish," I tease, tracing the lines of his muscles. Conrad smirks back at me and nibbles the lobe of my ear, causing me to giggle.

"Well, that would be fitting. Considering I am your stalker."

"And my protector. And my daddy," I add. He nods, a greedy look in his eyes as he fixes them on me.

"You're goddamn right."

Conrad tilts his hips, and still hard, begins to thrust once more. His display of primal lust has me back in the stars in seconds, soaring high like a rocket headed to the moon. And within moments, I'm clutching onto him as my body quivers under the grip of another orgasm.

He's come once, so I know he's going to last even longer for his second round. But I am more than ready to take it.

Give me everything you can, Daddy .

Conrad may have stalked me, but he also saved me. From my evil parents and the man I was to be sold to. He showed me my true colors, who I really am, and I'm convinced that we were meant to be. Nothing in the world could have ever stopped our unification, because my husband is an unyielding powerhouse who wanted me from the moment he saw me. He put everything on the line to get me, and now I'm his. Forever.

The End