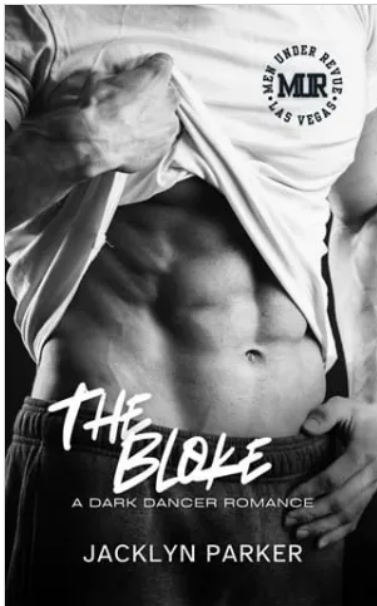




The Bloke (Men Under Revue #1)

Author: Jacklyn Parker

Category: Suspense Thriller

Description: CAN YOU FEEL THE THUNDER?

I'm a legacy and obligated to follow in my mother's footsteps. I spent two tireless years attempting to gain acceptance into the Aurelia School of Dance, only to be denied time and time again.

Having been raised in a life filled with unrealistic expectations and dreams that were never mine to begin with, I was desperate for a change of scenery and pace.

After my third attempt and failure at acceptance, I packed my bags and flew across the country, abandoning my past for what it was and rebranding my identity—my future.

Las Vegas—the city that never sleeps.

An escape from the reality of never being good enough for anyone or anything.

I was a pushover when I lived in New York; now, I'm a force to be reckoned with.

Enter Colby Bryce, a man who I didn't expect to sweep me off my feet and show me just how much the world had to offer to those who knew how to take what they wanted.

One wild night, one blazing hookup, and one giant f*cking mistake.

What happens in Vegas Well, you know the rest

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WELCOME TO LAS VEGAS.

Most know the Las Vegas Strip as the City of Sin, an adult playground where the only rules are those of the law.

Feel free to leave your life, love, and all those inhibitions behind. You won't need them where you're going.

What happens here stays here. There is no secret The Strip can't keep, not a single one.

Vegas is a city filled with lights, gambling, and lucrative entertainment for visitors who continue to seek their escape from reality.

No one sleeps here; we run twenty-four-seven on alcohol and caffeine, but that's only what can be seen from the surface.

There's a deeper level to The Strip that often goes unnoticed unless you know exactly where to look.

While the husbands come to spend and lose money, their wives come for us—more than once, if they're lucky.

The men play the slots and tables, and the women play with the ones who can give them exactly what they need—an escape.

It's not just the married who come for easy entertainment either.

The single women are even more fun to play with, desperate and thirsty for attention. They're the ones who believe they can take us home at the end of the night—or at least they try.

We're not strippers; we don't accept tips or dollar bills in our tight-fitting boxers that leave almost nothing to the imagination.

We're dancers, performers, entertainers.

You can touch us all you want; in fact, we encourage it.

But at the end of the show, we no longer belong to you.

We are the men who run this city.

We are the men of the underground.

We are the Men Under Revue .

Ravish the women...

Reign worldwide...

Revue first and forever...

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Chapter 1

Colby

Being the new guy for anything always fucking sucked, but being the new guy in a male revue show was substantially worse. While I didn't have to fetch coffee or bus tables to cater to every whim and need of the other blokes, I was filling in for call-outs and last-minute line-up changes almost every fucking night; my routines were never the same, and it threw me off.

I get it; it was like a right of passage to become one of them—being the bitch and just doing what you're told until it was your time to shine.

None of the guys here liked me; if they did, they never showed it.

I had hoped that would all change for me soon enough since Jaxon had been grinding my ass for the past week, and I was on the verge of putting a bullet in his—

“Colby. Where the fuck are you tonight?” His scolding tone brought me back from my thoughts, and I couldn't help but grit my teeth. Jaxon pulled himself up onto the stage and stepped into me. “Well?”

“I got it, Jax,” I answered sharply.

“Doesn't fucking look like it. Lock it the fuck up.” He stepped back to the edge of the stage, crossing his arms over his chest in frustration, and it took every ounce of restraint in me not to push him over the edge. “Vex, play it again from the top.” He

snapped his fingers several times so Vex in the audio booth could see him, and we got back to our starting line-up. “Let’s go boys.”

“Black Dog” by Led Zeppelin could be heard playing over the speakers in the showroom, and the seven of us started rehearsing part of the opening routine.

Eight blokes run the resident Heaven Down Under show at the Neon Sunset Resort and Casino on the Las Vegas Strip, with four others filling in when they weren’t swapping between tour locations. When it was a full house, and no tours were scheduled, upwards of twenty-five of us worked in one show.

Jaxon, the king asshole of the lot, hosted the Heaven Down Under show, dancing the lead on the finale set, and up until today, I was working as one of the background dancers.

Nick, one of our veterans, recently secured a spot on the international tour and left at the last minute, leaving me to pick up his set as a lead dancer starting tomorrow.

While I didn’t mind getting to work center stage with a full performance of my own, the problem was I knew it wouldn’t be permanent.

I had been here all of six months, and even though the work was hard as shit, I wouldn’t trade it for anything.

Was this the life I had imagined for myself as a kid? Fuck no. But it was the second-best decision I had made in the past year. The first was when I purchased a brand-new penthouse with a skyline view of the Las Vegas Strip. Which, of course, I would have never been able to afford if it hadn’t been for my decision to make a dramatic change in my life and career.

I grew up a country boy in Western Australia, and my parents were sorely

disappointed in my sudden change in lifestyle. They expected their eldest son to take over the family farm and continue with tradition: find a local pretty girl, settle down, get married, and have kids. A wholesome happily ever after. Unfortunately for them, that wasn't what I wanted for my life, and the moment I was able to drop everything and leave. I did— Oh, the fuck I did .

When my parents discovered that I had planned on packing my bags and moving across the world to be here on the Las Vegas Strip, they cut me off completely. This was a minor setback, but luckily, I got the job with the male revue show pretty quickly, a benefit of being an Australian Citizen, which was one of the main requirements for consideration.

As a man who spent his entire life working in manual labor, I already had the body; it just needed a little extra—refining. With the rigorous workout schedule Jaxon puts us through, it wasn't hard to keep or maintain—

“For fuck sake, Colby.” Benji. Asshole number two chimed in.

He gritted out before swatting me over the back of my head as I turned to face him. “Three hours. We’ve been at this for three fucking hours, mate. I want to get the bloody hell out of here.”

“What do you have to run home to at two in the morning?” I scoffed, rolling my eyes before grabbing my towel to clean up the sweat dripping from my brow. I was ready to go home, too, but I just wanted to get a rise out of him for the fuck of it.

A few of the blokes here were married, Tate, Jacob, and Matt, to name a few, but not all of them. Most of us were single, though, and didn't want it any other way. It wasn't that we couldn't date or marry in our line of work, but a man can become pretty picky after spending hours every night around hungry and feral women.

Every once in a while, one of the blokes would take a woman home after a show for a little added fun—that's how the first two got married, come to think of it—but it wasn't something that happened regularly. In fact, it was rare.

I have yet to find a single woman who piqued my interest enough to bring them back to my place, even for just a single night of fucking around. My particular tastes could have been the most logical reason for that—searching for a woman I could break instead of a girl who'd bark just because I told her to. I had always known that for me to serve one woman for the rest of my life, she would have to be worth every damn second of it. I wanted a woman I could serve, a woman who could bring me to my fucking knees if she wanted to. Unfortunately, that meant whoever that woman was—she had some pretty high heels to fill.

“Alright, wrap it up. Colby, finish rehearsing your solo set, and we can all call it a night.” Jaxon instructed, and I blew out a heavy sigh.

Fucking finally. I needed to get the hell out of here, take a long hot shower, and pass the fuck out. Some days, I wished I was nocturnal with all these late-night training sessions. But when one shift ends, another begins.

We weren't just male revue dancers, models, performers, or whatever you want to call us. We were something more: a dark, secret society that resided in plain sight and one of Vegas's many best-kept secrets.

We were the Men Under Revue, and we owned fucking everything.

Being employed by one of the revue shows didn't give you automatic access and membership to the secret society. You had to be initiated into it; once you were in, you were a member for life. Fuck up, and that becomes a forfeit.

In all honesty, the initiation tests were asinine and overplayed. Yeah, they make it

hard to pass because they didn't want just anyone joining their ranks; with status comes power, and you couldn't give that shit to just anyone, but it was easy if you had the right mentality and understood their business dealings.

The Strip could only function as well as it was operated, and the Men Under Revue were at the forefront of keeping it as lucrative as possible. If someone caused a problem that would impact the revenue stream coming in, we would ensure that they never left with their greedy lives intact.

Three primary groups ran and served their section of the Strip, and no, we didn't always get along, but we cooperated the best we could.

Once initiated, you were given a ring to symbolize your loyalty to the secret society. The ring is made of tungsten carbide and inlaid with black obsidian stone. The letters MUR, signifying who you now belonged to, were engraved on the inside of the band. You were untouchable in the eyes of everyone and everything on the Las Vegas Strip if you were found wearing one of these rings—and I got mine three months ago.

At night, we were the most popular source of entertainment for hungry, thirsty women whose husbands were too busy thinking about themselves to give two shits about them.

By day, we were the owners and operators of the entire Strip. You could catch some of us working as hotel managers, restaurant and bar owners, casual bartenders; you name it, one of us is most likely doing it.

Most members of the Men Under Revue preferred to work 'normal' jobs during the day, as it was easier to keep an eye on things when everyone believed you were a nobody.

In contrast, others prefer a higher, more elevated status and notoriety. To each their

OWN.

The rings signify our status and membership in the MUR. They're subtle enough that we can identify one of our own, but those outside have no idea what they mean.

Once you completed your initiation, you were given a list of available jobs and could choose whichever you wanted. I went with a poolside bartender because I enjoyed the casual conversation and people-watching that comes with it. The endless sea of bikinis and the winters off were a nice incentive, too.

The Men Under Revue payroll sets you up for life starting from day one, so it doesn't matter what job you choose after passing the initiation tests and receiving your ring. They reward those worthy of living within their secret society—especially those who complete their contracted jobs without causing problems and attracting unwanted attention.

The day job keeps you busy, but it also means there are more eyes on the Strip to maintain order and peace.

The only industry we haven't tapped into is law enforcement. They were the only ones not on our payroll... Yet. We'll get there eventually.

"That's all for tonight's training. Good work, boys. Now get the fuck out of here." Jaxon called out, pulling his phone from his back pocket and exiting the showroom.

The rest of us, being tired and overly exhausted, just mumble and groan to ourselves as we pack up our shit and leave for the night.

It was roughly two in the morning, and I had to be at the bar by eight.

As they always say, Vegas is the city that never sleeps... and if that isn't the fucking

truth.

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Chapter 2

Colby

THREE MONTHS EARLIER.

INITIATION: TEST ONE.

When I moved here, I arrived with nothing but a backpack and a dream to change my life. I knew the change would be a struggle from the very beginning, and because of that, I knew I couldn't have asked for much—beggars can't be choosers.

I was lucky to snag this job, dancing on a stage for a showroom filled to the brim with crazed women every night, but the checks alone weren't cutting it. With Jaxon expecting daily strength training and constant dance rehearsals, there wasn't enough time left in the day to work a second or third job—not like I would have had the energy to do so, either.

“Colby, you look like shit, mate.” Nick slapped me on my shoulder as he passed behind to reach his locker. He started working in this show over a year ago and took me under his wing when I got hired, like a mentor. “Getting enough sleep?”

Aside from Jaxon, Nick was another favorite in the show. He had shoulder-length blonde hair, which he tied back into a low, tight bun most nights. His ears were gauged, and his body was covered in tattoos. The ladies went fucking nuts for him and his baby blue eyes.

“Not in the least. How the fuck do you afford your penthouse while working here?” I ran a hand through my dark hair, forgetting it was already covered in body oil. Fuck.

I’ve been to Nick’s place a few times for drinks with some of the other blokes. He had a penthouse on the east side with a sweet-ass view of The Strip; it was breathtaking at night.

It was exactly what I wanted when I moved here, and I had no fucking clue how he could afford it if I was just barely surviving in my cheap one-bedroom apartment several miles out on the west side.

Nick sighed at my response and looked over his shoulder to see if anyone else was in the locker room with us. After confirming that we were the only ones here, he turned back to face me and grinned as if he was about to confess to a murder he was proud of dishing out.

“Look... I like you, and I can clearly see you’re struggling.” He paused, dragging his tongue along the back of his perfect, straight white teeth. “If you think you can handle some fucked up shit, meet me at my car after the show tonight. I’ll show you how I can afford everything.” He winked before pulling on his white tank top and stepping around me to exit the locker room.

I frowned as he left me behind to consider his offer.

“Fucked up shit?” I mumbled in curiosity.

I was sure everyone had a different opinion as to what is considered ‘fucked up’ these days, and my version might be very different from his. But whatever it was, I was game if it meant I could finally afford to survive here. With a slam of the locker door, I made my way backstage for the start of tonight’s show.

Leaning against Nick's car, I waited for over an hour, looking bored as fuck with my arms crossed over my chest, staring at the cement wall of the underground parking lot—the sounds of screeching tires and clicking heels ringing in my ears.

Nick had to stay back for the post-show photo ops and to sign autographs for the women who purchased them. I was not obligated to do this, considering I was still new, but eventually, it would also be part of my show routine.

The lights on his car flashed several times, and Nick approached it from around the corner.

“Get in, we're gonna be late.” He urged, unlocking the doors and getting into the driver's seat without looking at me.

I shrugged, dropping into the passenger seat and pulling the seatbelt across my lap.

Nick drove a white Lamborghini Countach LPI 800-4, it was a sweet ride, and yet again, I still had no fucking clue how he could afford it.

“Late for what?” I asked, relaxing into the leather seat as he backed out of his spot and pulled out of the parking garage.

“Your first part of initiation.” He answered vaguely and gave me a wicked smile that radiated trouble. “You want to make the kind of money I do; you gotta earn it, and not the way we do it in that showroom.”

Nick peeled off down Las Vegas Boulevard, and without even asking, I already knew that I was getting myself into something I shouldn't, but I couldn't keep living like this, and I sure as fuck didn't want to go back home.

I better not have to whore myself out for that kind of money, though.

Not fucking happening.

I'll consider a lot for a decent income, but I will draw the line right fucking there.

Twenty minutes later, we pulled up to a mansion in the middle of nowhere. I open the door and exit Nick's Lamborghini as my eyes scan our surroundings. There is nothing out here, not even street lights. The only lights were those coming from the mansion itself.

The grounds were out of place but beautiful. Several stone fountains lined the circle drive, with a massive one stationed right in the center, and the grass was all artificial turf. With how dark it was, I couldn't tell if the plants were too, but it wouldn't have surprised me. To keep a garden this lush, green, and vibrant would cost a small fortune out here in the desert.

"Before you say anything, no, you won't find this place on any map or GPS." Nick chuckled as he shut his door, slipping his hands into his pockets as he strolled towards the main entrance steps.

I pressed my lips into a hard line as I followed him, remembering that I was the one who agreed to this in the first place. Where the fuck were we? Why was a massive mansion sitting here in the middle of nowhere?

As we stepped into the entryway, a butler greeted us while holding out a silver tray on top of which two masks rested. Apparently, they were expecting us; why?

Both masks were solid black, with tubing resembling glow sticks accenting the eye holes and mouth in neon red.

Nick took one of the masks and placed it over his face, and without being told to or asking what the fuck this was about, I picked up the second and pulled it on the same

way. Either Nick was fucking with me as a sick joke, or I was getting myself into some serious shit tonight.

“You may proceed to the lower level when ready. They are waiting for you,” The butler instructed, gesturing to the descending staircase before exiting the foyer.

Without a word, Nick headed towards the stairs, and I gripped his arm just as he took hold of the rail.

“Nick. What the fu—”

“Relax, Colby. I wouldn’t have brought you here if I didn’t think you could survive it.” He assured me. What the actual fuck?

“Survive? You’re not doing a great job of helping me relax, Nick. What is this?” I pressed as I released his arm and stepped back, ready to make a beeline for the exit.

Nick sighed before lifting his mask to show me his face. “There is more to The Strip than you currently understand.” He paused, searching for the right words. “There is a secret society that operates the entirety of it, and those of us who are proven worthy of joining are well taken care of.”

“And how am I going to prove myself worthy ?” I questioned, roughly pulling my mask off and gesturing to the staircase with it. “A mask? It’s not fucking Halloween, Nick.” I couldn’t help but scoff at the ridiculousness of it all. Nick was fucking around with me, I was sure of it, and I bet he had half the blokes from the show here waiting for me like an episode of Punk’d.

“Look, I’m going to break this down for you, short and sweet, and then we are going down there...” Nick sighed long, pinching the bridge of his nose in annoyance. “To join, you must first be employed by one of the three male revue shows—which you

already are. Secondly, you must pass three tests as part of your initiation to prove your loyalty and contribution to the MUR.”

“MUR?” I arched a brow in question and crossed my arms over my chest, still holding on to my mask.

“Men Under Revue. That’s what we are called, and soon you will be too.” He answered, “The tests aren’t easy, and most, if not all, require blood to be spilled, but after three months of knowing you, I believe you can handle it.”

“And if I can’t?” I added, not wanting to know the answer.

“We’re not going to talk about that because you will. Now put your mask back on, and let’s go before you lose your chance; you get one shot, that’s it.” He gestured his chin to my mask before pulling his back down over his face. Fuck it, here goes nothing.

When we entered the lower level of the mansion, I followed Nick down a dark hall and around a corner until we reached a vast open space the size of a grand ballroom.

Four men stood at the far end of the room, just in front of what appeared to be a stage. Each wore a mask similar to Nick’s and mine, except one set was green and the other blue.

“The other two revues. We initiate together.” Nick explained as he leaned towards me and mumbled under his breath loud enough so that only I could hear him.

I gave him a silent nod of understanding as we approached the others, lining up beside them with Nick standing behind me. Without warning, the three of us in the front were dropped to our knees.

Nick gripped my shoulder before kicking my knees in, preventing me from falling forward. I twisted my head to glare over my shoulder and growl at him, and he hissed a “Shh.” Knowing that I had a few choice words for him.

“Protégés,” A strong voice echoed over the room, and I shifted my attention to see a man approaching us in a deep red suit with a black shirt and crimson silk tie. “Tonight, you start your first of three tests. Pass all three without any complications, and you will reap the rewards of being a member of our secret society for the rest of your life.” This sounds like something you could put on a Hallmark card.

Three tests, easy enough; I mean, if Nick believed I could do it, then why couldn’t I? How hard could spilling blood be as long as the person deserved it? I can’t believe I am attempting to justify murder right now.

“Bring him in.” The man ordered as another was dragged into the room, struggling with a dark hood over his head.

He was dropped into a chair, his hands tied behind his back. Two additional men in black suits secure his legs to those of the chair before stepping back. I could hear muffled noises coming from under the hood, which left me to believe that the man was either gagged or had something covering his mouth preventing him from speaking—or screaming.

“William Klein—” The man continued once William was fully secured to the chair. “Owes us a pretty penny. William here took out several loans two years ago as an investment and hasn’t been able to pay a single dime back to us.” Removing the hood, he dropped it to the floor beside William, and my eyes met his watery ones—they were pleading to be released, and I shifted my gaze away from him, avoiding further eye contact.

His mouth had a dirty strip of thick fabric across it, secured to the back of his head,

his drool soaking into it. It was tight enough to prevent him from any form of communication aside from simple mumbles and grunts.

“In his agreement for the generous loans he’s received from us, half of the investment was to be returned to us within the first year, followed by the second half plus interest a year after that.” He slowly paced behind William as he spoke. “What do you have to say for yourself, Mr Klein?” The man asked, taking a knife from one of the black suits and sliding it against William’s cheek to push the fabric down, cutting into his skin in the process. He already knew the answer; this was turning into a game now.

William’s eyes squeezed shut at the pain as blood began to trail down the side of his neck, soaking into the collar of his white button-up, the strip of fabric dropping to his collarbone.

“I—I can get you the—the money.” William stuttered through the pain. “T—tomorrow.” He added, blinking his eyes open and looking up to where the man now towered over him.

“Tomorrow is a year and a day too late.” He replied coolly, almost bored with this man’s pleading, before facing us and holding the knife out by the blade. “Which of you thinks they are ready to join the Men Under Revue tonight?” He arched a brow in question.

Without hesitation, I stood from my kneeling position and took the knife in my right hand. I’d rather have looked too eager to kill than not enough.

If this secret society thrived on spilling blood when necessary, I would show them I could do it without batting an eye. Sticking a human with a knife shouldn’t be any more complicated than slaughtering a pig, and I remember doing that often back on my parents’ farm.

William was nothing more than a pig as far as I was concerned.

I approached William, the man in red stepping aside to let me in closer.

“N—no. P—please, I swear I can get you the money.” William's cry fell on deaf ears as I gripped the back of his head and pulled it back, exposing his neck to me.

He was squirming in my grasp, trying to loosen my hold on him. His screams rang out in the empty ballroom, bouncing off the walls.

I was planning on taking my time with him, giving this man next to us and everyone else here a good show of just how fucked up I could be when asked, but his cries were giving me a headache, and I wanted them to stop.

I bit down on my cheek as I lined the blade of the knife against the side of his neck, and with one long, precise drag, I slit his throat.

Blood poured from his neck like a waterfall as his screams became wet and strained, his body eventually sagging in the chair as his breathing stopped altogether.

Releasing his head, I cleaned the knife on William's slacks before returning it to the man in the red suit.

I didn't question my actions or regret what I had just done; I wasn't going to win any favor by showing him pity or mercy.

Rolling my neck and shoulders, I stepped back over to where I had previously been kneeling by Nick. Only this time, I remained standing; I earned that right after what I had just shown them.

“Well done, Protégé.” He snapped his fingers, and the two men in black suits dragged

away the bloody and limp body of William. “From this moment on, you three are under initiation. Three tasks. Three chances to prove your worth. Your sponsors will be responsible for you until the ceremony.” He took a step towards us, sliding his hands into his pockets. “And as far as formalities go, you can call me Dustin Slate. Welcome to the underground.”

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Chapter 3

Colby

INITIATION: TEST TWO.

Growing up in the countryside with a large family, you generally develop a decent amount of patience. When I left, I must have lost most of what I had learned because I had been on edge since the night Nick brought me to that mansion and I completed my first initiation test.

It had been roughly a week since the events of that night, and I still haven't heard anything about a second test.

Did I fail? Was I too quick to kill William? They didn't exactly explain what was expected of me before or after I took the knife in my hand.

After leaving the mansion, Nick informed me about another benefit of being a member of the MUR: bypassing the need for a visa to work and remain in the USA. I hadn't even considered applying for one until he asked me how I planned on getting one that would last longer than a few months. That alone meant that I had to successfully complete these tests unless I wanted to return home with my tail between my legs.

Standing in front of my locker, I changed into my light blue denim jeans and a black T-shirt. The show for the night had ended ten minutes ago, and I was ready to get the hell out of there before Jaxon called us all back for additional rehearsal time.

I sat on the bench along the wall and started pulling on my white sneakers.

“Ay, guess what, mate!” Nick’s voice was far too cheery for how tired I was.

“What?” I finished tying my laces and dropped my foot to the floor, my eyes connecting with his.

“You got your second task tonight.” He chuckled, crossing his arms over his chest as he rested his shoulder against one of the lockers, and my stomach flipped.

“Fucking finally.” I sighed, standing up and grabbing my black leather jacket from the hook. “To the mansion?” I inquired, shrugging it on and turning to face him.

“Not this time; we’re going to one of the hotels on the Strip.” Nick gestured his head to the door, and I followed him out of the showroom. “Hope you don’t mind walking.” He laughed as we turned in the opposite direction of the parking garage and followed the sidewalk along the Strip.

I shook my head with a smile and followed his lead. I was ready for this test, and if the next two were anything like the first, it would be all too easy for me to complete. It helped that I just didn’t give a fuck about anything anymore.

Since moving here, my life has been all about survival and looking out for my best interests. If that meant spilling a little extra blood here or there to get what I wanted in life, then so be it.

You fuck with the wrong people; you deserved what was coming to you. When living in a City of Sin, that wasn’t too far of a stretch.

“You know, while I said I knew you could survive these tests, I never pegged you for the stabby type.” Nick broke the silence between us as we walked down the Strip.

“It just goes to show how much you blokes don’t know about me.” I shrug. “Or even care to, for that matter,” I added. The blokes are all nice guys, don’t get me wrong, but fuck do they only care about themselves when it comes down to it.

I get it; this industry is dog-eat-dog, but goddamn.

“It’s because you aren’t one of us yet.” He chuckled as if I wasn’t serious and only joking.

“We work in the same fucking show, what are you talking about?” I felt dumbfounded at his words.

“Just because you work in the show doesn’t make you one of us. This—” Holding up his right hand to show me the thick black ring on his ring finger, he added, “This is what makes you one of us. And you’ll get yours soon enough, mate.”

I couldn’t help but roll my eyes as we entered the double doors into Solitude, a newly built casino and hotel.

Three weeks ago, they had their grand opening and have become popular with the younger crowd that visits.

We walked across the large, open casino floor and entered the North Tower elevator lobby. A giant round three-tier fountain was in the center of the lobby, with three different bays branching off to take guests to their respective floors.

“Do you know which floor we are going to? And room?” I quizzed, looking up at the painted ceiling that reminded me of the Venetian.

“Yeah, this way.” Nick gestured to the hall on the left, and we entered the open elevator. He took out a white card, held it up to the room scanner, and when it flashed

green, he hit the button for the twenty-fifth floor.

“Where’d you get that?” I nodded to the card as he slipped it back into his pocket.

“You’ll get one of these soon enough, too. The society gives all its members a special card that grants you access to every floor of every hotel on the Strip.” He grinned at me in the reflection of the gold doors, and I couldn’t help returning the same expression.

Fuck, I couldn’t wait to become fully initiated. The high life that awaited me was within my grasp, and all I needed to do was reach out and take it.

The elevator bell dinged, and the doors opened once we reached our floor. Nick and I stepped out as he checked the placards on the walls for the direction we needed to take next.

We were on the twenty-fifth floor, so the room numbers started in the twenty-five-hundreds. With this being a newer hotel on the Strip, everything was grey—or at least various shades of it—with the carpet being dark and the walls a lighter color to brighten up the halls.

I wondered why we would perform my next test in one of the hotel rooms, but that shouldn’t have surprised me. If the Men Under Revue owned and operated the entire Strip, why wouldn’t they handle their business anywhere it presented itself?

“Down here.” He whispered and turned a corner, heading down one of the long halls of rooms. From what I could tell, we were the only two on this floor, and hopefully, that would stay the case.

“Do I need to ask what the expectations are?” My voice was soft as I approached his side. Nick had stopped at one of the dark grey doors, matching the carpet about

halfway down the hall.

“Same as the first. Do you need a reason?” He inquired, arching a brow before pulling the white card out again.

With a smirk in acceptance, I shook my head. “Not at all. I got it.”

“Good, then take this and take care of them.” He handed me a knife, and I took it without any further question. “You’ve got five.” Nick held the card to the NFC reader, and the light turned green with an audible click.

“I can do it in two,” I whispered with a grin as I pressed my palm down on the handle and opened the door, sliding swiftly into the room.

All the lights were off, and I could hear light snoring around the corner where the king-sized bed sat centered along the wall. Since my target for the evening was asleep, this test will be even easier than the first.

Stepping further into the room, I turned the corner and saw a petite body under the sheets. They were lying on their side, facing the open window, moonlight filtering through the sheer curtains.

I approached the bed and attempted to get a better look at who I was tasked to kill. I frowned, realizing that it was a woman.

Maybe I misjudged just how easy these tests would be.

Men I had no issue taking out, especially if I had no fucking clue who they were, but a woman? What would be next? I knew I shouldn’t question the motives of the society. She clearly pissed off the wrong person, overstepped her boundaries, and they were now sending me in here to take what they were owed—her life.

The woman stirred in her sleep, rolling to face the wall opposite the window. I needed to do this fast. No hesitation, just fucking do it, Colby.

I sucked in a deep breath before freeing my mind of any doubt and second thoughts, coming up to her side and gripping the knife firmly in my hand.

With her back to me, I pulled my arm back, adjusting for the right angle, and without pause, I plunged the knife into her back and straight through her heart. An audible gasp passed her lips before I covered her mouth with my hand to muffle any scream she could manage to get out before the knife did its job.

Counting down the seconds, her breathing slowed, and eventually, her body went limp, and I removed my hand.

I pulled the knife from her back, wiped the blade on the sheets, and turned to leave the room. For a second, I stopped and glanced back at the silhouette of her body in the moonlight before straightening myself and opening the door. Fuck sake, what am I doing?

Closing the door behind me, I came face-to-face with Nick, leaning against the wall with his arms crossed over his chest and a smirk on his face.

“Done already?” He looked down at his phone to check the time.

I nodded in response, handing him the knife and releasing a held breath.

“Yeah. Who was she?”

“That information doesn’t matter. But if you must know, that woman in there was no angel. Far from it.” Nick pointed his phone at the closed door as his eyes met mine. “She’s been on our radar for months. Taking advantage of older men in the Sugar

Daddy game, and her last client showed up dead just under a week ago.”

Chewing on my cheek, I let his facts sink in.

So what we do isn't all that bad then, right? Sure, we murder people, but from what it sounded like, they deserved what's coming to them, breaking some rule or committing an offense that required handling off the table. I could live with that. Make poor fucking choices, get stuck with the consequences.

“And what now?” I couldn't imagine leaving a dead and bloody body in the room for housekeeping to find after checkout.

“Now, we leave this on the door.” He attached a sticker to the number plate beside the door. “And when housekeeping stops by, they know what to do with this room.” He added before giving me a hard pat on the back. “Good on ya, mate. One more test to go.”

With a frown, I took a closer look at the sticker. It was a green circle with a metallic gold kangaroo in the center.

“Seriously?” I scoffed. “How fucking cliché can you get?”

“All three revues have their respective symbols. This one is ours. It fits the brand and is inconspicuous, yet obvious to those who need to know who left it behind.” Nick shrugged, uncaring, before turning on his heel to head back to the elevator bay. “Let's go, Colby. We're done here.”

I shook my head, taking one last look at the stupid fucking sticker before turning to follow Nick around the corner.

Chapter 4

Colby

INITIATION: TEST THREE.

Two days had passed since my last test, and I could see the finish line ahead of me—even taste the sweet reward that came with it—wealth, power, control. I knew I'd have more questions for Nick and Dustin after the ceremony, but getting there was my primary objective.

The blokes and I were sitting in the lounge backstage from the showroom, all in our opening number outfit: a black tank top, blue jeans, our signature black leather belt with the words Heaven Down Under stamped on the silver buckle, and white sneakers—curtain call was in thirty minutes. The ten of us relaxed before the show while Jaxon was out front greeting the guests and taking photos as they filtered in and got seated.

“Nick’s been praising you a lot these past two weeks.” Darren sat beside me on one of the couches as I downed the rest of my Celcius energy drink. Out of the corner of my eye, I glimpsed his right hand and noticed the black obsidian ring he wore. Glancing around the room, I realized they were all members of the MUR. That explains a lot.

“Yeah, what about?” Playing dumb, I shrugged and stretched an arm out along the back of the couch. Based on the fact that everyone here was a member, I knew that was what he was referring to.

“You know exactly what, but fair enough.” He spun his ring around his finger. “All I’ll say is that he’s impressed with you; honestly, all of us are. We didn’t think you had it in you.” Darren admitted with a chuckle. “Country boy, raised on a farm his whole life and just shows up here out of the blue? You continue to surprise us, mate.” He blew a low whistle, lounging back onto the couch.

As I gestured to the opposite side of the room where Nick was talking with Benji and Tate, I rolled my tongue along the front of my teeth.

“Tell me, do all revue dancers enter initiation?” I already knew I wasn’t special, but I had been curious if protégés were chosen or if everyone got a shot.

Nick had been busy since the night at Solitude, and I haven’t been able to ask him for confirmation.

“So, I’m guessing you are well aware by now that our friend Nick over there is your sponsor, correct?” Darren asked, pointing his finger toward Nick, and I nodded in response.

I knew that from the mansion, but I didn’t know what it specifically meant and entailed for him. “Well... while being a dancer in any of the revues qualifies you for membership, it requires a sponsor to enter the initiation process—someone to vouch for your worth to the MUR.”

“And Nick believed that I was worth something?” My brows raised at the thought that someone here actually gave two shits about me.

“Yeah. Surprised all of us when he said he was going to sponsor you. If I’m being honest, I sure as fuck wasn’t.” Darren laughed, stretching his arms behind his head.

“Thanks...” I replied sarcastically, rolling my eyes and crushing my empty Celcius

can before tossing it on the coffee table.

“Didn’t he tell you what happens if a sponsor’s protégé fails?” Darren leaned towards me with a frown of concern. I didn’t answer him, knowing he was about to tell me the answer regardless. “Not everyone gets sponsored because of the risk that comes with it. You bring someone in from the outside; they know what we do from day one. If they can’t handle or complete any of their tests, the sponsor has to take matters into their own hands. They are responsible for their selected protégé until death.”

Darren sat back with a sigh, and I pressed my lips into a hard line, glancing back over at Nick.

If I couldn’t finish my last test, Nick would be required to kill me. Great. I wasn’t nervous before regarding my initiation, but now? Fuck me.

After finishing our post-show rehearsal, I returned to my locker, pulling on a pair of grey sweatpants and a white T-shirt. I planned on going straight home and getting some much-needed sleep before physical training in the morning. Jaxon had us scheduled for a bright and early session starting at five.

While lacing up my sneakers, I heard my phone vibrate against the locker's metal shelf, so I stood to pick it up. Nick lit up the screen, and I unlocked it to see a new text message from him.

Nick: Ready for your last test? It’s gonna be a fun one.

Nick: Meet me Strip side in fifteen.

Me: OMW

Pocketing my phone, I shut my locker door and headed out of the showroom to meet

up with Nick. How could he believe that any of these tests were fun? I mean, when you spend your life doing it, then I guess, yeah, it becomes a game more than a job, but fuck.

I may be overthinking all of this, and I need to let go and embrace the new life that being a member of the Men Under Revue will create for me. If I pass this final test, I will officially become one of them, making jobs like this my new normal no matter what.

Stopping just outside the double doors leading to the strip from Neon Palms Resort and Casino. A whistle caught my attention, and I looked over to where I saw Nick waiting for me, standing with his arms crossed over his chest at the other end of the long pedestrian bridge. I picked up the pace and switched to a jog to catch up with him.

“Nice choice of outfit,” Nick smirked.

“I had every intention of going straight home tonight.” I huffed, running a hand through my hair and resting the other on my hip.

“As long as it’s easy to clean. We’re partnering up for this next one.” There was a layer of excitement to his tone.

Why am I not surprised that he would be excited to participate in one of my tests? Then again, he did appear bored as fuck when I left the hotel room of the last one.

“Another hotel room?” I inquired, gesturing my chin down the long strip of casinos and hotels that lined Las Vegas Boulevard.

“Nah, not this time. We’re heading into the basement of Neon Palms for this one.”

“Then why the fuck did I have to meet you out here?” I shot him an incredulous glare, pissed off that was where we had just come from.

“Fresh air? It’s cold and smells like shit down there.” He shrugged carelessly. “Besides spending all that time in the showroom tonight, I wanted to see the stars.”

You couldn’t see fucking shit with the Strip’s light pollution. I didn’t know what the fuck he was going on about.

“Fuck, let’s just get on with it then...” Groaning, I glanced at the ground and rubbed my forehead with my thumb.

“By all means.” He chuckled, holding a hand out for me to lead us back into the casino.

As soon as we entered the basement of Neon Palms, we were greeted with the strong smell of stale air, moisture, and iron. I wasn’t even going to attempt to think of where the iron smell originated from.

The sound of rattling chains grew louder and louder as Nick led me around a corner to where a man was dangling from the ceiling by his wrists, right over a small drain. The rust-colored stains surrounding its outer edge left little to the imagination about why he was hanging in that particular spot.

“Jasper. Lovely to see you again, mate.” Nick beamed as he approached the long metal table about a foot from where Jasper hung.

“Fuck you, Nickolas.” Jasper spat, his face swollen from a beating he must have received before arriving here.

“Oh, come now, that’s no way to treat a friend.” Nick teased, picking up a small

scalpel from the table, and moved to stand before him. “You remember what I told you last time you were down here?”

“Fuck.” Jasper hisses through his teeth in realization. “I didn’t—I didn’t do it this time, I swear.” He pleaded, his eyes focused on the scalpel in Nick’s hand.

“If you didn’t do shit, then you wouldn’t be here. Again. Last time was a warning; this time, you will face the ramifications.” He growled, touching the blade to Jasper’s skin, and he started wriggling against the chains.

The more he struggled, the more his body spun and twisted from the ceiling, his back eventually being displayed to me. I could see the words cheat and dice, scarred there from what I guessed was the last time he interacted with Nick.

“If you can’t already tell from his last visit, Colby. Jasper here likes to play with loaded dice and clean out our tables. Don’t you Jaspy?” Nick gave a sadistic laugh as he spun Jasper back to face us. “Colby, you’ve worked on a farm... Why don’t you educate me on how to drain a pig of all its blood?”

“N—No! Fuck you both!” Jasper continued to fight. “I’ll fucking kill you, Nickolas!”

Biting back a laugh, I pressed my lips together and chewed on my cheek. He was in no position to make threats, but the entertainment he was providing was a nice change from my other two tests. I could see why Nick said this would be fun for him. He had already dealt with this guy once before.

“There are a couple of ways to do it, usually with a chest stick, but since it looks like we don’t have one of those lying around—” I took the scalpel from Nick’s hand and brought it up to Jasper’s neck. “The next best option would be to sever the arteries right here at the base of the neck.” I pressed the blade lightly into the decompression point just above his breastbone, and a trickle of blood slid down his chest.

“Is it painful?” Nick quizzed, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Very,” I answered, tilting my head as I watched the blood continue to flow from Jasper’s neck, not pressing any further into him—yet. He had gone silent, but I could see his breathing accelerate with the fear of death—a harrowing one at that.

“Alright, go on.” Nick encouraged without pause, examining his nails.

“You don’t want to play with him a little more?” I quipped, my eyes meeting his over my shoulder.

“Nah, I’m sick of his shit, and we gotta be at the gym in four hours.” He yawned, bored already. Well, that didn’t take long.

Facing Jasper once more, I shrugged and blew out a breath.

“Sorry, mate. Boss’s orders.” Without letting him get another word in, I plunged the scalpel deep into the hollow point of his neck, blood flowing freely around the handle.

Jasper’s gurgled screams echoed off the cement walls and floor as I stepped back. He had seconds before the blood loss pulled him under. Blood pooled on the floor underneath him, already dripping down into the drain.

Nick’s hand clapped me on the shoulder as he watched my handy work and Jasper’s struggle.

“Right, let’s get the fuck out of here then. I’ll see you in a few hours.” He stepped around me and headed for the stairs, leaving me behind to stare blankly at Jasper’s blood-soaked body.

He didn't even spare a second glance at the mess he left behind. I would ask him if I was supposed to clean this shit up or not, but my best guess was no, seeing as he didn't instruct me to do it before he left.

The casualness of it all set me on edge, but if Nick was the man I needed to become to survive and thrive here, I might as well start now.

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Chapter 5

Colby

INITIATION: CEREMONY.

Nick told me I had to wait until the other two potential new members either passed or failed their tests. We were all tested individually, and while our sponsors could participate, we were the ones who had to make the killing move. That was the clarification I got from Nick when I asked him why he was able to be in the room with me for Jasper but wasn't when I took care of the women at Solitude.

I've been keeping an eye on the local news over the past few days but haven't seen anything regarding the three lives I've taken, or any others for that matter, seeing as I knew the other potential new members would have most likely taken out an additional three people each.

When I entered my cheap studio apartment in Summerlin, I collapsed onto my bed, muscles aching from our morning training session.

Jaxon had us add two hours to our current workout, followed by an additional dance rehearsal for tonight's show. They've added a special set for the holidays to mix things up, and we've had to learn an entirely new routine because of it.

I must have dozed off for a few hours because my phone woke me up just as the sun started setting. With a groan, I reached over, grabbed my phone, and unlocked the screen to a few new text messages from Nick.

Nick: Ceremony tonight after the show. Jaxon is canceling rehearsals for it.

Nick: Bring a suit, if you don't have one you can borrow one of mine.

Nick: This is it, mate, you did it!

Turning off the screen, I draped my forearm over my eyes and sighed heavily. I did it. Tonight, I would officially become a member of their secret society, one of the Men Under Revue.

It wasn't hard to get here, but it had me questioning a lot about myself and just how far I was willing to go to get what I wanted.

Turns out it was pretty far and fucked up.

A suit. Opening my eyes and dropping my arm to the side, I turned to look at my dresser across the room, which didn't hold anything more than grey sweatpants and jeans. I didn't have a fucking suit or the money even to afford one last minute.

Unlocking my phone, I quickly shot off a text to Nick before he left for Neon Palms.

Me: I need to borrow a suit.

A few seconds passed, and he responded.

Nick: No problem. I'll bring an extra one with me.

That's one less thing for me to worry about. Now I needed to get my ass in the shower and to the showroom for the evening.

Tonight my life would change, and I didn't give a fuck what I had to do to keep it that

way.

At the end of the show, I rushed into the locker room to find the suit Nick brought for me. As I suspected, he had impeccable taste in tailored suits. They matched his car, penthouse, and lifestyle to a tee. A Brooks Brothers Classic Fit Tic 1818 suit in grey, with a black silk tie and white dress shirt, was left hanging on my locker door.

I've got an hour to get ready; that's roughly how long it will take for the rest of the blokes to finish their post-show photo and autograph session. I was surprised when I looked at the tags and found that Nick and I were very close in size. We were maybe off by just an inch or two in some areas, but the suit should fit me like a glove otherwise.

Staring at the suit and taking in every thread of fabric that I couldn't afford, I rubbed my hands up and down my face, considering everything that would be required of me beyond tonight. Seeing that suit made everything seem more real, a lifestyle that would soon belong to me—own and control me.

“How long have you been standing there?” Nick's voice carried over my shoulder, and I snapped out of my thoughts, turning my head to see him leaning against the second row of lockers.

“Apparently, long enough for you to finish your post-show duties.” I huffed with a weak smile.

My stomach was in knots for tonight—the ceremony. It was almost as if I was saying goodbye to a part of me I no longer wanted but thought I needed. What happens once I lose that last shred of humanity that keeps me grounded? Granted, the Men Under Revue wasn't a secret society of blind murderers... right? They had reasons and justifications for what they did, didn't they?

“Don’t overthink it, mate.” He stepped towards me and placed a hand on my shoulder. “Yeah, it’s a fucked up lifestyle to most, but it comes with a life of luxury and peace of mind. That’s what you came here for, right? The life.” I mean, he wasn’t wrong. I wanted a change from what would have been my life back home, but this was a stark contrast compared to the one I had initially considered. “Not to mention the amount of pussy you’re gonna have thrown at you after all of this.” He added with a chuckle and a sly wink.

Fuck. In all of this, I hadn’t even considered what my life would be like with future relationships. I didn’t want to spend the rest of my life single. Sure, I left because I didn’t want the wholesome life back on the farm, but that didn’t mean I didn’t want a full one.

One with love, passion, and fucking. Kids, maybe, a consideration I’d be open to with the right woman. But I had to find her first.

“I’ve got it, Nick. Thanks.” I sighed, reaching out and taking the suit off the locker door. “I just want to be sure this is what I want. Although I’m sure I can’t turn back now even if I wanted to.”

“You’d be right with that assumption, mate. Don’t give me a reason to kill you now.” Nick laughed before moving to his locker and pulling his suit out. “Now, let’s get ready for your big night. I heard the other two potential new members passed, too, so it’ll be a full house at the mansion.”

I didn’t know where I would be without Nick right now, but I sure as fuck knew it wouldn’t be at that mansion about to receive the paycheck of a lifetime.

Nick pulled up to the front of the mansion, parking at the end of the circular driveway behind the long line of luxury vehicles of every make and model that had arrived before us. At least twenty other cars were parked and empty, with another five that

had followed us through the gates.

Nick wasn't kidding when he said this would be a full house tonight; honestly, that was an understatement at this rate.

This time, the fountain in the center of the drive was lit up, glowing a soft red. When Nick brought me here the first time, all the fountains were unlit; tonight, they were on full display, including the ones that lined the driveway up to the main gate.

Getting out of Nick's Lamborghini, I turned to admire the enormous mansion and the overwhelming sea of black suits filing in through the main front doors.

"You ready?" Nick walked up beside me as I continued to stare in awe of it all.

"Do I have a choice?" I sighed heavily, taking it all in and chewing on my cheek.

"Not anymore, mate. Come on, let's get you inside so I can show off our newest member." He laughed, shoving me forward.

I stumbled slightly at the push but found my footing and followed him up to the doors, keeping my head down from wandering eyes. My hands started sweating, and I slid them into my slacks as we stepped into the entryway.

I've never been the center of attention; being raised in a large family in a small town, there was no spotlight to shine in. Even right now, with my position in the show, I was in a supporting role in the background, not dancing a center stage set like Nick, Jaxon, Darren, and Tate—another thing I would have to get used to.

Everyone here was dressed to the nines. It wasn't hard to see just how wealthy the Men Under Revue were, in contrast to their role on the Strip. Our show at Neon Palms was the smallest of the three and more exclusive, considering our requirement

of Australian Citizenship, so there were only eleven of us here tonight, while the other two revues had upwards of twenty.

“Levi!” Nick called out over the overwhelming sea of members.

“Nick! Where have you been?”

“Where the fuck do you think I’ve been?” Nick gave him a sarcastic laugh, bringing the man named Levi in for a hug and patting him on the back.

“Not on tour, so it seems. They still haven’t promoted you?” Levi gaped at him in shock, as if Nick should have been on tour this entire time.

“Nah, and I doubt they will anytime soon.” He shrugged in disappointment.

“Shame, you’d fit in well with the rest of us.” Levi frowned. “And who’s this handsome fellow you brought with you? I don’t recall seeing him at the last ceremony.” He held his hand out to me with a smile. “Levi Castiel.”

“Colby Bryce.” I returned the smile, shaking his hand.

“Colby here is my protégé; he passed all three of his tests with flying colors and will be sworn in tonight with the other two newbies.” Nick chimed in.

“Pleasure to meet you, Colby.” Levi nodded.

“Levi runs Temptations at the opposite end of the strip. The equivalent of Jaxon, with the benefit of touring. The Temptations group focuses more on the touring aspect than their residency shows.”

“Isn’t that the truth? We just got back from our European tour, and the women...”

Levi blew out a low whistle before another gentleman caught his attention.

“Don’t let Levi suck you into touring; it’s easier when the women come to you.” The man approached us with a lively chuckle and extended his hand to me. “Dallas Ryan, I run Red Magic halfway up the Strip from you in Stardust.”

“—and Dallas is just jealous that his show has never been selected for touring.” Levi jumped back as Dallas moved to take a playful swing at his arm.

“Like I said, it’s easier when they come to you. We don’t need to tour.” Dallas smirked, shaking my hand and looking over the crowd as a chime rang across the main foyer where we were gathered. “Sounds like they’re starting. I’ll see you boys in there. Good luck, Colby.” He winked before leaving us to join his group.

“Come on, let’s find Jaxon and the others.” Nick gripped my arm and dragged me to the other side of the crowd as everyone began filing down the stairs where the expansive ballroom resided.

The ballroom was set up like a standard showroom, with a stage at the front and seating lined up in three separate sections. Each revue was grouped and seated in its own designated area.

Following Nick, we were both seated at the end of our section so we could quickly exit into the aisle when we were prompted to approach the stage. He briefed me before we descended into the basement, ensuring I understood the ceremony process.

“When the time comes, after Dustin has finished his introduction, we—the sponsors—will be called up to present our protégés. This is where you will follow me and stand to my left on the stage. Once I’ve presented you to Dustin, he will congratulate you on passing your tests and present you with your membership ring.” His eyes narrowed on mine.

“You do not speak unless spoken to once we are in there. Until that ring is on your finger, you’re still a protégé, and any fuck up, no matter how minor, will impact your membership.” Nick placed his hands in his pockets, turning towards the stairs. “When the last protégé is handed their ring and puts it on, the real fun begins.”

My knee bounced as I sat beside Nick, waiting for the ceremony to start. There were still a few more men filtering into the room. A hand gripped my shoulder from behind, and I turned my head to see who it was.

“Look, the blokes and I know we’ve been hard on you these past three months, but there was a reason for it,” Jaxon whispered. Was he seriously trying to have a heart-to-heart right now? “We’ll talk more after you get your ring.” He winked before lounging back in his chair and crossed his arms over his chest.

Clenching my jaw, I turned back to face the stage just as all the lights over us dimmed, leaving only those at the front of the stage to illuminate the space. The crowd of men all fell silent as Dustin Slate stepped onto the stage, holding a microphone in one hand while sliding the other into his slacks.

“Nice to see the gentlemen from Temptations are back from their most recent tour just in time for the ceremony.” He grinned, his eyes taking in the audience before him. “As I’m sure you can tell from tonight’s turnout, all three of our potential new members have passed their tests and will receive their rings tonight.” The room filled with applause, and something told me it wasn’t typical for all three to pass their tests. “But, before we gift the rings, let me introduce our newest members to the Men Under Revue.” Dustin cleared his throat as he paced the stage.

“At this point, you should all know who we are and what we do. We are a secret society that runs the Las Vegas Strip. Without us, it wouldn’t function like the lucrative machine it is, and anything that affects the flow of funds is swiftly taken care of, as I am sure you’ve discovered with your tests.

“By day, we all work your typical nine-to-five jobs, and you will choose yours before leaving here tonight. In doing so, we can keep a closer eye on the Strip in an undercover degree, then by night, we are what all the women come for—pun intended.” He jested, and the room chuckled.

“Follow our rules, do your jobs—all of them—and you will be well taken care of for the rest of your lives. As I’ve said before, the Strip is a lucrative machine, and the Men Under Revue are all for sharing the wealth between brothers.” Dustin held a hand out at the edge of the stage, and a small black velvet box was placed in his hand.

“That being said, I’m sure you three are anxious to receive your rings, and the rest of you want to get the fuck out of here. Sponsors—” He paused, eyes scanning over the three sections. “Present your protégés.”

“That’s us,” Nick murmured as he stood from his seat and stepped into the aisle.

I got up and followed his lead. We approached the stage, and I stood to his left, just as he instructed me earlier. The two other pairs mirrored us in position, and Dustin handed each of the sponsors one of the black velvet boxes.

“Sponsors, you may present your protégés with their rings.” I sucked in a sharp breath as Nick turned to face me, opening the black box and removing the obsidian ring.

“If our newest members will repeat after me—” Dustin cleared his throat, and Nick pressed his lips into a hard line, shaking his head slightly as a silent reminder not to do or say anything stupid. I don’t recall him ever mentioning that I would have to repeat an oath or some shit like that.

He held the ring out to me, indicating which finger it was to be worn on, and I slid the ring onto my right-hand ring finger.

“Ravish. Reign. Revue.” Dustin spoke each word with the utmost clarity.

We repeated the words in unison, and satisfied with our dedication to the Men Under Revue, Dustin concluded the ceremony.

“Congratulations, the three of you, as of right now, are officially members of the Men Under Revue. Welcome to the brotherhood.” Dustin grinned, stepping aside and presenting us to the rest of the room, which began filling with cheering, clapping, and whistles.

Brotherhood . I haven’t heard anyone, not even Nick, use that term for it until now, but it made sense, considering the society’s name.

“You did it, mate. You’re one of us now. Officially.” Nick winked before jumping off the stage to join the other blokes.

Looking down at my right hand, I couldn’t help but admire the black obsidian that now resided on my ring finger.

A symbol of the brotherhood to which I now belonged.

A key to the life I now possessed.

I felt like I could finally breathe.

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Source Creation Date: August 7, 2025, 2:08 am

Chapter 6

Sienna

Breathe.

In and out.

Breathe.

Relax, release.

Breathe.

“—Sienna Carter.” A wispy voice came from over the PA system, and I glided onto center stage, setting myself up in my starting position before the admission board. The lights were hot, scorching my skin as I stood beneath them, sweat already beading on my brow. I was sweating before, but now it was being exaggerated by the lights.

My pointe shoes squeezed my feet. I had been in them all morning practicing before my audition, not taking them off for even a second.

“This is your...” The man paused. “Third time auditioning for us, is that right?”

“Y—yes.” I stammered out of nervousness.

“Very well. Please proceed.” I could hear the boredom and disdain in his voice.

They had already decided my fate before I even stepped onto this stage. Two failed attempts, and now a third? They wouldn’t give me the shot I needed, but here I was, trying regardless of the failure that dripped from his words. Proceed . It was as if this was just another boring presentation for them to push through for the day.

This is what I get for being born to parents who have unrealistic expectations for their children. I was a people-pleaser. I did what I was told to do to make those around me happy, disregarding my feelings for theirs.

My childhood was filled with dance classes, overpriced personal trainers, instructors, and nutritionists. My parents invested every single penny they could into a career I never chose. It was no wonder I continued to fail my auditions. The passion isn’t mine; it was theirs—hers.

One last try, one last failure, and I would run away from this place. From New York. I didn’t belong here; I never did. I grew up without my own dreams and identity. I was always ‘Sweet Sienna Carter,’ the straight-A student and dancer. But was I really?

For twenty-one years, I’ve lived a life that wasn’t mine, at least not one I wanted, and if I succeed with this audition and secure my spot at Aurelia, will I ever get the chance?

Aurelia is the most prestigious dance school on the East Coast. My mother graduated with high honors and a list of companies that practically begged her to dance for them. I was her daughter, the legacy that is now a failure in her eyes—a disgrace to the family name.

A version of “Love Me Like You Do,” curated by Nate Fifield, started to fill the

auditorium, wrapping around my senses like a blanket and threatening to suffocate me.

The tune numbed me from the inside out as I closed my eyes and fell into the melody, which carried me away into yet another routine of expectations and disappointment.

I hate this life...

I woke up to the rumbling sound of my phone vibrating on the hardwood floor of my bedroom. After the audition, I returned home and collapsed onto my bed face first without changing into something more comfortable. I was exhausted, and my body could no longer handle the heavy stress that it carried.

Blinking the sleep from my eyes, I tilted my head to the window above my bed to see that it was now night. My audition was at nine this morning, and I got home shortly after eleven. I slept the entire day away. Not surprising, in the least.

With a groan, I rolled onto my back and reached over the edge of the bed to pick up my phone from where it had landed. Holding the screen above my face, the screen was lit with the name Lillian . Answering the call, I placed it on speaker before dropping it into the sheets beside my head.

“Lily.” I greeted.

“How’d it go, girl?” Her lively voice beamed through the phone.

I could hear music and voices in the background. She must be at a house party already or hosting her own.

“As it always goes.” I sighed heavily. “What time is it?” My voice cracked with sleep.

“It’s nearly midnight. Did you just wake up?” Lily laughed. “When will you know?”

“Same as last time... by the end of the week.” I audibly yawned, stretching my arms out above my head.

Lily was my closest friend in New York—a complete party animal with absolutely no regard for anyone but herself. She was the opposite of me, and everything I wanted to be. Free.

Lily and I met at my first Aurelia audition. We both were denied acceptance on our first try, which became the common ground on which our friendship blossomed. We trained together the following year, hoping to gain acceptance on our second try.

Unlike me, it was her dream to attend Aurelia, not her parents, and when she wasn’t accepted after our second audition, she decided to quit altogether and enjoy life.

I was envious of her ability to choose. It was a luxury I didn’t have, but soon I would, depending on what phone call I received within this next week of waiting. At least she understood how I was feeling right now, having gone through it twice before.

“In that case, get your ass over here, and let’s drink your anxiety away.” Lily cheered.

I could see her throwing both hands in the air as she squealed. I’ve spent this past year training so hard that I almost forgot how it felt to be carefree and happy like her—becoming a zombie to the machine of dance that owned me.

I breathed a heavy sigh, running my hands up and down my face.

“Can’t tonight, maybe tomorrow. I need more sleep. I’m burnt like toast.”

“Boo!—Fine, but I’m keeping you to that!” She giggled, and I could hear her smile

through the phone. “Talk later, girl, take it easy, alright?” Concern laced in her words.

“Yeah... night, Lily. Be careful.”

“Always.”

After hanging up the phone, I peeled myself off the bed and changed into hot pink sweatpants and a black cropped T-shirt. I descended the stairs of my parent’s house and went to the kitchen, digging into the freezer for the bag of frozen fried chicken and french fries.

With the high intensity of my weekly training schedule, I didn’t have much time to work, so I still lived with my parents, a blessing and a curse. While I was thankful that I didn’t have bills to pay and a fully stocked fridge, I hated that they could monitor me twenty-four-seven. Again, the freedom Lily had, that I didn’t.

I popped three breaded chicken strips and a handful of fries into the air fryer, set it for fifteen minutes, and then plopped down onto one of the bar stools, flipping through social media on my phone.

Lily’s Instagram account was already flooding my feed with photos of the party she was at. A smile pulled across my lips as I scrolled through her pictures and the fun she was having—slightly jealous that I couldn’t have accepted her invitation.

The only thing stopping me was the complete exhaustion that wrecked my body. My parents were out of town for the week on an anniversary vacation, so they weren’t around to stop me from having a little bit of fun while I waited for my phone call. I could use the distraction, just like Lily suggested.

A ding came from across the kitchen, and I moved to remove my late-night dinner

from the air fryer. Dumping the contents of the fry basket onto a plate, I sat back down at the kitchen counter and began reviewing the new dance routine that my trainer had just sent me.

I was so over this... all of it.

I haven't heard anything for three days since my audition for Aurelia. There wasn't even a rumor from other dancers I know who auditioned with me—just radio silence from the admissions council.

“I wouldn't sweat it. It may very well be that they are saving the acceptance calls for later, you know, get all the ‘I'm sorry, try again next year’ calls out of the way first.” Lily reassured me over the phone.

I have my Bluetooth earbuds in while stretching for today's training session. My parents booked me a two-hour slot at the studio this morning as a way to kick my ass out of the house.

“I hope you're right because if I get denied again, I don't know how I will tell my parents... what I will tell them.” I sighed, resting my leg on the ballet bar to stretch my hamstring.

“You tell them the truth, and you live with it. What's the worst they could do?”

That was the one problem with Lily; while she understood the stress of the audition, she didn't understand my parents, my whole reason for even attempting a third time.

“Uh—Kick me out and disown me for one?” I growled out, switching my legs on the bar. “I have no job, no career path. I am a sunken ship, and I'll drown before I even reach shore.” Since when did I become so metaphorical... I really needed to get more sleep.

“So? Move in with me. We can figure it all out together.” She hummed in thought. “You know, I think I can even pull a few strings to get you a job at Frisky’s as a waitress.”

Oh, that was precisely what I needed to go from a company-worthy ballet dancer to a stripper waitress. Wonderful. Not that I was even worthy of a company by Aurelia’s standards.

“I’ll... think about it. Thanks, Lily. Talk to you later.” I hung up on her before hitting play on my routine playlist for warm-up, starting with my grande pliés and single-leg relevés on the bar.

Twenty minutes into my warm-up, my phone begins to ring, interrupting my music and warm-up. My gut clenches as I tap the side of my earbud to answer.

Please don’t be Aurelia; please don’t be Aurelia...

“H—hello?” I hesitated.

“Good afternoon, Miss Carter. This is Arietta Scarlet from the Aurelia Admissions Council. Do you have a moment to speak?” Her tone was bored as if this call was just one of many that she had made today, all ending with the same result. Disappointment.

“Y—yes. I am free to speak.” I breathed, sinking to my knee on the freshly polished floor.

“Your file shows that you have auditioned three times for our Academy.”

“Yes.” I quickly answered.

“That wasn’t a question.” Bitch . “Tell me, why did you audition a third time?” Oh no...

What answer do I give her? The truth? A lie? Does this answer impact my acceptance status?

“I—umm...” I couldn’t breathe. I felt like all the air had been squeezed out of my lungs. What the hell do I say? “My mother. She was a prestigious ballet dancer when she was my age and wanted the same for me—she graduated with honors from Aurelia. I wanted to follow in her footsteps. Aspire to dance in her footsteps.” A half-truth. I didn’t give two shits about her previous dance career.

“A yes... Evaline Carter. She was a magnificent dancer.” Arietta paused. “I don’t know how to say this so I will be blunt. At this time, we do not have a slot available for you at our school.”

“But I—” I felt as though my leotard was tightening against my skin, suffocating me and squeezing the life out of me as she continued, not even pausing as I attempted to cut her off.

“You are more than welcome to audition a fourth time next year, but if I may be honest with you, Sienna .” Dropping the formalities, I see... “Perhaps this isn’t the right path for you. While you are a wonderful dancer—there is no denying that—you aren’t exactly what Aurelia is searching—”

Click .

I ended the call just as abruptly as she’d ended my life.

I didn’t need to hear the end of her speech; I didn’t want to.

I was done.

Chapter 7

Sienna

FIVE YEARS LATER.

“Good morning, ladies; let’s begin with two red springs and your leg circles,” I called out as I lay down on one of the empty Pilates reformers and slid my feet into the straps to join the class warm-up.

It had been five years since I dropped everything... leaving my entire life back in New York and escaping to Las Vegas. A lot can happen in five years, and it has.

The first year was rough. I managed to move all of what was left of my bank account into a new one that my parents couldn’t touch. I packed a small bag and bought a one-way ticket for the next flight out to Vegas.

When I arrived here, the first thing I did was search for a cheap place to stay. There weren’t many options, but I found a small, affordable apartment just west of the Strip. By my estimation, I had enough in my account to last me at least six months before I would have to crawl back to my parents, begging for forgiveness that I knew they wouldn’t give.

I left everything behind—my parents, Lily, and the old me.

When I stepped off that plane, I told myself I would not be the Sienna Carter of New York. I would be a new me, rebranded into the image I had always dreamed of being.

Who I was deep down, and the new me didn't give a fuck about anyone but herself.

Within the first two weeks here, I snagged a waitressing job at a small bar near my apartment complex. I made a couple of friends there, and after working tireless hours and saving every penny I made, I started my dream job.

After two years of saving, I had enough for a down payment on a small space where I could own and operate a Pilates studio.

The studio was big enough to hold twelve reformers, with a small private dance room around the corner—my sanctuary after a long day. I still danced, but no longer ballet; I was more of a freestyle dancer now, and it was just for fun, to scratch the itch. I had no intention of dancing professionally ever again.

“Five more, and switch direction,” I instructed, drawing my legs down together, then moving them out into a straddle before meeting them at the top and repeating the movement.

I've been running this studio for just under three years and have built a pretty decent client base over that time. The friends I made while waitressing made a big difference. One of them, a bartender, was one of my first customers, and she still stops in frequently when she isn't busy working or stuck in classes at LVU.

“Continue with your frogs.”

I wouldn't say my life was complete; it was far from it, but the life I started building here was more than anything I could have dreamed of having. It was fun to move to a new city where no one knows who the fuck you are, and you could be whoever you want.

I am happy to say that I am no longer the people-pleaser I left back in New

York—and never will be.

The bell on the front door dinged, and I removed the reformer straps from my feet, replaced them on the pegs, and sprinted to the front of the studio.

“Switch to Peter Pans,” I called out as I approached the front desk and saw—said friend—standing there with a grin on her face.

“Chyler!” I beamed, stepping around the desk and wrapping my arms around her in a tight hug. “Good to see you, girl.”

“Got a spare spot this morning?” She asked, returning the hug.

“For you? Always. Come on in.” I gestured to the open reformer and stood at the front of the room. “Grip the handles behind the shoulder rests and start moving into your towers.” I continued with instructing the class. “The harder you pull, the higher you can go, then release your spine, one vertebra at a time, keeping your legs straight as you move them down, then bend them into a tabletop position and repeat.”

When the class finished, I returned to the front desk to check the reservations for the next one. Depending on the day, I instructed four classes in the morning and three to four in the evening. Some classes had the twelve reformers full, while others had as few as three, but I loved what I did. I could have a class with only one customer and still be happy to instruct.

“As always, you kick my ass with your classes.” Chyler chuckled, stepping up beside me and wiping the sweat from her brow with a towel.

“I had planned on going easy on everyone this morning, but when you stopped in, I couldn’t resist making you suffer,” I laughed with a smirk. “This isn’t your usual class; what brings you in today? Canceled classes? When is graduation again?” I

quizzed.

“No canceled classes. Graduation is next month, and thank fucking god for that.” She sighed. “I’m ready to move back to Minnesota and be closer to my sister... but I actually came by to see if you were interested in going out tonight. It’s Jessie’s birthday, and we are going to Heaven Down Under .”

“I haven’t seen Jessie in months. Is she still at the bar?” Chyler and I waited tables at the same place until one crazy busy night when she was pulled to work behind the bar and stayed there ever since. She was always sneaking us shots when things got slow. Jessie replaced me, but I stopped in often to visit Chyler, so Jessie and I became well acquainted over time.

“She is, but only like once a week. So, are you in?” I could hear the excitement in her tone. Looking over my schedule for the day, I saw my last class was at six.

“Yeah, I can make it.” I nodded in confirmation. “My last class is at six. I need to shower and change, and I can meet you two around eight?” I arched my brow, hoping that it wouldn’t be too late.

I didn’t even know when the show started. I’ve heard of Heaven Down Under but haven’t seen it myself. You’d think I would have after living here for over five years.

“Great, the show starts at nine. I’ll have Jessie book your seat at our table. This is going to be so much fun,” She beamed.

Chyler always loved chasing after hot men almost as much as me. I was surprised after all this time that she hadn’t found one to keep around longer than a couple of weeks. She wasn’t the relationship type—as I’ve been told. Unlike me, who was waiting for the right man to sweep her off her feet like a prince in a fairytale.

Chyler and I may have different perspectives on relationships, but there was one thing we did together and did well—being each other’s wingwoman. We knew how to get men and were never shy. I think that's why we always got along so well; our personalities were very similar.

“Alright, I’ll meet you at the showroom in Neon Palms by nine. There’s a bar right outside of it, right?” I’ve been to Neon Palms several times, so I was no stranger to the layout and where everything was.

“Yeah, Glow , we will meet you there. Thanks for the class,” Chyler smiled before heading out the door, and I could barely contain the excitement for tonight.

I’ve needed a girls’ night for a few weeks.

This will be a welcome break just to let loose and have some fun.

My last class wrapped up by seven, and I spent the past half hour cleaning the studio and equipment so I wouldn’t have to worry about doing it in the morning. I modified the morning schedule to start a little later than usual.

There were only two or three customers per class, and after reaching out to them, I found that they were more than happy to blend into the late morning class at eleven.

After locking the studio door, I got into my beat-up white Dodge Avenger and drove to my apartment to get ready. It wouldn’t take me long; I knew exactly what I had planned to wear; excited was a complete understatement.

Stepping out of the shower, I wrapped my long brunette hair in a towel and dug through my drawers for my denim booty shorts and strappy black crop top. I pulled on a black lace thong, finished dressing, and ran into the bathroom to do my make-up.

I went with a dark brown smokey eye, a champagne shimmer on the lids, a black liner on my waterline, and a bright pink lip matching my heels. The contrast between the dark brown makeup and my black top made the pink pop even more. It was my favorite outfit and look for partying.

Hearing my phone chime, I stepped back into the bedroom and picked it up from the dresser.

Chyler: We are at Glow; see you soon!

If they were already drinking now, I would have some catching up to do by the time I arrived.

Me: Order me a few pink Starburst shots!

They were my favorite. Sweet, sour, and fruity. It was also my favorite candy. However, there are nights when I prefer fireball and hot tamales.

Chyler: Done!

I ran back into the bathroom to style my hair into rough beach waves. I had thick hair that landed just above my lower back. My hair was shorter when I was dancing back in New York because putting it up in a tight bun all of the time was a pain in the ass, but now that I could have it down or up in a messy bun, I try to keep it as long as possible.

With my hair styled, I grab my black and white Kate Spade purse from my bed before sliding on my heels and making a beeline for the door. I took one last look at myself in the full-length mirror by the door as I pulled out my phone to call a Lyft.

I was every part of the woman I had dreamed of being.

Now, I just needed the man to go with it, and I wasn't getting any younger.

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Chapter 8

Sienna

“Sienna!” A loud and tipsy Chyler shrieked across the bar as I entered. She came up and basically strangled me with a hug. “What took you so long?” She gasped dramatically.

“Chy, it’s only eight-thirty. I got here in thirty minutes.” I laughed, hugging her while dragging her ass back to the bar where I saw my four baby pink shots lined up.

“You should have just ordered it as a drink if you were getting four of them.” Jessie chuckled from over my shoulder, and I turned to give her a warm hug.

“Hey! Happy birthday, girl. Good to see you again.” I beamed at her.

“Likewise, it’s been a while.” Jessie smiled. “Drink up; the doors open for the show in about fifteen minutes.” She gestured to my shots, and I grinned, gladly ready to suck down every single one of them.

“How’s the studio going?” She asked, leaning against the bar next to me.

“It’s—”

“It’s amazing. This woman knows how to kick your ass.” Chyler interrupted, stealing one of my shots and downing it within seconds.

“I think someone needs to slow down.” Jessie scowled at her.

“I think someone owes me another shot,” I added, cheersing Chyler’s empty glass and finishing mine. “Let her have some fun.”

“If I do that, she will be under at least six of the guys in that show by the end of it.” She teased, finishing her drink off.

“Aren’t there only eight?” I questioned. From looking at the posters, it seemed that only eight men were in the show.

“There is more, but they—” Jessie pointed at the giant poster in the corner of the bar. “Are the main reason why everyone comes here.”

I followed her finger and looked closer at the men in the poster. It didn’t take a genius to see why they pulled the kind of crowd they had every night. The men were screaming hot. Having a body like theirs and allowing us to touch them all we want should be a crime, and yet, what I wouldn’t give to take one of them home.

“We came here for hot, sweaty men; damn right, I am going to cover myself in them while I can.” Chyler cackled as she turned to leave the bar. “I better smell like them for days after this.” She added, flipping her hair.

I finished my last shot, setting the glass down on the counter and following her and Jessie into the showroom, my eyes catching on the posters as we approached.

Just inside the double doors, there was a neon sign that lit up the dark entryway:

Good girls go to heaven; bad cunts come down under.

“We’ve got the round table in the right corner.” Jessie looped her arms through

Chyler's and mine as she escorted us to our reserved table.

"Ooo, nice spot," Chyler cooed, slipping into the booth and signaling the waitress for drinks.

I slid in after her and perched myself at the edge of the booth with my feet dangling towards the open aisle.

"Prepping yourself to be swept off your feet, Sienna?" Jessie arched a brow and giggled as she sat on Chyler's other side.

"I mean, would that be so bad?" I smirked, biting my bottom lip.

Would it be?

Chyler ordered us a round of drinks, the Blue Aussie—a Blue Hawaiian renamed to fit the show—with an extra shot of Malibu on the side. She was definitely in the mood to get wasted tonight, but I couldn't complain—so was I.

I downed the shot first and took a few sips from my drink, scanning the room before the lights started to dim and "Down Under" by Men at Work began playing over the speakers. Six long tables in two rows are in the center of the room, with booths outlining the edge of the main floor. A center circular stage sits in the middle of the long tables.

The tables are designed for the dancers to stand and dance on them, with rails on either side to hold drinks. The room was a dancer's playground with all the different areas and sections they could jump up and dance along. Our table in the corner had, in my personal opinion, the best view. We could see everything.

With the lights fully dimmed, the center circular stage lit up with laser lights that shot

straight from the platform to the ceiling, creating a cage effect. I could feel my pulse racing in anticipation of the start of the show—or were the shots from earlier finally kicking in?

Chyler and Jessie started shrieking like horny banshees, and I turned to see a man in an all-black suit appear in the middle of the laser cage stage. The crowd of women screamed and catcalled as he swaggered around the perimeter of the circular stage, keeping within the lasers and getting a good look at his guests for the evening.

“Ladies—” He started. “Ladies... ladies... ladies. How are we feeling tonight?” The man was gorgeous, and if he was just the host, I couldn’t even begin to imagine the rest of the men that would entertain us. This, right here, was every woman’s wet fucking dream. “If you want to see more men like me and a lot less clothing, you gotta be louder than that.” He tsked. “I said, how are we feeling tonight, ladies?” He commanded, and the entire room vibrated with shrieks, screams, and squeals of thirsty women. Chyler, Jessie, and I included.

“That was much better. My name is Jaxon, and I’ll be your host and MC for this evening. Welcome to Heaven Down Under, where good girls go to heaven, and bad cunts like yourselves come down under.” His charming smirk had me biting my lip and giggling like a schoolgirl. And that accent...

“Now that is a slogan worth having. Fuck me.” Chyler raised her brows before sucking down more of her drink.

“I just want him to stop talking and let me feel up some men.” Jessie laughed and started banging her hands on the table as loudly as possible before screaming, “Bring out the boys, Jaxon!”

“I was going to lay down a couple of ground rules for the evening,” Jaxon delivered a mischievous grin. “But the blokes have decided that they really want to play with you

sheilas tonight. So, the rules? Fuck ‘em. There are none.” He licked his lips and shrugged. “Now put your fucking phones away and get ready for the ride.”

As Jaxon finished his speech, I turned to see men lining the edges of the main floor, standing on platforms above the seating. I could feel myself growing hot at the reality of the men that now surround the room. My hands twitch in my lap, begging to drag themselves down every toned and ripped torso.

I sucked in a breath when bright blue eyes captured mine from the far end of the platform that runs behind our table. The blokes were shirtless, of course, and they were wearing denim jeans with a dark leather belt and a large silver buckle with the show’s logo on it. Cowboy hats shielded most of their features, casting shadows over their faces as the lights shone down on them—but those blue eyes. They almost glowed.

My eyes shamelessly wandered down to his buckle as his hips rolled with the music, and I couldn’t help but wonder how those hips would feel grinding up against mine. At least ten other men were dancing on the floor, and I was drawn to this one like a magnet. He sucked me into an orbit that I never wanted to leave.

The four standing alongside our booth stepped down and danced towards the stage, working the crowd of ladies holding their hands out for a quick feel. When all eleven dancers reached the main stage, they fell into their opening routine.

A remix of “Black Dog” by Led Zeppelin played, and I could feel the dancer in me subconsciously joining them. I miss performing...

The dancers unbuckled and removed their belts one by one before snapping them on the stage floor like leather whips. As each belt cracked, they turned, giving the audience their backs and a nice long look at their asses, and as if hearing every shrieking woman beg for them to take it the fuck off, they gripped the front of their

jeans and ripped them away.

Cowboy hats slid down their chests to cover what we all came to see as they turned to face us once more. I couldn't remove my eyes from the face of the dark-haired, blue-eyed man who captured my attention from the start of the show. My eyes widened as they raked down his tight and toned form, landing right where his hat hovered over his cock.

“Sienna, you're drooling!” Chyler shouted over the music and endless screaming.

I covered my mouth, turning to face her, and realized that it was—in fact—hanging open. I laughed, my face flushing from embarrassment and all the alcohol.

Chyler's eyes flared wide as she touched my shoulders and shook me with both hands before gesturing behind me. I turned to follow her gaze and froze, seeing the man I was drooling over now standing before me with his hand held out to take.

Fuck me .

Heart racing, I placed my hand in his and stood from the booth, my eyes held captive by his bright blues.

The smoking hot dancer spun me around, pulling me into his chest, and started grinding his hips against my ass. My breath caught as I felt his hard length against my lower back, his strong scent wrapping me in a blanket of please take me now .

He turned us, leaving me to stand before him, as he fell into my seat in the booth, patting his lap with a sly grin. I was confident on a good day, but add all the Malibu I've been sucking down like a fish, and there is nothing I wouldn't do. Shame and regret could grab me in the morning, but right now? Right now, I was all his.

Stepping towards him, I straddled his thigh and started grinding myself against his jeans, letting the music and alcohol take control of my limbs. A strong arm wrapped around my waist as he pulled me further onto his lap, rolling his hips into mine, a moan escaping past my parted lips.

He was turning me on with every move, and I was losing my grip on reality. Of course, he did this with multiple women every single night; I wasn't special. But fuck did I wish I was. I'd give anything to land a man like him.

His hands gripped my thighs as he leaned forward and lifted us out of the booth, my legs wrapping around his waist. With a quick pivot, he drops me back into my seat, leaning into and over me.

"I'll be back for you later, love." He murmured, his lips just a hair's breadth away from touching my skin, and I melted. I fucking melted . He said what?

Releasing me, he stepped back and smirked, licking his lips with a hunger I didn't think possible for a revue dancer. Feeling significantly hotter than I was moments ago, Chyler and Jessie squealed like excited children as the mystery man I had my eyes on returned to the stage, finishing his routine and exiting backstage.

"Okay, what the fuck was that?" Jessie exclaimed, eyes wide in disbelief. "Girl, his eyes were fucking you harder than yours were fucking him." She gawked.

"I—Um... He—" It was just part of the show. That's all. Nothing more.

"If he can make you speechless with his touch, I can't even begin to imagine what he is capable of in bed." Chyler's eyes drifted off as if fantasizing about him between her legs, and something possessive snapped inside of me.

"Have whichever one you want, but I call dibs on that one." I clipped, my heart still

racing and nearly beating out of my chest.

I didn't know what had come over me. How could I be possessive of a man I didn't even know? Let alone who probably had zero sexual interest in me. This was his job, to make women want him, and he did a fucking marvelous job at it.

"Relax, Sienna... He's all yours." She scoffed with a sarcastic smirk, holding up her hands in submission.

"Now that you've had a small taste, how about taking a bite?" Jaxon stood center stage, one hand holding the microphone, the other sliding into his slacks. "We've got four delicious blokes for you ladies to sink your teeth into this evening, so help me welcome our resident rockstar and metalhead to the stage, Dazza!"

I was going to need a cold shower after tonight if that was just the warm-up. Holy shit .

Three performance sets and three additional drinks later, I was in heaven, and how could I not be with several half-naked men manhandling my body like a rag doll?

For every set, the lead dancer selected a woman from the audience to participate in his set on stage, and I couldn't help but feel the jealousy of wishing I could have been one of them. Just once.

Chyler and Jessie were borderline falling out of the booth while attempting to get chosen. One of the servers scolded Chyler for standing up on the seat, and I couldn't help but laugh as she flipped the woman off with a fuck you glare.

"I'm getting another round of drinks; who wants one?" Chyler offered, slurring almost all of her words while trying to slide out of the booth over Jessie's lap.

“I think you’ve had enough for the next hour, girl.” Jessie shoved her back into her seat.

“Just one more,” Chyler whined and pouted, crossing her arms over her chest.

“Absolutely not. But you can have this water.” Jessie teased, pushing a full glass of ice water in front of Chyler. “Thank me later.” She cooed.

Chyler huffed, “Pfft. I’ll never thank you for water.” She rolled her eyes and downed half the glass as if she needed it, and I giggled, covering my mouth.

“You too, Sienna. You two drink like fucking fish.” Jessie scolded, and I sucked my cheeks in to make a fish face at her.

“Get on our level, Jessie; it’s your birthday!” I shrieked, finishing the last of my third... no... fourth drink of the night.

“Exactly, and I’d like to remember it.” She chuckled with a dramatic eye roll.

“You—” I hiccuped. “You—” I tried again but stopped when the room suddenly darkened, and red and blue lights began flashing in all four corners. “What the—”

“Some of you have been very naughty girls tonight and caught the attention of our law enforcement.” Jaxon’s voice projected over the speakers. “We’re all bad cops here and like it a little rough. Who here requires a frisk?” He crooned, and the dancers lined up along all three sides of the main floor wearing riot gear. Oh, fuck me sideways .

Glancing around at the men now surrounding us, I couldn’t help but notice that one was missing. The dark-haired, blue-eyed smoke show from earlier was nowhere to be seen. I pouted in disappointment as “Turn Down for What” by DJ Snake and Lil Jon

started playing over the speakers.

“Girl, there are ten half-naked men in uniform that could bend us over backward without a second thought, and you are fucking frowning?” Jessie screamed over the loud music, and I bit my bottom lip in embarrassment. “And you tell me to get on your level?” She mocked. Was I really being that obvious? Pathetic.

The dancers stepped down from their perches and began working the screaming sea of women, one coming over to our table where they took Jessie’s hand and spun her around so her back was to them. They pinned both of her hands behind her back before bending her over and pounding their hips into her ass, leaving absolutely nothing to the imagination, and she ate up every goddamn second of it. Happy fucking birthday, Jessie .

Another dancer joined the fun at our table, dragging Chyler out of the booth and picking her up by her thighs as if she weighed almost nothing. She laughed the entire time, running her hands through his long blonde hair as her thighs squeezed around his waist.

“Looks like our Officer Colby finally found the one that got away. But how long will she remain free?” Jaxon chuckled over the speakers as a large body dropped down from behind where I was sitting and towered over me in the booth.

I swallowed, my breath catching in my throat as my eyes flicked from rock-hard abs, hidden by a black tank top, to a pair of bright blue eyes. Oh...

Colby held his hand out to me with a smirk, and I greedily took it. My heart leaped into my throat as I placed my hand in his, and he pulled me from my seat and escorted me to the stage. Chyler and Jessie were whistling and screaming behind me, still playing with the two men who came over to entertain them.

“I said I’d come back for you, love.” He gave me a wolfish smirk as we reached the top of the stairs, leading me to a chair that had been placed on stage left. I sat down just as “Watch Me Burn” by Michele Morrone started, and he pulled up a second chair, straddling it in front of me.

With a flirty wink, Colby took my hand, kissing the back before spinning the chair out from under his legs and kicking it across the floor, swaggering to center stage as he rolled his hips, falling to his knees and ripping his black tank top in half.

I gripped the sides of the chair and bit my bottom lip as I watched him dance in awe, his movements so fluid and precise. I’d give anything to dance with him—moving my body in sync with his. The way the stage lighting played off his muscular curves made my head dizzy with desire—or maybe that was all the alcohol.

Making his way back to me, Colby gripped my knees, spreading my legs wide on either side of the chair, and set the tip of his boot in the space between them before gripping my chin and tilting my face up to meet his.

I admired his bright blue eyes before sucking in a breath as he brought his face down to meet mine, centimeters from our lips touching, only to pull away like a tease as he continued his performance center stage. Unable to resist, I pulled my thighs back in and pressed them tightly together, my slow breaths turning into needy pants.

As he strolled back a second time, Colby unbuckled his belt, pulling it through the loops of his jeans in one seamless move. He then straddled my thighs on the chair and laid the flat part of the leather belt across my mouth just behind my teeth again, leaning close enough in that I could feel his warm breath caressing the side of my cheek and the corner of my lips.

I couldn’t help but whimper at the desperation I was feeling; I was ready to explode. The strong scent of AXE body spray that enveloped my senses was causing me to

lose my fucking mind for him.

He removed the belt from behind my teeth and pulled me across the stage, his back to the audience as he took both of my hands and ran them down his chest to his firm abs, my fingertips exploring every single dip and curve along the way.

“Do me a favor. Get down on your knees, love.” His voice dripped like golden syrup, and my body moved on its own accord. I was kneeling for him before my mind even processed the request.

A second later, he ripped off his jeans, and a hand slid into the back of my hair, gripping the nape firmly as I gazed up at him in awe through dark lashes. My hands returned to his abs, and my nails dug into his skin.

I couldn't help myself; my body was begging for his. Here I was at eye level with his cock, wanting a taste so badly; I didn't care if it was the alcohol thinking for me at this point. I wanted him.

As the song ended, Colby gripped my hands in his and abruptly pulled me backstage. He led us down a dark hall that ran alongside the stage and whipped us around a corner into what appeared to be their locker room. My head spun from the rapid movement, and I swear the sharp turn gave me whiplash.

Colby pushed me up against a wall in the far corner of the room, and without even allowing me a breath, his mouth was on mine, actually on it this time, and I parted my lips with a moan, giving him an all-access pass.

This isn't real; this is just the alcohol in my system. My head was still spinning.

I was lucid dreaming, most likely passed out in the booth, with Chyler and Jessie ready to drag my drunk ass home.

But fuck did he taste good.

Chapter 9

Colby

Those hot pink heels and lips. I wasn't sure what came over me tonight. After over five years of performing in these shows, moving from being a backup dancer to having my own leading set, I never felt the need to claim a woman from the audience until now.

I've had to bring women on stage for my set every show, but this one... she was different, and I just had to have her.

We choose who we will bring up on stage for our sets while working the crowd on the main floor. Generally, it was always the bachelorette or birthday girl, but when I caught sight of her stunning blue-grey eyes, I couldn't resist.

I was drawn to this woman, and I couldn't fucking wait for the song to finish so that I could pull her backstage and have my way with her.

To everyone else, it was all just part of the show. Hopefully, her friends wouldn't miss her for the rest of the evening because she was coming home with me.

I could taste the Malibu on her tongue as mine tangled with hers. Gripping onto her thighs, I lifted her body, pressing her back into the wall, her legs wrapping around my waist tightly on instinct. I could feel her hands trail up my arms and shoulders and into my hair, her fingers teasing the strands before delivering a sharp tug.

My cock was growing harder by the second as she started rolling her hips against mine.

“Fuck” I groaned into her mouth as I felt one of her hands release my hair to tug at the only piece of clothing I was still wearing—my tight teal boxers.

Her hand slipped under the waistband to grab my hard cock, and she quickly pulled her hand back. I couldn’t help but chuckle against her lips.

“You—are you—” She was breathless, her eyes growing wide with shock, curiosity, and awe.

“Pierced? Yeah. All for you, love.” I moved my mouth down to suck on her neck, and she moaned. “Are you telling me this is the first pierced cock you’ve ever had?” I asked, biting lightly under her ear.

“No—I mean yes. I just... oh, fuck me.” She rolled her head to the side, biting her bottom lip with a whimper.

“I can do that all night,” I murmured into her neck as I released one of her thighs and unbuttoned her shorts before sliding my hand between us.

She was so fucking wet; I let out a rough growl as I ran my middle finger through her slick center before dipping it inside of her. “Look at you, soaking wet for a man you only just met. Want to make this more personal? Tell me your name.” I started sucking on her neck with the demand, marking her as mine. I’d do a lot more before this night was over.

“Si—Sienna,” She swallowed as she panted, her grip tightening on the back of my neck, nails digging into my shoulder with the other hand as I added a second finger into her.

“Sienna,” I repeated, loving the sound of her name on my tongue, and she moaned breathlessly. “I’m going to give you everything.” A promise, as I started rolling her clit with my thumb while pumping my fingers in and out of her slick cunt.

She may be drunk right now and unable to fully understand what was happening between us, but I knew she was meant for me. There was a reason she was here tonight, and it wasn’t just for a friend’s birthday or bachelorette party. She was here for me.

“Colby, please,” She begged, her bedroom eyes locking onto mine.

I captured her mouth with mine, adding a third finger and fucking her roughly with my hand.

“Come for me, love,” I whispered, pressing my thumb harder into her clit.

Sienna’s thighs tightened around my waist, and I could feel the walls of her cunt squeeze around my fingers. “That’s it. Let me feel you coat my hand in your cum, beautiful.”

I muffled her cries of pleasure with my mouth as I felt her come all over my hand, sliding my fingers in deeper to let her ride out the rest of her climax on her own.

She rolled her hips, her tight cunt spasming around my hand.

Sienna was perfect, and I was going to claim her as mine tonight.

“Colb—fuck, mate. Really?”

I chuckled against her panting lips before turning my head to see Darren standing with his arms crossed in the doorway to the locker room.

“What? Like you haven’t ever, Dazza?” I mocked.

Darren sighed, rolling his eyes at the situation.

“Fair enough, but you still have a show to finish.” He held his hands up before gesturing to the hall leading to the stage. But I had no intention of finishing the show tonight; I was going to finish Sienna instead.

“I’m not finishing the show. Have one of the backups take my spot.” I retorted.

“Fuck sake, Colby...” Darren ground out, throwing his hands in the air. “Jaxon’s gonna be pissed with you.”

“Let him be. Not my problem.” I shrugged, removing my hand from between Sienna’s legs and dropping them to stand, keeping my arm around her waist and holding her tightly against my chest. I wasn’t about to let her get away from me; no way in fucking hell.

As he turned and headed back to the stage, Darren mumbled several choice words for me under his breath.

“You’re coming with me,” I growled, throwing her over my shoulder and carrying her out the back door of the locker room. I was ready to sink myself deep inside of her. Show her everything my pierced cock and I had to offer.

“Wait—!” She squealed in laughter, her fingers digging into my ass cheeks. “My friends—”

It took a little longer than expected to get back to the penthouse. But she was still ready to fuck when we arrived; I could barely get us through the front door before she was crawling all over me like a fucking spider. Sienna was fit and flexible, and I

planned on taking full advantage of everything she was capable of.

“Oh my god, this place is amazing!” She kicked off her heels and spun around the living room in awe before falling into the giant black love sac in the corner, giggling uncontrollably.

With a smirk, I entered the sunken living room and held my hand out to her. “If you like the living room, you’ll love our bedroom.”

Sienna took my hand, and I quickly lifted her up, throwing her over my shoulder and carrying her down the hall. She was giggling the entire time, still riding the tail end of her drinks from earlier in the evening.

Entering the master bedroom, I dropped her down in the center of the Alaskan king bed before removing my shirt and jeans and then climbing in to join her. She was sprawled out on the black silk sheets, running her arms up and down them.

“You’re right; I do love this room more.” She hummed in awe, rolling onto her side to face me as I lay beside her with one hand behind my head. “But I believe you still have more to show me.” She added, pulling herself up to straddle my hips, my hands finding their way to her ass and squeezing it.

“Oh?” I bit my lip, flipping our position so that her back was on the bed, and I now hovered over her, her legs wrapping around my waist. “What do you want to see first? Tongue or cock, love?” I licked my lips, hoping she would choose the latter of the two, but I would fuck her with both before she passed out from coming on them.

“Dealer’s choice.” She spoke breathlessly as her eyes dropped to my mouth.

“Tongue it is. Always ready for a late-night snack after work.” I grinned, working my way down her flawless body as I removed her top and bra.

My lips caressed her neck, down to her collarbone, and between her perfect perky tits. I sucked one of her nipples into my mouth, teasing it with my tongue and teeth while I rolled the other between my fingers. She arched her back, her chest rising to meet my mouth as soft moans fell from her sweet lips.

“I didn’t think you’d be this responsive to me.” I switched nipples, giving them both the same treatment. “I guess this makes you mine.” Sienna groaned as I continued dragging my lips and tongue down her stomach to the waistband of her denim shorts.

I unbuttoned her shorts and pulled down the zipper before ripping them down her legs and throwing them into the corner of the room, along with her black lace thong. Running my hands back up her smooth thighs, I spread them wide, pleased to see that she was still just as wet as she was earlier.

“Fuck. I think I’m going to love this more than you.” I breathed before diving my head down between her legs and latching on to her clit.

Sienna’s hips bucked as I sucked hard on her, teasing the tip of her clit with my tongue. She was everything I had ever imagined my perfect woman to be and she tasted like mine. All fucking mine.

Cries of pleasure filled the room as I released her clit to dip my tongue inside of her tight cunt. I ate her out like a starved man. A meal that I got to fuck when I was done with it.

I worked my tongue in and out of her a few more times before adding two fingers and returning to suck on her clit some more.

Sienna writhed under my mouth, moaning unintelligible words and crying out my name. Fuck I loved how my name sounded coming from her lips. I wondered how loud I could get her to go with my cock instead of my mouth.

“Come for me, love, so I can fuck this tight cunt of yours with my cock and give you a real treat,” I growled against her clit, her hands gripping my hair and pulling hard as her slick cum spilled over my fingers and onto the sheets.

I pulled my fingers out of her, coating my cock in her cum, before licking the excess off my hand and sucking it from my fingers.

“You taste so sweet; you’re going to give me a sugar high.” I stroked my cock one more time before positioning it at her entrance, pressing it into her tight cunt.

“Fuck... me... Colby...” She panted as I continued to push my way inside of her slowly.

“Say please,” I purred, stopping halfway.

“Please—”

I slammed the rest of the way into her, and she choked out a scream, digging her nails into my forearms. I continued to slowly thrust in and out of her, letting her get used to my size before fucking her harder. She rolled her hips greedily against mine, and I picked up the pace, rising on my knees and wrapping my arms under hers, pulling her toward me.

Her hands fisted the sheets, and I felt her tighten around my cock. Not yet .

I pulled out of her completely, flipping her over, ass in the air as I dug my fingers into her hips. Lining myself back up, I plunged my cock into her again and started fucking her harder, my hand sliding up the back of her head to grip her hair.

“Colby,” Sienna whimpered my name, pleading to let her come.

I could feel her beginning to tire from the alcohol and long night.

“Go on, fill yourself up, love,” I groaned, ready to burst inside of her the moment she squeezed my cock like a vice, and it didn’t take long.

She came, and hard, milking every last drop of cum from my cock.

Sienna was panting, attempting to catch her breath, and burying her face in the sheets. As I pulled out, I could see both of us dripping down her thighs.

“Don’t move,” I gently ordered, stepping away from the bed and heading into the bathroom briefly, returning with a damp towel to clean her up.

I lightly dragged the warm towel up both of her thighs and over her swollen cunt before tossing it aside and wrapping my arms around her, pulling her down into the sheets with me, both of us passing out from exhaustion.

Chapter 10

Sienna

Inhaling a deep breath, I stretched out and rolled onto my side. The streak of sun shining through a crack in the curtains was blinding, forcing me to shut my eyes before bringing my forearm up as a shield. My head was throbbing from the hangover I knew was coming for me after all that drinking last night.

How did I get home? When? The last thing I remember... oh shit, the show.. .

With a groan of deep-seated regret, I lowered my arm, blinking my eyes open as I peered down to see that this was not my bed. The one I was now lying in was twice the size of mine and wrapped in black silk sheets, but that wasn't even the worst of my problems this morning.

Something on my left hand snagged in the sheets, and I glanced down to find a ring on my finger—my ring finger.

“Oh no... no, no, no, no, no.” I whispered, my eyes growing wide as they took in the white gold twin band with several sparkling diamonds, accenting a large black raw-cut diamond at the center.

At least, it appeared to be a diamond; it was too dimly lit in the bedroom to tell precisely what it was. I didn't know if diamonds came in black, but what else could it be? Obsidian?

The stone wasn't see-through; it was solid black, and that was the only kind of jet-black stone I could think of that might be inlaid in a ring.

What the fuck happened last night? I thought it was all just some sort of fucked up dream. I barely remember anything after being hauled out of the showroom's back door. Bits and pieces are coming back to me, but the ring?

I slid out of bed, wrapping myself in one of the loose silk sheets, and tiptoed to the bedroom door, peering through the crack to see if anyone was in the hallway. The cold marble floor on my bare feet caused a shiver to trail up my spine.

Whoever's place this was, it was massive. The bedroom alone was the size of my entire studio apartment. This couldn't belong to the man from the show. There is no way a male revue dancer could make enough to live in a place like this.

I must have gone home with someone else...

The thought alone of leaving anywhere with a complete and total stranger who I didn't even remember meeting made my throat close. Bile burned the back of it as my pulse started to race.

The sliding glass door behind me opened, and I jumped in surprise at the sound before turning to see who was entering the bedroom from outside.

"Morning, love." A heavily accented voice, one that no amount of alcohol or bad hangover could ever erase, gave me a brief moment of relief that was immediately overshadowed by the realization that I did go home with him .

Colby stood leaning against the doorway wearing nothing but low-hanging grey sweatpants and a wolfish smirk. "Or I guess I should call you something else now... wife, perhaps?" He chuckled, pushing himself off the doorframe and stalking toward

me from across the room, his muscles flexing with every step.

Fuck he was gorgeous, and I was a goddamn hungover trainwreck who couldn't remember a thing that happened over the past twelve hours.

Did we? Of course, we did. I didn't just sleep naked in his bed and not let him fuck me. Oh, drunk Sienna... why do you do this to yourself?

I pulled the sheet up higher around my body as his bright blue eyes stripped me bare.

This was all just a very lucid and fucked up dream. I wasn't here, and I wasn't married to— to him .

My heart was near beating out of my damn chest the closer he got. It was just a dream, and I would wake up in my bed, most likely covered in vomit from all the alcohol.

As I backed away from his approach, Colby stepped into me, caging me against the door, his hands firmly gripping my hips, and he leaned himself into me. I pulled away, sinking my body as far into the door as I possibly could.

“What’s the matter?” He frowned, lifting my chin with his fingers so our eyes met.

“This—this isn’t real. We’re not—” I swallowed, unsure of what to believe, what to say.

The surreality of it all. Men like him didn't just pick up random women from the bar, and they certainly didn't marry them hours after... oh god, I let him fuck me with his fingers backstage... It was all coming back to me in bits and shattered pieces.

“It’s very real, and we are.” He attested. His confident smile melted my heart, and I

felt like I was about to faint. “Come back to bed,” Colby murmured, tucking a loose strand of hair behind my ear before taking my free hand and pulling me across the room with him.

I don’t know why I followed him. I couldn’t think between my pounding headache and the weight of the ring that now sat on my finger. Sighing heavily, I pulled my hand out of his and stopped just as he fell to sit on the edge of the bed facing me.

“No. We’re not married. I was drunk.” I admitted shamelessly, gripping the sheet covering me even tighter than before. “There is no way I could have consented to that.”

“Sienna—”

“Don’t call me that,” I shouted, cutting him off.

“Don’t call you what? Your name?” He gazed up at me with those beautiful blue eyes and scoffed sarcastically.

“You don’t even fucking know me.” I barked. No matter how drop-dead gorgeous he was. I couldn’t be married to this man. I knew nothing about him; he could be some fucked up serial killer as far as I was concerned. “I need to go home. Where are my clothes?... my phone?” I glanced around the room frantically, catching a glimpse of my shorts in the far corner.

Colby stood from the bed, towering over my five-five height as he pulled me into his hard, warm body. He was intense, and for a second, I forgot how to breathe.

What could a man like him want with a nobody like me?

“You are home.” He softly laughed as if this was all just some stupid joke and I was

messing with him.

He caught me off guard, and I needed to remember the woman I was, the one I was supposed to have turned myself into.

The fantasy ends here.

“Cut the shit, Colby. We aren’t married; there is no way this was even legal.” I run a hand through my hair, and he roughly grips my chin in his fingers, my eyes flicking to meet his.

Desire burned behind those bright blues; I saw him burning me alive in their reflection.

“Believe it or not, you and I are married. Legally.” He growled, and I could see his frustration with my denial of that fact. “You are my wife.”

Fine. If I was his wife, then he was going to discover just what the fuck he got himself into with me. He’ll be signing the divorce papers soon enough. I’ll make sure of that.

Turning on my heel, I storm over to the corner where I saw my shorts, tossing the sheet aside and roughly pulling on my clothes.

“Where is my phone?” I demanded, placing my hands on my hips.

“You’re not leaving.” He quipped, dropping back onto the bed once more.

“I’m your wife, not a caged animal. You can’t keep me locked up here.” I hissed, running my hands through my messed-up hair. “Give me my phone, or I’ll just leave and get a new one.” I threatened.

It would suck to have to get a new phone altogether, but I'd do it if it meant getting the fuck out of here.

“So you accept it then.” He questioned.

“Accept what?” I gawked.

“That you are my wife.”

“I...” Fuck . “Don’t change the subject. Just give me my damn phone.”

Colby chuckled and gestured his chin to the dresser next to me, where I saw my purse and phone sitting on the edge of it.

I didn’t give him the satisfaction of my ignorance.

Grabbing my things, I headed for the bedroom door, pulling it open.

“Dinn—”

I slammed the door behind me before I could hear him finish what he was about to say, making a beeline to the front door.

I didn’t bother putting my heels on; I just scooped them off the floor as I stormed through the living room.

Of course he lived in a fucking skyline penthouse. I clenched my teeth, took the elevator to the first floor, and pulled my phone from my purse to call my ride out of here.

Lucky for me, Chyler wasn’t as hungover as I had expected her to be, and she picked

me up within ten minutes of getting off the phone.

As soon as she reached the curb, I ripped open the passenger door and fell into the seat, taking one last look at the main doors of the building, hoping that Colby didn't decide to chase me.

"You have a lot of explaining to do, miss—" Chyler started before her eyes fell to my left hand. "Is that a fucking ring?" Her eyes widened, and her voice rose. "Did you get fucking married last night?" Her laughter was not something I needed to hear right now.

"Just fucking drive." I sighed, sinking into the seat and raising my hands to cover my face. I could feel it growing flush with embarrassment.

"Your place or mine?" She asked, still in just as much shock as I was.

"Mine... I need to get ready for work..."

Without further question, Chyler pulled away from the curb and drove us to my apartment.

She didn't talk the entire drive, letting me process what had transpired over the last twelve hours before indulging her in all the juicy details. I could see her eyes flicking back and forth from the road to my ring, and I knew she was begging to know what had happened.

Pulling up to my apartment complex, Chyler parked her car in the back lot, and we both got out and headed up to my unit. Again, she didn't say a word as she followed me inside, but her mouth opened as soon as she shut the door behind us.

"Alright, I gave you the fifteen minutes it took us to get here. Now talk." She crossed

her arms over her chest and stared me down.

“Yes, fine, okay. I apparently was so fucked up last night that I got married.” I throw my arms up in the air, tossing my purse across the room in the process.

“To who?” She arched a questioning brow, and I started laughing like a mad woman. I was laughing so hard I wanted to cry. Chyler walked over to me, furrowing her brows in concern, as she gripped my shoulders. “Who, Sienna?” Tears fell down my face as I tried to compose myself enough to answer.

I thought I was a trainwreck earlier this morning, but now I was entirely off the rails.

“Colby.” I managed to get out between sobs.

“From the show?” Her jaw dropped with realization. She was squeezing my shoulders in her hands. “That’s not—”

“Don’t you dare say it’s not that bad that I married a stripper last night.” I choked out, losing my handle on reality. I was just glad I had my meltdown here and not in front of Colby. Fuck my life .

“Well—He’s not technically a stripper—” She mumbled.

“Semantics, Chy,” I roared, shoving her away from me and storming into my bedroom to change.

She followed me and leaned against the doorframe.

“It’s okay, Sienna. We’ll find a good lawyer who can—”

“You seriously believe that I can afford a lawyer right now?” I turned to face her.

“Look around, Chyler, I live in a fucking rundown studio apartment. My refrigerator is empty, and my pantry is full of ramen and boxes of mac and cheese. I can’t afford jack shit, let alone a goddamn divorce lawyer.” I sneered.

“I’m only trying to help,” Chyler shouted, her hands balling into fists. “But clearly, you don’t want it, so fuck you too, then.” She pushed off the doorframe and turned to exit the apartment. “Call me when you are level-headed and done being a bitch.”

The door slammed shut, and I fell onto my bed, crying until I could no longer think or breathe.

GOD-FUCKING-DAMNIT!

Chapter 11

Colby

I let her go this morning. It was entertaining to see just how pissed off I could make my wife as she stormed out of the penthouse. Sienna refused to accept that we were married but she wouldn't for long. I made a promise to her last night that I would give her everything, and I plan on keeping that promise. I'll give her the fucking world.

After carrying her out to my cherry red Polaris Slingshot, I threw on the spare clothes—jeans and a T-shirt—I kept for emergencies and drove her straight to The Little Chapel of the West. She laughed at the idea of marrying me when we pulled up, thinking it would make for a great story in the morning, a joke to her friends, but she didn't know just how serious I was.

The owner of the wedding chapel works for the Men Under Revue, so he had no issue whatsoever with her drunken state as she signed the marriage license he slid in front of her. He doesn't question us and never will. That's what comes with the power we hold over the Strip.

When she finished signing the documents, I was able to catch her full name.

Sienna Isabelle Carter —now, Sienna Isabelle Bryce.

In the five years I've worked for the brotherhood, I've learned to take what I want, and she is exactly that: what I wanted. I didn't feel the need to chase her around, to

woo her like a normal man would.

Instead, I put a ring on it, one with a tracker so that I could keep a close eye on her. She wouldn't take it off; she was too stubborn to do that. She'll continue to wear it as a fuck you to me. But if she does take it off, I've also installed one on the back of her phone's battery.

Within the past three hours, I was able to track where she lived and, I assumed, where she worked. The pin on my app told me she was at—what appeared to be—a Pilates studio on the west side of Paradise, closer to Spring Valley.

Opening the browser on my phone, I searched the address to find the studio's name and operating hours. Sunset Pilates, she would be there until at least seven tonight, which worked for me.

Locking my phone, I dropped it into my gym bag, slid on my sneakers, and headed to the elevator. I skipped out on last night's finale and signings and knew that Jaxon would have a few choice words waiting for me once I got to the showroom for training and rehearsal.

I rode the elevator to the basement garage, tossing my bag into the passenger seat before getting into the driver's seat and peeling out of the garage.

I could already hear Jaxon's reprimands in the back of my mind as I drove to Neon Palms. It had been a good long while since I last pissed him off, so this should be pretty entertaining for everyone, including myself.

I didn't give a fuck if he scolded me in front of the other blokes. I got what I wanted last night. I was a happy, sated fucking man. Nothing he could say or do would ruin that for me.

Abso-fucking-lutely nothing.

Pulling into the parking garage at Neon Palms, I jogged up the stairs to the showroom and made my way to the back door for the locker room. Once inside, I shoved my bag into my locker and strolled to the stage for rehearsals.

I could already hear the music playing. Jaxon had started rehearsal without me.

When I arrived, I was already dressed in my gym shorts, white sneakers, and a white tank top, so there was no need for me to change. I was ready to start practicing for tonight's show.

"Well, look who finally decided to show up." Jaxon scorned, giving me his darkest fuck you glare to date. "Line the fuck up." That's it?

Doing as I was told, I walked across the stage to line up with the other six blokes. Our set music started, and we all moved into our starting positions, a single-file line down center stage. We gripped the hems of our white tanks and pulled them up to chest height while leaning to the side, switching in a staggered formation.

We continued the routine, not actually ripping our tank tops off but stopping with all seven of us lined up at the front of the stage.

Jaxon cuts the music and steps onto the stage.

"Take five, guys; I need a minute with Colby." Fuck.

"Jax—" I started.

"Please tell me you didn't do what I think you did last night." He whisper-yelled just as Darren and Benji retreated to the lounge room.

“The fuck does it matter what I do?” I crossed my arms over my chest, standing my ground.

Once everyone had cleared out, Jaxon stepped into me, so close I could feel his breath on my face as he seethed.

“It does when it comes to the brotherhood. You can’t just bring random women into it.”

“I don’t recall that being a problem with Tate and his new wife,” I shrugged.

“Tate’s wife went under a thorough background check, followed by a test of her loyalty to him and the Men Under Revue.” He ground out through a clenched jaw. “Are you willing to put yours through the same?”

“What kind of fucking question is that?” I barked. “I didn’t realize I needed permission to marry.”

“All I’m saying is, if she fails, she’s done. It’s your hands that her blood will stain, Colby. Can you live with that?” Jaxon sighed. “You can marry whoever the fuck you want, but I just wished you would have said something before doing it outright. Was she really that important?”

Was she? I know it was an impulsive decision, but it was the right one, and I will die on that fucking hill.

“Of course she is. I don’t need to justify my reasons for claiming her as mine.”

“No, but now you better pray to god that she can pass her test.”

“There are no gods here, only us.” I scoffed.

“You say that now...” Jaxon shook his head. “Not everyone is like us, Colby... Not everyone understands how we handle things. She might not be as tough as you believe her to be.” He groaned, fisting his hair. “Fuck, mate... You don’t even know her.”

I might not know her now, but by the end of the week, I will.

And I’ll make sure she passes her test, whatever the cost.

Chapter 12

Sienna

In a rush to get my ass to the studio on time for the first class of the morning, I forgot I was still wearing my wedding ring. A couple of my customers brought it up, their eyes wide and beaming. After the fifth reminder, I removed it and shoved it into the top drawer of the front desk. I was sick of looking at it and attempting to come up with some lame excuse as to why I had the ring on and wasn't married.

Women love to gossip, and here in this studio, there is enough to go around every class. We are a tight-knit community, trusting each other with our secrets and slandering those outside these doors. I didn't judge. I enjoy the gossip; it makes for an entertaining day.

"I need to see you ladies working your scapula. This is level two; you know every position we work is full body." I called out as I paced down the center row between reformers. My last class was full tonight, so I would need to stay later to get my personal workout in before heading home.

"Russian splits, and then we will end with whatever extra stretch you need." I started. "When stepping onto the reformer, you need to close your rib cage and tighten your abdominals, pelvic floor, and inner thighs. This is your powerhouse. Let any of this go, and you get nothing from this workout but an injury." I stopped pacing when I reached the front of the room and turned to watch as everyone continued the workout.

I've been trying all morning to get my mind to shut the hell up. I couldn't think.

Everything circled back to him .

The past six hours have been nothing but a sad attempt at trying to remember what the fuck happened last night.

This is where I curse myself for being a lovable drunk and not a complete bitch instead.

I remembered vague details of the night, but not everything. I wasn't completely blackout drunk, but there were a few missing pieces that I just couldn't seem to recover, one of which was the wedding. I vividly remember us fucking in his massive bed and how he tenderly cleaned me up afterward. Every time my mind went back to that memory, I could feel my pulse racing and my face grow flushed.

"Five more... three... two... one." I clapped my hands and turned down the music. "Great job today, ladies; wrap up with your stretch of choice, wipe down the equipment, and I'll see you next time."

When I woke up this morning, I thought the entire night was just an extremely vivid dream. A fantasy that my mind made up because of how drunk and needy I was. I had hoped to wake up in my bed or on Chyler's couch, but that was far from the reality of it.

Did I feel bad for biting her head off this morning? Yes... and no. I couldn't blame her for my blatant stupidity; she wasn't my babysitter, nor would I ever ask her to be. She had enough shit on her plate.

I hung my head as I sat behind the front desk, feeling utterly defeated.

How was I going to get myself out of this situation? I couldn't stay married to Colby... Could I? He was a total stranger; I didn't know him... at all. Except that his

dick is pierced... Fuck.

Is this what my life is coming to now? Decisions based on incredible, mind-melting sex?

“You can’t fucking keep him, Sienna,” I growled to myself as the front door shut, and I was now the only one left in the studio. “He doesn’t love you, he can’t, and why the fuck would you want him to anyway?” I continued talking to myself as I sighed and fell onto one of the reformers, pulling on my grip socks.

This marriage was an accident—a drunken impulse.

While lying down, I put in my earbuds and turned up “Magic” by Coco & Breezy & Baby Sol on my phone before dropping it to the floor beside me.

I needed an escape from my ridiculous thoughts.

After a nice long stretch and workout, I will come to my senses and find a way out of this fucked-up situation.

Worst case, I’ll have to give Colby hell.

Fifty minutes later, I finished my workout with leg circles and a straddle stretch, lying down on the reformer with my feet in the straps. I was soaked in sweat, taking most of my anger and frustration out on my body.

As I spread my legs out wide to do my final straddle stretch, something gripped my ankles, preventing me from pulling my legs back in. My eyes flared open to the ceiling, and I pulled out one of my earbuds.

“Are you fu—” I stopped, staring blankly up at the last man in the world that I

wanted to see this evening.

“Fucking kidding you? No. But I’m loving this angle, love.” Colby chuckled, licking his lips as his blue eyes raked down my legs before fixating on mine.

“What are you doing here, Colby?” I hissed, glaring up at him.

“Picking up my wife for dinner.” He replied casually.

I lost all my words, just as I lost myself after hearing him call me his wife. Those two words, coming from his gorgeous mouth, were a fucking crime for making me feel anything for him. What was wrong with me?

“I’m not your wife. Get the fuck out of my studio.” I lifted my upper body to rest on my elbows and pointed to the door, which I now regretted leaving unlocked.

Releasing my ankles, the straps still holding them in place, he bent down between my spread legs and rested his hands on either side of my waist. His face was so close to mine that I could smell his spiced cinnamon scent, and my traitorous cunt tensed as his nose gently grazed against mine.

“Colby.” I breathed, my throat closing in anticipation.

I wanted him to touch me. Fuck, did I want him to touch me...

“Tell me why...” He paused, dragging circles around the tip of my nose with his. “I don’t think even you believe those words, love.”

I whimpered as his weight settled between my thighs. I had dropped the bar at the front of the reformer earlier, leaving nothing to prevent him from lying directly on top of me.

He wore grey sweatpants, sneakers, and a white T-shirt but looked so put together. His dark hair was short on the sides, long on top, and perfectly mussed. I wanted to drag my fingers through the strands and pull as hard as possible.

I swallowed, my eyes meeting his once more before dropping to his lips, attempting to restrain myself from kissing him.

“I’m. Not. Your. Wife.” I softly spoke, a slight tremble in my voice as I fought the desire building inside of me for him.

“I can fuck you into believing you are,” He murmured, his lips now just barely touching mine. Did I want to challenge him? I could feel his hard length growing against my aching cunt. Fuck. “I’d prefer you to beg me for it, but I’ll take screaming my name as a consolation.”

“You could fuck me into a coma, and I’d still deny it.” I sneered.

I have made several bad decisions in the past twenty-four hours. One of which was marrying this man. What’s one fucking more? Antagonizing him might become my new favorite game.

“Your fight only turns me on more, love.” He smirked, gripping my yoga shorts on either side of the seam and ripping them apart down the center. “Now, if you won’t come with me for dinner, I’ll just have to eat my meal here instead.”

“Those are Lulu-fucking-lemon!” I snapped, gawking at what he had just done to my favorite workout shorts. I spent months justifying the frivolous purchase.

“I’ll buy you all the Lulu-fucking-lemon you want after I taste my wife’s sweet cunt.” Colby growled, pushing my thong aside and sliding a finger inside of me. “Which, I might add, is soaked for me.” He pulled his finger back out, sucking on it before

gripping my thighs and falling back to his knees.

I watched him intently, still propped up on my elbows, as he brought his mouth so close to my cunt that I could feel his warm breath against it.

“Eyes on me if you want to come later, love.” He murmured before dragging his tongue up the length of me, closing his mouth around my clit and sucking hard.

I struggled to keep my eyes focused on his, pressing my lips into a hard line, fighting the urge to moan as he devoured me.

Fuck, why couldn't he be terrible at sex? I've heard 'eat me' being used as an insult several times, but I never thought it would feel this good to be someone's feast.

His tongue continued to explore my cunt, as he kept firm suction on my clit. My legs were shaking from still being in the straps of the reformer, resisting the weight of the springs, my body, and his goddamn sinful mouth.

A whimper escaped my lips as I dropped from my elbows, gripping the handles behind the shoulder pads.

“Sienna, love. I can't see those beautiful blue-grey eyes of yours.” Colby's seductive voice made me squirm under him as he drove two fingers into me, fucking me roughly with them. I squeezed my eyes shut, holding back a moan. “Sienna—” He warned with a growl.

“No.” I breathed.

I was ready to break. Every inch of my body was shaking with the need to come. Colby stopped, pulling his fingers from my throbbing cunt.

“Look at me, love. Otherwise, you’ll have to wait until we get home to come.”

I groaned at the threat and loss of his touch.

“I—I don’t live with you... Colby.” I manage to get out between breaths and a dry swallow. I was a bitch in heat for him, and yet I still had my fight.

“Then, I’ll live with you. Eyes on me, Sienna. Now.” He ordered, and my eyes shot up to his.

“You wouldn’t.” I gasped.

“Don’t ever question what I will or won’t do for you.” He stated. “Come for me, love, so I can take you to whatever place you want to call home and fuck you into that coma.”

With a chuckle, his mouth was back on my cunt, his fingers pumping inside of me as a third was added. They rubbed right up against my G-spot, and my eyes rolled to the back of my head as my climax tore its way through my senses.

I cried out his name, my hands releasing the handles, and instead gripped his hair as I came onto his face.

Colby groaned in satisfaction as he removed his fingers from me, dragging his tongue around my now-dripping cunt. I fell back on the reformer, releasing my hold on his hair, and reached for my own.

Not giving me a chance to catch my breath, he removed my feet from the straps and picked me up, cradling my body in his arms.

“I... can’t...” I mumbled, unable to think past my orgasm that I was still coming

down from.

I didn't want to go with him. I wanted to go home—to my apartment.

Without uttering a word, Colby opened the top drawer of the front desk, grabbing my keys and wedding ring. He gloomed at seeing it before slamming the drawer shut and exiting the studio, carrying me out and locking the door behind him as if I weighed absolutely nothing.

Was he upset that I took it off?

Colby dropped me into the passenger seat of his Slingshot, parked out front, and once in the driver's seat, his eyes fixated on mine. I pressed my thighs together to cover the split in my shorts, even though he'd already seen everything—explored it with his mouth.

Taking my left hand, Colby slipped the wedding ring back on my finger before his blue eyes seared into mine.

“Fight and argue with me all you want, Sienna,” He murmured. “But you are mine, and I have no fucking intention of letting you go.”

I swallowed the lump in my throat as he let go of my hand and started the motorcycle, heading in the opposite direction of his penthouse.

I was fucked.

In every way imaginable.

Chapter 13

Colby

Sienna was more than I'd imagined when I claimed her as mine. I didn't expect her to be as combative as she is, but it turns me on. I love a good challenge, and she is proving to be just that. I was going to have a lot of fun breaking her.

Thanks to the tracker, I already knew where she lived. When we pulled up to the front of the building, she looked confused.

"Why are we here?" She asked, furrowing her brows at me.

"You said the penthouse wasn't your home, so—here we are. Your home." I gestured to the old and rundown-looking apartment complex. It reminded me of my apartment from when I first moved here.

"You are not living here with me." She argued, rolling her eyes and attempting to get out of the vehicle without flashing her exposed cunt to the world.

"I live with my wife; if she lives here, so do I."

"What about your pent—"

"Fuck the penthouse. I don't need it. What I need is you." I interrupted, giving her my truth.

I didn't need the penthouse to be happy; it was just insignificant stuff, and all of it is replaceable, but she isn't, and I know I need her more.

Jaxon said she would have to pass a test for me to keep her, that the marriage alone wasn't enough, and now I was trying to think of how the fuck I was going to tell her. One doesn't just come out and say to their wife, 'Hey, I'm a member of a secret society that kills pieces of shit that pop up on the Vegas Strip, and now you have to do the same, or I'll be forced to kill you.' I would have to find a way to break this to her gently enough not to scare the fuck out of her.

Sienna growled instead of arguing further, stomping her cute tight ass all the way up to her apartment building. I hopped out of the driver's seat and followed closely behind her, close enough that she slammed the door in my face. Fucking ow!

She was pissed off with me, and I chuckled at her fire. It didn't matter what place I chose, our apartment or our penthouse; she would have been pissed with me regardless of location.

The way her ass swayed as she strolled towards and up the stairs got me going. I wanted to see that pretty toned ass up in the air for me again, like our first night together.

Fuck, she was gorgeous. With her long brunette hair that flowed down the length of her back and those goddamn eyes. They reminded me of the clouds just before a storm.

She was a storm, one that I'd love to get caught in.

When we reached her unit, she opened the door and ushered me in with a long sigh. The door shut behind us, and my eyes wandered around her studio apartment.

It was small but more than enough for just her; I didn't see anything wrong with it, but I could feel her unease as I continued my perusal. She thought I would judge her for living the way I once did. We have much more in common than just our last names now.

"Well?" She snapped at my silence.

"Well, what?" I smirked, dropping onto her bed and lounging back on my palms.

"Aren't you going to start judging me on my apartment and how I live? How poor I am compared to you?" She jested with a harsh tone.

Was she being serious right now? Is that what she thought of me? Or was she looking for another reason to fight?

"Love, if that's the kind of man you believe me to be, then we've gotten off on the wrong foot already." I chuckled, crossing my arms over my chest.

Sienna rolled her eyes before running a hand down her face in agitation. She was fun to play with in more ways than one.

"Is there a reason why you are still here?" She huffed, stripping off her ripped shorts and throwing them in my face. I deserved that .

She crossed her arms over her chest, now wearing nothing but a black lace thong and cropped tank top.

"I've already told you," I spoke casually, dropping her shorts to the floor, pushing off the bed, and stepping into her. "I live with my wife," I murmured, gripping her chin and tilting her face to meet mine. "Is that so wrong?"

“N—no... I—” She stammered. Seeing her fight me one second and then become speechless the next was adorable.

I affected her, even if she acted like she hated me. Sienna’s face went flush as she struggled to find the words she had for me. Too bad I wasn’t going to let her find them.

I bit down on my bottom lip as I brought mine to hers to test if she wanted me as badly as I thought she did but hid it behind all her rage.

My lips hovered near hers, just enough to feel her warm breath and smell the salty sweat that kissed her skin. She was intoxicating to be near, and she was all mine.

She licked her lips in response to my nearness, her eyes flicking to mine with a longing sigh. Oh, she was fucking mine .

I wrapped my arm around her waist, dragging her back towards the bed. When my legs bumped up against the mattress, I fell back, pulling her on top to straddle my hips.

“Colby.” She hissed through clenched teeth.

“Come on, love. I know you want to take me for a ride.” I gripped her thighs and thrust my hips upwards. “Fucking use me.”

She whimpered, falling forward, her hands fisting into my T-shirt.

“This means nothing.” Sienna gritted out, her breaths turning into lustful pants.

“Whatever you say, love.” I surrendered.

I'll let her believe whatever she wants for now.

Happy wife, happy life, and all that shit.

My hand trailed from her ass up her back and gripped the roots at the back of her head; I roughly pulled her face down to mine, devouring her mouth. She moaned, parting her lips, allowing her tongue to play with mine.

Her hips rose, and I felt her shift above me, removing her thong. While she was up, I slid my sweatpants and boxers down my hips and thighs, kicking them to the floor. Neither of us broke our heated kiss.

I stroked my hard cock as she lowered her hips to mine, pressing the head up against her soft, warm cunt. She whimpered into our kiss as I slid myself into her. She was a great fuck when drunk; I could only imagine how incredible she was when sober.

Once she was fully seated on my cock, she began to rock her hips, and I could tell she was enjoying the feeling of my Jacob's ladder as it rolled against her, making her purr.

"That's it, love, look at how perfectly I fit your tight cunt." I breathed, biting her bottom lip and releasing my hold on her. "Fucking ride me, beautiful." I groaned, thrusting my hips upwards, encouraging her as she dug her nails into my shirt and chest, letting out a cry as I slapped the side of her upper thigh hard enough to leave a red mark.

I wanted to be rough with my wife, to see just how much she could take.

When Sienna dropped her gaze to meet mine, I could see a storm swirling in her eyes, as if I was staring into the eye of a hurricane. She stopped rolling her hips and leaned down, holding me captive.

“Here’s the thing, sweetheart.” She murmured. “We can do this dance. Fuck around, and pretend we are married. But at the end of the day, I don’t like you, and I sure as fuck won’t love you.” My girl had a bite to her tone and a temper to match.

I could work with her terms. She doesn’t have to love me now, but she would in time.

Chapter 14

Sienna

He had the fucking audacity to think he could control me? After all the bullshit I left behind in New York? I don't fucking think so. He was a total smoke show and had my body begging for every solid inch of him, but there was no chance in hell that I would let him dictate what I did the way my parents once did.

Letting what small amount of rage that was building inside of me take root, I slowly rolled my hips against him, grinding myself down on his hard cock, his piercings rubbing up against the inside of my sensitive cunt. I've always heard that hate fucking was fun, and I was ready to find out just how much.

Colby groaned as I moved up and down his rock-hard shaft, my thighs pressing up against his sides for leverage as I continued to ride him, harder and faster, my hands gliding up my body to fist in my hair.

His hands traveled upward from resting on my thighs to grip my waist. They were soft and smooth but also had a subtle roughness that had faded over time. Workers' hands that softened from a life of luxury.

His thumbs caressed my skin, rubbing circles on either side of my abs, the tender touch turning my goal of a hate fuck into something far from it.

I sucked in a sharp breath at the realization and dropped my hands to his, pulling them away from my body.

“Stop.” I breathed, subtle pants of lust and desire passing my lips.

“What’s the matter?” He frowned, his eyes softening as they fixated on mine, and I snapped.

“Don’t give me those puppy dog eyes.” I bit. “We aren’t making love. This is a simple hate fuck, and you know it.” My words were harsh, but they were the truth. At least from what I believed they were.

“You want a hate fuck, love?” Colby chuckled, and my insides twisted. From excitement? Fear? “Whatever my wife wants.” His eyes darkened, and within seconds I was flipped off his cock and face down in the sheets.

He pulled my arms behind my back, securing my forearms parallel to each other with one hand as he smacked my ass with the other. I whimpered from the sharp pain, but it felt so good. He dragged my body down towards the edge of the mattress, my hips now hanging off and toes planted on the ground.

“I think I like you more in this position.” He purred, positioning himself between my spread legs, using his knees to spread them even wider.

I didn’t fight the urge to push my hips upwards, my ass in the air and ready for his cock.

Without warning, he drove himself into me from behind, fucking me roughly with every thrust. His piercings rubbed against my G-spot, and I moaned loudly into the bed with how good it felt. I had never experienced a pierced cock until I had his, and now I didn’t think I could ever go back.

Colby had one hand on my arms to keep them in place and the other on my hip for extra control and leverage. His grunts made me wet, and the sound of his thighs

slapping against mine sent shivers down my spine.

His hand smacked my ass again as he continued to pound into me, and I cried out from the burning sensation it left behind.

“Oh, fuck me.” I panted into the sheets, drooling from pleasure.

I could barely swallow, every thrust taking away my breath. My arms were starting to cramp from their tight positioning, but I was too far gone to say anything.

Colby slowed his thrusts, bending forward over my back, his lips grazing the shell of my ear.

“I want to see your beautiful face when you come for me.” He released my arms and abruptly flipped me onto my back, my legs straight up against his chest, with his fingers digging into my thighs hard enough to bruise. “Let me see how much you hate this, love.”

He slammed back inside of me, and I screamed while clawing at the sheets. I needed to grip on to something, anything. He was making it hurt on purpose, and I was becoming a slut for it, my face growing flush as I attempted to pull my legs towards me, but his grip just tightened further.

“You can have your legs back when they’re shaking,” Colby smirked. “But for now, I need you to be my precious wife and come on my cock. Show me how much you enjoy being hate fucked.”

His fingers slid up my side to tease and pull at my hard nipples. I could feel my cunt clench around his cock with every tug.

“Who am I?” He challenged, slowing his movements yet again.

“Fuck... you.” I shook my head. I refused to give him the answer he wanted.

“Who. Am. I?” His hips slammed into me, and I cried out at how deep he went.

“Asshole...” I hissed, tears starting to slide down the sides of my face from the pain.

“Last chance, love.” He slammed into me a second time, and I bit down hard on my bottom lip as his hand slid up from my breast to lightly squeeze my throat.

“Fuck” I screamed so loudly my throat burned. “My h—husband.” I choked out.

“That’s my girl.” He crooned, finishing me off by playing with my clit until I came so hard I saw stars dancing across my vision.

With a final thrust, he followed me, filling my cunt with his white hot cum.

Colby released my neck and pulled out of me, his cum mixed with mine dripping from my cunt and onto the sheets and floor. I couldn’t feel my legs; they were numb from the position he held them in as he fucked me like it was a punishment. I didn’t think I could walk even if I tried. Thank god I was already in bed.

He wrapped his arm around my waist and pulled my back to his chest as he laid us further up on the bed.

“I am not cuddling with you after that,” I growled with a whine.

He was not going to fuck me into submission, even if I just called him my husband so he would let me come.

“You have a small bed; there is no other option.” He yawned and shrugged against me.

“Then sleep on the floor.” I barked.

“Fuck no. If you don’t want to cuddle, that’s fine, but then we live at the penthouse, where the bed can accommodate your ridiculous need for space.” Fuck sake.

“Fine.” I hissed. Always a fucking loophole to be found somewhere .

I gripped the pillow in front of me, holding it tightly to my chest, trying to ignore the man at my back.

It didn’t take long for sleep to claim me, hoping to wake up with him gone come morning.

The sound of a drawer slamming shut startled me awake. I groaned and pulled a pillow over my head, attempting to fall back asleep.

I swear... Another loud slam came from across the room, and I jolted upright.

“What the fuck are you doing?!” I shouted, glaring daggers at Colby from where he stood in front of my dresser. An open suitcase was on the floor, half filled with my clothes. “Don’t—”

“I’m packing you a bag for the penthouse. We can hire a service to move the rest later.” He spoke calmly, turning to casually lean against the dresser, crossing his arms over his chest.

I hurled the pillow I was holding across the room, aiming straight for his head. He didn’t flinch and swatted it to the floor just before it collided with his face.

At least I know my aim is still good.

“Do you have to do this right now?” I growled in anger, reaching for my phone to check the time. “It’s not even fucking seven. What the hell is wrong with you?”

“I have to work at nine.” He shrugged. “I wanted everything ready so we could leave when you woke up.” He was acting like he was doing me a fucking favor.

“Work?” I arched a brow in question. “Your shows are in the evening...”

“I bartend during the day at the Neon Palms Ultrapool.” Colby sighed, running a hand through his hair, and all I could think about was running my own through it. Feeling the soft strands through my fingers and tugging on it as his mouth trailed down my body, kissing every square inch of me. Fuck. It was so hard to be angry with him when he was so goddamn gorgeous. It was not fucking fair.

He was a bartender and a male revue dancer, yet he could afford a skyline penthouse with a view of the Last Vegas Strip... How?

I fell back on the bed, hearing his footsteps coming towards me. I held up a finger to stop his approach.

“Stop... right there.” I didn’t bother to look at him, to even see where he had stopped.

I covered my eyes with my forearm. My mind was a hot mess, and all because of him. This wasn’t right; he took advantage of me while I was drunk and chained me to him by an illegal legal marriage.

Generally, you’d think that it would be a woman who would trap a screaming hot man into marriage, but no, not here. So why was I pissed off knowing that I was the winner in all of this? I got every starving woman’s wet dream; I made out like a fucking bandit that night.

A male revue dancer on the Las Vegas Strip.

All mine, no strings attached.

Colby pounced on me, straddling my hips and shaking me from my drifting thoughts. His hands wrapped around my wrists and pinned them above my head. I tried to squirm under him, but he was too big and far too strong for me to overpower him. He leaned his face within breathing distance of mine, and my breath caught.

“You—” I started with a grunt as I strained to release my wrist from his grip.

“I can tell you’re in deep thought about something,” He grinned. “Reconsidering your feelings for me already, love?” He chuckled, licking his luscious lips and flicking his bright blue eyes to mine.

“I don’t know you, and you sure as fuck don’t know me.” I gawked. “I’d willingly jump out of a Maverick Helicopter mid-flight before reconsidering... this.” I paused before adding, “You.”

“No, you’re right, but if I were to reach between us right now, I know I’d find you soaked for me.” He murmured into my ear as his lips grazed along my cheekbone before pulling back to look at me again.

“Is that all you think about? Sex?” I scoffed, rolling my eyes.

“It’s hard to think of anything else when your wife tastes like a Michelin star meal.” Colby picked up his hips, sliding down my body and dragging the sheets that covered me with him. “Speaking of... How about a little breakfast?” He growled, eyes darkening as he looked up at me from where he stopped descending near my hips.

With a huff, I pulled my right leg up towards my chest, high enough to prop my foot

on his shoulder, and with as much force as I could muster, I pushed him off of me and slid out of bed before he could pin me down again.

Colby laughed as he watched me step around the bed—him—and stroll over to my now half-empty dresser. I angrily pulled out a pair of hot pink yoga shorts and a loose-fitting black crop top, dressing before pulling my hair into a messy bun with the black scrunchy I found lying on top.

“Nice choice in outfit.” Colby crooned from the bed, lounging on his side as if on vacation.

“I’m not here to please your eyes.” I retorted, grabbing a pair of white ankle socks and slamming the drawer shut.

“Well then, might I suggest an outfit change?” He chuckled playfully, lying back and resting his hands behind his head as he stared at the ceiling. Oh, please... fuck sake, he’s annoying as shit.

I started digging through the half-packed suitcase and noticed only booty shorts, tight tank tops, and the occasional crop tops were in there. No underwear, no bras...

“What the fuck is this?” I pointed to the suitcase while glaring daggers at him.

He shrugged and didn’t answer me. Un-fucking-believable .

If it weren’t for his good looks and half-decent personality, I’d have fucking murdered his ass by now.

I wasn’t the type to normally consider violence first, but I wasn’t above it today.

As I started pulling out a couple of bras and underwear from my drawers and

dropping them into the suitcase, I looked over to see that his eyes were now closed, allowing me to openly admire his hard cock that I could see through his low-lying sweatpants.

Fucking stop it, Sienna. We hate him. He doesn't own us.

"Stare a little harder, and he might grow another inch, love." Colby lightly laughed, opening an eye and gazing directly at me. I hadn't noticed that my jaw was hanging open as I essentially drooled over his dick.

"I—I wasn't... ugh!" Feeling my face flush with embarrassment, I gave him my back and finished packing the suitcase, bending over to zip it up. He whistled over my shoulder as he got a good look at my ass, and I flipped him off before returning to stand.

"You're a fucking child, Colby." I chastised.

"I'm a man admiring his beautiful wife. Can you blame me for wanting to act childish around you?" The smile he gave me was one women only ever dreamed of seeing from a man like him. One that screamed he wants you and adores you. Does he really fucking adore me? Adoration could take a back seat next to the rest of my unrealistic expectations for whatever this was between us.

I didn't answer him. Instead, I picked up the suitcase and strolled my ass to the door, where I slid into my ivory-white Kizik Vegas sneakers and waited for him to get up off his ass so we could leave.

"Let's go then," I stated impatiently, placing a hand on my hip, the other resting on the suitcase handle. "I have classes to teach starting at ten."

He jumped off the bed and prowled towards where I was standing, stepping into me

and pressing my body up against the wall. My breath caught as my eyes drifted up to meet his. I continued falling into a trance when our gazes collided—the feeling of comfort and connection taking root.

He dipped his face down to mine, his lips grazing the side of my cheek as he reached for the door handle and opened it next to us.

“After you then, love.” He murmured, and I slipped out of the apartment before I made an even bigger mistake than just marrying him while drunk.

Sienna... You are so fucked, girl.

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Chapter 15

Colby

As I pulled into the underground parking ramp for our penthouse, Sienna mumbled under her breath. I know she was judging all of this; it was an unnecessary luxury compared to where she lived. The Pilates studio couldn't bring in that much revenue for her to afford more.

I was not trying to rub in what I have now, what I've earned. But I was damn well going to give her the world. Show her that she could have everything she wanted; she just needed to take it.

I parked in my designated space and jumped out, running to her side to help her.

"I'm highly capable of getting out of your glorified motorcycle on my own, thanks." She snarled, shoving my hands aside, stepping out before grabbing her suitcase and storming towards the elevator bay.

Scratching the back of my neck, I blew out a heavy sigh. I was well aware that she hated me; she had every right to. But I didn't regret a single thing. I was going to worship this woman, and if she came out loving me in the end, then it would all be worth it.

Stepping up beside her, I pushed the call button for the elevator, and we waited for it to descend to the parking garage level. She didn't say a word; wouldn't even look at me. A shit-eating grin tugged at my lips as I thought about how hard she was trying to

resist me. How wet she got even though she claimed to hate me.

The elevator dinged, and the doors opened for us. Sienna stepped inside, and I followed her, pulling out my key card. I held it to the sensor and pressed the wide, gold ‘penthouse’ button. It lit up, and I stepped back to stand beside her. She shifted further to the left to put additional space between us, and I suppressed a chuckle.

When we reached the penthouse, Sienna exited the elevator and sprinted for the bedroom, slamming the door shut behind her. I could hear the sound echo down the hall that led to our bedroom and into the open-concept kitchen and living area.

I walked over to the floor-to-ceiling windows that gave the perfect view of the Las Vegas skyline and watched as the sun rose over the city. This was the primary reason I bought the penthouse.

While I enjoyed the luxury of it all, the view was what I was truly paying for. It was something worth waking up to every morning, and soon, that something will be replaced by Sienna, my wife.

Sienna’s laughter echoed throughout the parking garage as I carried her over my shoulder. The moment she caught my attention during the show, I knew I had to have her, and I wasn’t about to let that opportunity slip past me.

I dropped her into the passenger seat, and she giggled, biting down on her plush lower lip, painted with bright hot pink lipstick. Before getting in myself, I pulled out the gym bag that I had kept in the back for emergencies and pulled on a pair of sweatpants and a T-shirt. I wasn’t about to drive her around The Strip in my boxers.

“Where are we going? Back to your place, I presume?” She beamed with a slight slur to her words as her hand found its way up my thigh. She was most definitely drunk. I could smell and taste the Malibu on her tongue when I devoured her delicious mouth.

She was a very lovable drunk; I'll give her that, too.

"Why don't we take a ride down the strip first." I grinned before starting the motorcycle and putting it in reverse. Sienna whined at the idea but snuggled herself into the seat, crossing her arms over her chest. There was something about her. I couldn't explain it, but something just tugged at my subconscious, telling me to claim her for my own—that I needed her.

So here I was, at the end of the night—almost—with a gorgeous woman at my side that I wanted to keep as long as she'd let me, which led me to pull into the Little Chapel of the West before taking her back to my penthouse.

"Oh, I've heard so many stories of this place." She giggled in awe as she stared up at the lit-up yellow sign. "So many celebrities have gotten married here..." She trailed off in thought.

"It's a stunning and iconic church," I added, lounging back in my seat as my eyes soaked in every inch of her. The light from the sign created shadows that played off her features in the most perfect of ways. She was captivating.

"You know..." She started laughing at my sudden silence. "It would be so funny if we got married here tonight; after everything that had just happened, my friends would absolutely die if they found out I ran off and married one of the dancers." Her beautiful eyes flicked to mine, and I smiled as she continued to giggle from all the alcohol in her system. "I'm not being too forward, am I? Just tell me to stop if I'm being too much."

"Not at all," I assured her. "I think that would make this a night to remember for the both of us." I gestured my chin to the church. "Want to pull the trigger?"

Sienna's eyes light up like the Fourth of July, and she bites her bottom lip.

“Seriously?” She gawked, jaw almost falling to the floor. “Just as a joke, right? They can just give us one of those fake wedding certificates and silly cheap dice rings?” She asked, her face turning slightly flush from the idea sinking in.

“Whatever you want, love,” I confirmed with a shrug.

What she wouldn’t know is that the wedding will be entirely real, and we will be legally married after tonight. I’ve purchased a ring and have been waiting for an occasion just like this to use it. It might not fit her, but we could always get it sized later. I’ve spent the past year looking for the perfect woman to call mine, and she was it.

Sienna was going to be my wife.

“Are we going, or are you just going to stand there staring out the window until we are both late?” Sienna’s voice brought me back from my memory, and I turned to see her standing in front of the kitchen with her hands crossed over her chest and an irritated look on her face.

I still didn’t regret marrying her. She was giving me a run for my money, that’s for sure, but I would win this fight in the end. Her attempts to piss me off were cute, which is why I continued to let her do it. My wife thought she could drive me away by being a complete bitch twenty-four-seven, but it would take a lot more than simple spite-filled words to get me to sign the divorce papers—or even consider having them drafted.

“I need to change, and then we can go,” I said as I strolled past her and headed down the hall to the bedroom.

I wished I didn’t have to work today and could bend her over the kitchen counter instead, sinking myself deep inside of her until she screamed loud enough to shatter

glass. But I couldn't neglect my duties to the brotherhood at a time like this. Not when I knew she would have to complete her test soon enough. I needed all the time I could get to prepare her and ensure she was ready. I didn't know what kind of test they would issue her, but I knew it wouldn't be easy.

When I entered the bedroom, I noticed that piles of clothes had been thrown out of my drawers onto the bed. She certainly had a flair for dramatics, that's for sure. I wanted to be pissed off with her, but instead, I chuckled to myself, grabbing a pair of light blue denim jeans and a clean white T-shirt from the stack. I changed my clothes and headed back to the kitchen with a smirk plastered on my face.

"You know we have a walk-in closet," I stated, sliding my hands into my pockets as I approached where she stood. "There's plenty of space in there for all your clothes and more."

Sienna's lips parted with her comeback for me, but she quickly closed them and instead huffed, turning on her heel and walking to the elevator. I arched a brow as I followed her in and pressed the button for the parking garage.

She could give me all the silent treatment she wanted for now because she wouldn't be silent tonight when I finished the show.

After dropping my wife off at her studio, I raced to Neon Palms for my shift at the Ultrapool bar. It had only been two days since I met and married her, yet it felt like it had only been mere hours.

If I could step away from my duties for a week to spend solid, uninterrupted time with her, I would, but seeing as I didn't have prior approval to marry Sienna, I didn't get the benefit of a honeymoon—at least not yet.

Exiting the hotel, I walked past the adults-only pool and lazy river before

approaching the gates to the Ultrapool. Compared to this hotel's four other pools, this one was explicitly a party pool. It had a resident DJ who played daily, and every so often, we had celebrity DJs like Benny Benassi and Steve Aoki, who would come to spin their mixes.

When I started here, I was just a bartender, but after three years, they promoted me to lead. It didn't matter what position I was in aside from the responsibilities that came with it, which I now regretted having.

I stepped behind the bar and grabbed the inventory clipboard to verify that we were fully stocked for the day. As I slowly made my way down the rail, I caught a glimpse of someone from the corner of my eye. Nick was standing at the end of the bar, waiting for me.

Pulling my phone from my back pocket to check the time—it was a quarter to eleven, and the gates would open in fifteen minutes.

“Aren't you supposed to be managing Lunacity today?” I asked, pocketing my phone and continuing my work.

Lunacity was Nick's baby, a playground bar where anyone over the age of twenty-one could release their inner child—with the addition of alcohol, and over twenty games that had been transformed into a fully interactive experience.

When he opened it three years ago, I stopped by to check it out, but I haven't been there since. It had been the biggest hit lately on the Strip, so he adjusted the operating hours to take advantage of the demand.

“Late opening. Dustin instructed me to deliver your assignment personally.” He arched a brow, and I paused what I was doing to give him my full attention. “It's not regarding your wife, but I do believe that congratulations are in order?” He chuckled,

resting his forearms on the bar.

Relief washed over me like a bucket of ice water being dumped over my head. I haven't had the time to speak with Jaxon or Dustin regarding Sienna and her test, and I was grateful that this wasn't hers so soon.

"You feeling alright, mate?" Nick asked, his brows furrowing with concern. "Looking a little pale all of a sudden."

I switched my hands on the clipboard and rubbed my thumb against my brow before answering.

"No yeah, I'm fine... Had a late night and skipped breakfast, is all." I released a long sigh. "What's the assignment?"

Nick hummed in suspicion but didn't press further.

"The owner of Fallout has been having a tough time at his nightclub lately." He started. "There have been reports of men luring women out of the club and then assaulting and raping them in the back alley." Nick sighed before continuing. "When the reports first started coming in, they installed multiple surveillance cameras in the back of the building, and now they suspect it's someone employed at the club who is doing it, or at least involved in it, since the offenders always seem to know exactly where the blindspots are on any given night."

"And let me guess, I need to go there tonight, after our show, and attempt to catch them in the act?" I asked, reorganizing the bottles on the rail into their proper order.

"Yep, and hopefully, you are successful because Dustin said if it's not handled tonight, you are going back there every single night until it is."

I couldn't help but grit my teeth at the thought of having to spend every night at that club just waiting to catch whoever these people were in the act and put an end to them. The countless nights I would be spending away from my wife.

"I'll get it done." I clipped, chewing on my cheek in thought. "Anything else?"

"That's it." Nick shook his head and pushed off the bar to leave. "Let me know if you need any help." He added on his way out.

"No, I got this." I nodded before he exited the Ultrapool gate, then slammed my fist down on the counter in irritation. Fuck.

Chapter 16

Sienna

While I had always loved my job and owning a Pilates studio, it had also become a sanctuary. Since I was stuck living with Colby, being here was the only place he wouldn't bother me. Although, I couldn't help but wonder what he was thinking about back at the penthouse. He seemed overly lost in thought as he peered out at the skyline. I almost felt bad for being such a bitch to him, but he deserved it for putting me in this kind of position and refusing to let me go.

This afternoon, I had a short break between my noon class and the following one that started at four, so I spent most of it looking through the monthly schedule and debating whether to add additional classes throughout the week to keep me out of Colby's path.

As I sat at the front desk, eyes glued to the computer, I caught myself spinning the wedding ring on my left hand as if out of habit. Glancing down at the ring, I pressed my lips into a hard line, taking in every detail from the black raw cut stone in the center—which I was confident now was obsidian based on how it looked in natural lighting—and the four round quarter-carat diamonds that enhanced it along the white gold twin band closely resembling vines. Why would he choose a ring like this for me?

The front doorbell chimed, and I looked up, shoving my hand under the desk and out of sight.

“Are we in a better mood today?” Chyler entered the studio, dropping her gym bag on one of the benches, and approached the desk.

“That all depends on what a better mood consists of these days...” I mumbled, propping my elbow on the counter and resting my chin in my palm. “I moved in with him...” I gritted out through clenched teeth.

“Excuse me?” She gawked. “You did what?”

Releasing a long-held sigh, I dropped my face into my hands.

“I moved in... with him... this morning,” I whined in hopelessness, digging my nails into my scalp.

There was no lying to her; she would figure it out eventually. Chyler always seemed to have a knack for getting the information she wanted from people, and I was no exception. Although right now, I wished I was to save the embarrassment and shame that came with it.

“Oh, Sienna...” Chyler sighed, stepping around the counter to wrap her arm around my shoulders. “I think someone needs a drink.”

“Drinking doesn’t solve anything; drinking is what fucking got me here in the first place.” I gave her an incredulous look as I shook her off of me.

“I didn’t say it would solve your problem.” She clipped. “But if you must know, I’m graduating early and leaving at the end of the week. This is my last night to party with you and Jessie before I leave.” She crossed her arms over her chest and arched a brow. “So you can either pull that head out of your ass and drown your problems in Malibu tonight, or I guess this is the only goodbye you’ll be getting from me.”

“Graduating early? When did you find this out? You just told me you had a month left.”

“I found out this morning. I didn’t know it was an option, but I guess I qualify.” She shrugged. “You know how badly I’ve wanted to see my sister. This is a good thing.”

Chyler was my closest friend here, and we weren’t even that close. We only continued to see each other because she loved my studio and workouts more than any other. With her leaving, I would be back to where I started... alone once again.

“I’m sorry.” I dragged a hand down my face. “Yes, let’s go out and party tonight to celebrate your early graduation.” I wasn’t going to be the asshole to her now. Not when this would be our final goodbye.

“Great.” She beamed, perking right back up to where she was when she walked into the studio. “Fallout. Jessie and I will be there around nine.” She swiftly added.

“Sure, that sounds good. I’ll text you if anything changes.” I confirmed, pulling out my phone to add it to my calendar as a reminder—another excuse and way to avoid Colby tonight. I would most likely crash at one of their places afterward, too.

Chyler stepped over to where she plopped her bag on the bench and picked it up. I checked the time on my computer monitor and saw that it was almost two thirty.

“You aren’t taking a class today?” I asked as she draped the strap from her bag over her shoulder.

“No, I can’t; I have to wrap up some things at school.” She smiled softly. “I’m going to miss this studio... and you.”

“Don’t get all soft on me now... we still have tonight.” I forced out a chuckle and

returned her softened expression. “We’ll make it one to remember.”

She nodded in agreement and left the studio. My thoughts returned to my Colby problem as I once again sat there alone in silence.

Fallout was one of those nightclubs you went to on a weekend where you wanted to drink, dance, and potentially hook up with a hot stranger. There was a strict dress code for men and women with no exceptions under any circumstances whatsoever, and because of that, I never felt the need to go there. I’d much rather spend my night at a dive bar than have to comply with their ridiculous policy, but that is where Chyler wanted to spend her final night partying, and I was not going to kick up a fuss over it.

After closing the studio at eight, I drove back to my apartment to dress for the evening. There was enough clothing left behind from this morning that I could put together a reasonable outfit and do a basic makeup look.

Fluffing my hair with a can of dry shampoo, I admired my quick, thrown-together style in the bathroom mirror. I wore a tight, black midi dress and my favorite hot pink heels. For makeup, I went with a smokey dark brown shimmery eyeshadow all over the lid and basic black liner on my upper and lower waterline.

I looked good for not having much in my closet. I was never the party girl, and while I wanted a dramatic change when I moved to Las Vegas, partying was not one of the things that I added to my immediate to-do list.

Partying just reminded me of Lily... I ghosted her immediately and even got a new phone number. She had no idea where I had gone, and I didn’t want her to. My parents would have just used her to harass me, and I had to cut ties entirely with New York.

And what would they say now... To see that I was thriving in Sin City and... married. Fuck, everything circled back to that one fact. No matter how hard I tried to avoid the knowledge of being legally bound to Colby, I always landed right back there.

Why did it have to be him? Why did I have to be so stupid? And why the fuck was he constantly on my mind?

Colby was going to be the death of my sanity. I hated him; I have to hate him.

The Lyft I called pulled up to the front doors of Fallout, and I stepped out, scanning the line for Chyler and Jessie. Not seeing them, I took my phone out of my purse, walked toward the end of the line, and texted Chyler.

Me: Here, where are you?

She didn't respond immediately, and I stood at the end of the line, hoping I was just early and they weren't already inside. It was just after nine, and she said they would be here around that time, but I wondered if they had gotten here earlier.

Fallout from the outside looked like your typical Vegas-style nightclub. The entire exterior was matte black with no windows. The only colors on the outside were the gold door handles and the red velvet rope used to separate lines and block entrance into the club itself. Even the bouncers were dressed in all black down to their ridiculous sunglasses. Who the fuck wears sunglasses at night?

I stood in line for about ten minutes before my phone went off, and I looked down to see a new text message from Chyler.

Chyler: Coming to get you. Jessie got us VIP!!

That made things a little easier...

With VIP, it was a skip-the-line pass for all group members. When I reached the main doors, I saw Chyler speaking to the bouncer and pointing at me. He nodded as I approached and removed the rope that separated the two lines leading inside.

“You have to see the booth that Jessie got us!” Chyler squealed excitedly as she grabbed my hand and dragged me inside the club. She already sounded a couple of drinks, or shots, deep. Good for her .

Once inside the doors, Chyler pulled me to a sharp left, running down a long corridor. At the end was a set of stairs leading to the second and third levels of the club. We veered off to the right once we reached the second level, and she then proceeded down to the far end of the balcony, where I saw Jessie in a prominent corner VIP booth, big enough for at least twelve people.

“This is so unnecessary...” I joked as Chyler fell into the plush black leather seating and picked up her drink from the low-lying, glossy black table. “But I love it!”

The leather sofa fit seamlessly into the corner, where six people could comfortably sit on the left and another six on the right. There were only three of us.

“How did you manage to swing this?” I asked Jessie. I could only imagine how much a twelve-person VIP booth would cost to reserve, not including the alcohol.

“Don’t worry about it; I have my industry connections.” Jessie winked, picking up her glass and signaling for the waiter. “Sit, stay, have a drink, party!” She commanded, patting the spot next to her, and I shrugged, plopping my butt down into the booth.

“What can I get you, ma’am?” A young male waiter stopped before our booth and

handed me a drink menu. “Malibu Cherry Coke,” I ordered. “Oh, with extra cherries, please!”

“Be right back.” He smiled, leaving for the bar.

The music was loud, but not enough that we couldn’t communicate sitting next to each other.

“Who’s spinning tonight?” I quizzed Jessie as she sucked down her drink.

“Don’t know, don’t care.” She shrugged with a playful laugh.

Like me, she didn’t care to come here but managed to pull out all the stops for Chyler with this booth.

The waiter returned, handing me my drink, and I waved him back just before he left.

“Can we actually get six pink starburst shots as well?” I asked, and he nodded, leaving our booth again to grab the shots.

I had every intention of getting fucked up tonight. I wanted my mind blank, numb, and free from all distractions aside from my two friends.

Chyler glanced at me over Jessie, her eyes flicking to her and back to me a few times. I shook my head, mouthing the word ‘no’ as my eyes flared wide. I haven’t told Jessie about my situation and didn’t plan to. That stayed between Chyler and me, and it would move with her to Minnesota. I didn’t need any more hands in the pot of my fucked up life.

Her eyes then flicked to the hand holding my drink, and I choked on my long sip, realizing that I was still wearing the wedding ring. Fuck. I quickly switched hands on

my drink and casually wedged my left under my thigh. I couldn't take it off in front of her; it would be too obvious, but now I had to always be aware of my left hand.

Our waiter delivered the pink starburst shots to our table, and the three of us took them together, celebrating Chyler and our last night as just the three of us.

I finished the rest of my drink and ordered another shortly after, my buzz for the evening beginning to make itself known. I was feeling good, but I wanted to feel better.

A remix of "The Bad Touch" by Bloodhound Gang started playing, and both Jessie and Chyler jumped up from their seats. Jessie grabbed my hand, dragging me with them.

"Come on, girl! Time to dance!" She squealed as we speed walked in our heels to the end of the balcony and down the stairs to the dance floor.

The nightclub was crowded, filled to the brim with bodies. I preferred it on the second level, though, as there were fewer people to push through to move around. I grunted and glared daggers at several people who collided with me as Jessie pulled me through the sea of dancing drunks.

Relax, Sienna... have fun.

Breathe.

Chyler stopped in an open spot, and we all moved to the music, grinding up against each other and screaming the lyrics as loudly as we could. I loosened up as the song played, the anger and frustration of the day dissolving into bubbly laughter.

I managed to slip my ring into my purse when Jessie stepped away from the booth

earlier to use the restroom. I was thankful for the opportunity. I wasn't planning on explaining it to her at any point this evening.

An arm curled around my waist, and someone's hips pressed up against my ass, grinding into it. My heart started to race, and I looked over my shoulder and saw a random man with short dark hair grinning at me. I could hear Chyler and Jessie's playful laughter over the music and shifted my attention to see them grinding up against men of their own.

I could feel the sweat starting to bead down my hairline and back from dancing in the tight crowd, and my accelerated heart rate wasn't helping.

I needed to cool down before I passed out.

"You okay?" The guy grinding up against me asked with concern.

"I—I'm fine," I shouted over the music. "I just need some air." I ran my hands through my sweat-soaked hair and attempted to shove my way off the dance floor and out of his grasp.

"Here, let me help you." He yelled, gripping my waist tightly as he pushed people aside, making a beeline to the emergency exit. That was kind of him ...

I could already feel the relief wash over me from the cool air as we approached the door, and he opened it, allowing me to step into the club's back alley.

"Thank you." I breathed a sigh of relief, pressing my back against the cool cement building and closing my eyes. "I almost thought I would suffocate on that dance floor if I stayed there any longer." I swallowed, taking a deep breath.

"Are you sure you're alright?" The man stepped into me, and I opened my eyes at his

nearness.

“Y-yes, I’m fine now.” I stuttered, sinking further into the wall. He was so close, and it felt even more wrong.

“In that case...” He murmured, lowering his face to mine and raising his hands to cage me in. “Feel like having a little fun?” He smirked, and my insides twisted. I wanted to vomit.

“I’m married.” I clipped, pushing as much confidence into my words as possible.

He slid a hand down and took my left hand, holding it up where I could see it in my peripheral vision.

“I don’t see a ring. Are you sure about that?” He chuckled as though he caught me in a flat-out lie. Fuck.

I didn’t have my phone on me either; I was so fucked right now.

Dropping my hand, he leaned in even closer, our chests touching. He dragged his hand up my bare thigh, pushing the hem of my already short dress up even higher.

“No... Stop.” I whimpered, biting my lower lip as my breaths shortened. Please make him stop. I closed my eyes and rolled my head to the side, attempting to avoid any and all forms of eye contact with him. He gripped my chin, turning my face to meet his once more.

“Don’t tell me you don’t want this.” He licked his lips before grazing them along mine. “Everyone wants this.”

I swallowed the bile that began burning the back of my throat. My eyes locked to his,

and I clenched my jaw, preparing myself for the worst. I had two options right now: fight or surrender, and even if I lost the fight, at least I would have the peace of mind of knowing I tried.

My hands came up to push against his chest in an attempt to put space between us—however little that may be. He was strong but smaller than Colby overall, and it didn't take much to overpower me with my petite frame. Goddamnit, I wish Colby was here right now... Of all the fucking times...

He abruptly wrapped his hand around my neck, the other now cupping me between my thighs, a finger threatening to slide itself past my underwear. Adrenaline coursed through my veins, and I could feel myself growing lightheaded.

“Don't fight me, or I'll make it hurt even more.” He growled into my ear.

I started trembling in his grasp.

“Need some help there, mate?” A strong voice came from the shadows, and I whimpered in relief as I sagged against the wall.

“Fuck off and find your own pussy, man. This one is mine.” The man spat, not giving Colby the light of day, his attention fixed on me.

Colby lightly laughed, stepping out of the shadows. I turned my attention to meet his bright blue eyes, and mine stung with unshed tears. His hands slid into his back pockets as he casually continued to swagger toward us.

“Funny you should say that because she's not yours...” He paused, stopping mere feet away from us. “She's mine.” He finished coolly, dragging his tongue along his teeth.

“Look, ass—” The man started, turning to face Colby and didn’t get a chance to finish as Colby brought up his right hand and violently stabbed a knife straight through the center of the man’s throat, blood spraying both of us from the impact.

All I heard were the sounds of strained gagging and desperate breaths before Colby released his grip on the knife, and the man’s body went limp, falling to the ground, the knife still sticking out of his neck.

My mouth fell open in shock as I attempted to process what just happened.

“I... you... he...” I stammered, unable to create a cohesive sentence.

Why was a part of me happy? Satisfied? I wasn’t scared of what he had done, but more so... was I in awe? Like a knight in shining armor, Colby just killed a man to save me and fuck if that didn’t just turn me on.

He ran his blood-covered hand through his hair, giving him the look of an unhinged killer, and my eyes locked with ones of a darkening blue. For someone who just stabbed a man and killed him instantly, he was looking overly calm and collected. His face was peppered with speckles of blood, almost like forbidden freckles. I was sure mine looked just the same.

Colby stepped into me, and I didn’t move, not even a subtle flinch. I wasn’t afraid of him. I should have been, but I wasn’t.

He gripped my wrists and pinned them beside my head against the wall, his bright blue eyes shifting from my left hand back to mine and searing into them.

“Where’s your ring, love?” He questioned.

Oh shit... he thinks I took it off to hook up with someone, doesn’t he?

I sucked in a breath, and instead of answering, I shook my head.

Would he even believe me after what he just saw? How long had he been standing there? Did he know it wasn't consensual? That I told him to stop?

I've never found him intimidating until now, at least not in the aspect of murder, and instead of it scaring the shit out of me, something twisted in my heart, and it twisted in desire for him. Was I that fucked up?

Unable to find the words or any justification for why I wasn't wearing my wedding ring, my lips parted, and my eyes dropped to his lips—a silent plea.

I may need to reconsider my hatred for my husband because what I was feeling as I stared into his eyes was anything but hate.

Chapter 17

Colby

Skulking around the back alley of Fallout was not what I had planned for my evening. I only hoped that whoever was causing the problems of assaulting and raping women here would make a move tonight so I could kill them and be done with it. If they didn't show up tonight, I would be obligated to return every night until they did.

I arrived shortly after midnight. Post-show rehearsals ran later than expected, so there was a chance I had already missed them if they struck earlier, but it would make sense for them to attack closer to close, based on the women being either wasted or drugged.

You could hear the music out into the alley, so it was no surprise that no one would have heard the screams of the victim if she were even capable of trying.

Nick couldn't give me any information regarding the condition of the women during the attack, just what was done to them. Even though it was a huge problem, the owner tried to keep it as quiet as possible to avoid damaging the reputation of his establishment. No surprise there.

After an hour of waiting, I repositioned myself to crouch against the cement wall of the nightclub, rolling my shoulders and neck, which had begun to stiffen. This dirty fucker just had to pick the back alley. They couldn't do this inside the club? Maybe in the bathroom or somewhere that had a place where I could sit while I waited? Fuck.

I yawned, checking my phone for the time—almost one-thirty.

I should probably check in on my wife...

Just as I opened my tracking app, the back door of the nightclub opened, and I slipped my phone into my back pocket, silently pressing my back against the wall to hide in the shadows.

My eyes caught on a familiar set of hot pink heels. I took a step forward to approach her when a man dressed in all black stepped out of the door and caged her against the wall.

He brought his face close to hers, whispering something into her ear. With the music filtering into the alley, I couldn't hear a single word of their exchange, but the moment I saw his hand slide up her thigh and under her dress, my blood boiled, and I saw nothing but red.

Fisting my hands tight enough to turn my knuckles white, I tried to calm myself down to approach this situation without flying directly off the handle. I didn't care if he was or wasn't the fucker I was here for; he was a dead man for touching my wife.

"Need some help there, mate?" I offered, stepping out of the shadows and attempting to play this off as a casual gesture, while deep down, I was seething with malicious intent.

"Fuck off and find your own pussy, man. This one is mine." He spat, not even giving two shits who I was or why I was out here.

The fact that he saw my wife as just a pussy to take advantage of and fuck sent me over the edge.

I shoved my hands into my back pockets while swaggering over to them as a means to keep them to myself. Not only that, but I did it to grab the handle of the butterfly knife I had brought with me.

My wife's blue-grey eyes met mine, and I could see the unshed tears building within them. She wasn't out here with him intentionally; I could see that now. Whether he followed her out of the club by chance or lured her, it didn't matter. Her safety mattered; her eyes told me everything her lips couldn't.

"Funny you should say that because she's not yours..." I paused, stopping a foot away from them. "She's mine." I finished coolly, dragging my tongue along the front of my teeth before making a tsking sound.

"Look, ass—" He started, turning to face me, but I didn't let him finish what he was about to say. Instead, I pulled the butterfly knife from my pocket, flipped it open in a single fluid motion, and violently stabbed him in the center of his throat, blood spraying my face from the impact.

I held him there for a few seconds, enjoying the desperate sounds of his struggle for air and survival. It didn't take long for him to stop breathing entirely, and at that point, I let go of the knife, his body falling to the floor in a bloody mess.

That's one issue resolved...

I ran the same hand that held the knife through my hair before setting my eyes on my wife's. I was sure she was terrified, not from what that jack-off was going to do to her, but what I did to him. Something tells me that she was not well acquainted with killing and murder. I knew I was going to have to desensitize her to it for her test, but I guess we were jumping into it right here and now.

I stepped into my wife as I took both of her wrists, and brought them up beside her

head, pinning them to the wall.

The second issue was the lack of a ring on her finger, which now had me questioning her intentions for the evening and whether they were as innocent as I thought they were.

I glanced at her left hand before my eyes returned to hers.

“Where’s your ring, love?” I asked in curiosity.

I was prepared for a lie; she wouldn’t tell me the truth even if it would save her ass from the anger that I felt knowing she was here, drinking, without her ring on, with men just begging to taste her.

Sienna shook her head, avoiding answering my question. I scanned her eyes for any hint or indication of what she was feeling at that moment, and the longer I stared, the more I felt drawn to her.

Her gaze dropped from my eyes to my mouth as her lips parted, melting all of the anger and doubt I had just felt toward her.

I released one of her wrists and cupped the nape of her neck, tilting her head back as my mouth claimed hers.

Her lips parted, allowing me access, and I drove my tongue into her mouth, tangling with hers. She moaned, her hands wrapping around the back of my head as she gripped my bloody hair and tugged, pulling me even closer to her.

“Fuck the ring. Fuck me.” She mumbled into my mouth as she sucked the air from my lungs.

I didn't need to be told twice; I would do it gladly. The fact that she was so willing and wanting caught me off guard, but I wasn't about to argue or question her when I was just as desperate.

Sienna pulled her leg up to wrap around my hip, and I gripped her thigh with my free hand, the hem of her dress pushing up to her hips with the change in position. I leaned into her, pressing my weight into her body.

Releasing her mouth, I trailed my lips down to follow along her jawline, tasting the iron from the blood on her skin, mixing with her salty sweat. Surprisingly, she was even more stunning, covered in another man's blood, one that I had just killed for touching what was mine. I had never wanted her more than I did now.

With one hand still fisting my hair, she dropped one to my shoulder, balling her hand into a fist in my T-shirt and pulling on it, her hips rolling against mine for friction.

"Colby." She breathed with heated desire. "I need you. Now." A whimpered plea fell from her lips, and I grew harder, moving to suck on her neck to leave a mark.

Seeing another man attempting to take what was mine caused something primal in me to come forward; a forceful need to mark and claim her as mine. This woman drove me to the edge of insanity, but my wife was a high that I never wanted to come down from.

I let go of her neck and reached between us to unbutton my jeans and draw down the fly. Pulling my cock from my boxers, I pushed her thong aside and buried myself deep inside of her with one forceful thrust. She was soaked to the point that I slid into her effortlessly, and she rolled her head to the side with a breathy moan of satisfaction.

Not wanting to take things slow, I started moving faster, thrusting harder into her. I

would have taken my time with her, but we were in the back alley of Fallout with a blood-soaked body lying on the ground beside us. If this were going to be a romantic fuck I would much rather be back at the penthouse instead. This fuck was going to be quick and dirty.

Her panting moans filled my ears as I continued pounding into her against the wall with one hand gripping her ass tightly, lifting the other up so that both of her legs were wrapped around my waist for better leverage.

“Please,” She begged, biting down on her bottom lip. “Please, Colby.”

I was still pissed off with the thought of her coming here to find someone else to take her home and fuck her that I almost considered not letting her come. At least not without a thorough groveling.

Slowing my pace, I brought my lips to the shell of her ear, dragging them lightly along it.

“Were you trying to get fucked by another man tonight?” I murmured. If she wanted to come, she would have to give me the truth, and with my cock buried so deep inside her, I doubt that would be a problem.

“What?” She gasped with a rough swallow.

“You heard me... Were you trying to get rid of me by fucking another man tonight?” I pressed further, tugging on her earlobe with my teeth. I may have been angry, but that didn’t mean I didn’t want to taste her.

She sucked in a sharp breath, her cunt clenching around my cock as she pressed her hips up against mine for more.

“Answer me... wife.”

“I... No.” She stammered. “No, I would never.”

“Are you sure about that?” I teased, releasing one of her thighs and sliding my hand to play with her clit.

“Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.” She whimpered with a moan, digging her nails into my scalp and shoulder, her thighs tightening around my waist.

“Want to try again?”

“Fuck... You are my husband, the only man I will ever fuck; now, please let me come.” She rambled with a laugh that told me she was losing her mind from the sex. “Colby, please!” She screamed, gripping my face in her hands and turning it to meet hers. Her eyes burned into mine, her nails burrowing into my scalp on both sides.

I laughed, licking my lips.

“Whatever my wife wants.” I crooned before slamming my hips back into her, fucking her roughly until I was just at the edge of coming.

“Come with me, love,” I spoke before devouring her mouth with mine again, swallowing her screams and moans of pleasure as she came all over my cock, gripping my shirt so tightly that she tore it in half. Bracing myself against the wall with a hand on either side of her shoulders, I followed her climax, driving myself as deep as I could go, filling her with my cum.

“Fuck... me...” She panted against my lips, trying to catch her breath.

“When we get home.” I breathed, pressing my forehead against hers and closing my

eyes.

Chapter 18

Sienna

Over a week had passed since my husband thoroughly fucked me up against the back alley wall, next to a dead asshole, outside of Fallout. While my impression of him shifted dramatically that night, I still wasn't ready to fully commit to the relationship he was forcing me into.

Colby was still the asshole that roped me into marrying him, knight in shining armor or not; no matter how honorable he was, that didn't mean I had to love him. I had a choice and wasn't about to admit anything until I truly knew and understood my feelings for him.

Once I'd caught my breath and could think clearly—minus the alcohol still in my system—he walked me back inside to grab my bag and say goodbye to the girls, which just ended up with me screaming at them over the music as they continued grinding against random men on the dance floor.

Thankfully, it was dark enough on the dance floor that they couldn't see the blood spatter on Colby or myself, which would have been disastrous, all things considered.

Chyler hugged me when she saw Colby over my shoulder and realized I was leaving. Fuck I was going to miss that girl; she texted me just before she left a few days later.

Chyler: You take care of yourself, Sienna. Don't let that smoke show of a man blind you from who you are and smother your dreams.

Chyler: You are a strong, amazing, and incredible woman. Everything that you should be. Make sure he understands that before you pull the trigger and decide to love him.

Chyler: I'll always be here if you need me, but in all honesty, I hope you never will. Not because I don't care, but because I know you.

It had been hard knowing she was gone. While we never hung out like best friends or socialized as much as we did in the studio, she was still close to me. She was someone I could trust to keep me in check, and now, with her gone, I had to find the balance I was missing.

Colby had spent most of this past week ignoring my existence. I was at the studio teaching classes all day, and he worked at the bar only to return around three in the morning. Every day was the same routine; the only issue was that now he was leaving me alone. Why was that suddenly a problem?

Not once did he attempt to share the massive bed with me, nor did he bother to remain anywhere near me like he did those first few days we were together.

Something had changed between us that night at Fallout.

I didn't know what, and I wasn't sure it was for the better.

Before that night, all I wanted him to do was leave me alone, and now that he was... I wasn't so sure what I wanted anymore. Was he over me? Had I finally brought him to the point of contemplating a divorce?

I found myself sitting in the center of my studio's dance space, staring at my reflection in the floor-to-ceiling mirror wall, contemplating everything: my life, my strength, my goals, my husband.

Everything I thought I had figured out for my life was suddenly lost to me.

I sighed heavily as I replaced the earbuds I had removed before I sat down and unlocked my phone. If anything in this world could clear my mind of racing thoughts, it was dancing.

I brought up my favorite dance playlist, scrolled through the songs, and stopped on “In The End” by DJ Challenge X.

Pressing play, I turned up the volume, slid my phone across the floor, and let the lyrics carry me away as I stood and started my usual routine warm-up, having stretched in my last class. I could feel the wetness of tears on my cheeks as I brought myself up into a relevé, finding my center balance before striding across the room with a few pirouettes and an arabesque.

You are a strong, amazing, and incredible woman.

Pirouette. Arabesque.

Everything that you should be.

Pirouette.

Chyler’s words echoed through me, and I stopped in front of the ballet bar, gripping it tightly as unwanted thoughts crept back into my mind. I squeezed my eyes shut before pushing off from the bar and guiding myself back into the center of the room.

I opened my eyes and picked up my pace, sliding across the floor on my knees, arching my back upwards, and hanging my head back towards my feet.

Watching myself in the mirror, I leaned forward with my arms stretched out, palms to

the floor. Using the weight from my hips, I pushed my upper body forward, lowering it until I lay flat on the floor with my forearms propping me up like a plank.

I rolled my hips against the ground as the dancers did during the Heaven Down Under revue show before flipping over to my back, planting my feet firmly on the ground, and pushing up into a bridge before using my inner thighs, hamstrings, and glutes to pull my body gracefully up to standing.

Stepping forward, I pressed my back against the mirror, rolling my hips and body to the music before pushing myself away and back towards the ballet bar. I set myself up to pirouette one last time around the room; this time, I kept my eyes closed, allowing myself to float around in the dark.

Make sure he understands that before you pull the trigger and decide to love him.

Her last words resonated on a deeper level more than any advice she had offered before.

Could I love him? Did she see something I didn't? In him? In me?

With my last spin, I must have overcalculated my initial positioning because I ran into the wall at the other end of the room.

When I opened my eyes from the surprise, strong arms wrapped around my waist, pulling me close.

I took out one of my earbuds, panting heavily from my warm-up. My eyes were now locked on those of my husband, who had let himself into my studio once again.

“What’s wrong, love?” Colby softly spoke, dragging a knuckle down my tear-streaked cheek. It was hard to resist leaning into his hand, a gentle touch of comfort.

“No—nothing.” Staring up into his bright blue eyes, I almost forgot why I was still here—what I was doing. “What are you doing here?” I asked.

“What are you listening to?” He ignored my question, asking his own instead.

I frowned, glancing down at the earbud that I had just removed. Looking back up at him, I placed the earbud into his right ear and tapped it on the side to start the song I was dancing to. The second one was still in my left ear to listen to the music with him.

He leaned his head down to press his forehead against mine as he closed his eyes.

Something so simple, like listening to a song, was becoming more intimate than I had imagined it would, especially with him.

His grip tightened on my waist as he slowly started to sway with me in his arms.

“Dance with me.” He murmured, releasing my waist and taking my hand.

“I don’t—” I shook my head, not wanting to be this close to him right now.

“One dance, love.” His eyes opened and softened as he sighed.

It was a plea—something that I never thought would come from him; that I would always be the one left to beg for him to give me what I wanted, whether romantic or sexual.

I squeezed his hand, tapping my earbud twice to start the song from the beginning, and he took both of my hands, leading me into a jazz-style dance across the room.

He pulled me in close, his hands gliding along my stomach and back as I spun in his

arms, our touches grazing past one another like a whisper before I snapped back, leaping into his arms. Using the momentum from the jump, he swung me around his waist, my arms catching around his neck as my legs followed from around his back.

I slid my body down to the floor between his legs as he stepped over me before his strong arms pulled me back up, my hands gripping his shoulders as I pushed one foot into his knee, throwing my free leg up in the air behind me into an arabesque.

I stared down at him, holding my position, unable to comprehend how incredibly freeing it felt to dance with the man I had convinced myself I hated so much.

He bounced his knee that held my foot, and with the added motion, I launched myself up, curling my head in and rolling down his back as he lowered his upper body for me. When my feet touched the floor, we stood back to back, my breath quickening from the rush he gave me.

My husband took my hand from behind, and with one twirl, he pulled me around his body, my back pressing up against his chest with his hips grinding against mine in time with the music.

Colby made me feel as if I were floating with every effortless movement. His hands and body guided me through the melody, making a song I once found sad and depressing into something almost hauntingly romantic.

He stopped once I was facing him, my body flush up against his, a leg wrapped around his hip, and his hand gripping my thigh tightly. Our eyes connected, and I felt like a tether had been hooked between us, pulling us together tighter than ever before.

I was breathless and in awe of what he was doing to me. I started this dance session despising him, and now, suddenly, I was questioning if I was the problem instead.

“Colby,” I breathed as I stared deeply into his bright blue eyes—the eyes I saw every time I closed my own but was too terrified to admit who they belonged to.

Instead of responding, his lips parted, and I leaned up to capture them with mine, exploring his delicious mouth with my tongue.

He backed us into the corner as our tender kiss turned heated, all tongue and teeth.

I tugged at his shirt, and he smiled against my mouth before placing a hand over his head, pulling the shirt from his back, and dropping it to the floor beside us. I stared in awe at his toned and ripped physique, fighting back the urge to drool over it.

In all our fucking I had never had the chance to take a step back and simply admire his hard form. Every dip and curve of his muscles had me growing flush with desire as my hands greedily began wandering over his chest and down his abs. His hands were pressed against the wall beside my head, caging me in with his strong arms, and for the first time... I didn't feel the sudden urge to flee.

“Are you going to tell me what's bothering you?”

My eyes flicked back up to his as my fingers played with the waistband of his sweatpants.

“Why?” I asked. The single question that had bothered me this past week since Fallout.

“Why what?”

“Why the sudden space? The silent treatment?” I tilted my head in question, attempting to get a read from his soft expression.

Colby breathed a heavy sigh, placing his hands on my hips and pulling them toward his. I could see his jaw tick as he searched for his answer. I didn't think it was that challenging of a question.

"I've just been busy with work." He eventually shrugged. "And I didn't want to disturb you so late at night; you always look so peaceful when you sleep." He was referring to the late nights and avoiding our bed. Was he seeing someone else?

"Is there someone else?" I couldn't stop the words from falling past my lips, but I just had to know. It was fine if he was done with me, but I wanted the truth.

My husband chuckled lightly as he gripped my chin and tilted my face to meet his. I couldn't help but notice the subtle glow behind his blue eyes as they searched mine.

"There won't and never will be anyone else. You're it for me, love. All I'll ever need in this life and the next." He promised, releasing my chin to tuck a loose strand of hair behind my ear.

"I don't understand. You've been avoiding me..." I pressed, my heart twisting at his words. How could I be it for him if he hadn't even attempted to touch me for over a week? "Not a single word as I pass by you in the mornings before I leave for work. This is the first time you've had contact with me in a week."

I swallowed the lump that built in the back of my throat as he wrapped his hand around the back of my head and leaned into me.

"My wife demanded to be left alone, and I gave in to her demands. Don't tell me you changed your mind about me already?" He smirked, dragging his nose up my bridge before pressing a kiss to my forehead.

Heat began pooling between my thighs with an aching and desperate need for him. A

week without sex, a week without the touch of my husband, and I was suddenly a lustful, hot mess in his arms.

“Should I take your silence as a yes?” He teased before capturing my mouth with his, and I let him. I let him in, in more ways than one.

I could sit here and be alone for the rest of my life, where friends come and go as time moves on, or I could give this thing , whatever it may be, between Colby and me a chance to see if it could blossom into something more.

We may have married for all the wrong reasons, but did that mean we couldn’t make them right? Was I being unreasonable when I had first decided that all I would do was hate him until he was done with me? Would it be wrong for me to take advantage of my emotional vulnerability and see where true intimacy took us?

I might be crazy for it, but I’d be damned if I didn’t see where this path might take me.

Make sure he understands... and I would. Before considering love, I would ensure he knew exactly who I was and gave me everything I wanted.

My husband may be the death of me, but I’d be the death of him, just like our vows.

When the fuck did I start referring to him as my husband?

Chapter 19

Colby

When we left Fallout, I knew something had shifted between us. Fucking my wife in that alley felt... different. It wasn't the same as all the times before. Something inside of me had changed. My feelings for her evolved into something more—and it scared the ever-living shit out of me....

I wasn't able to get confirmation that the man I had stabbed in the alley was the one I was ordered to dispose of. So, for the past week, I had spent every night watching that back alley like a fucking hawk.

When I returned home just after three in the morning with no success, I immediately checked on Sienna. She was always fast asleep, as peaceful as ever, in the center of our bed.

Even though I had the overwhelming desire to crawl into bed and wrap myself around her, I refrained from doing so. Instead, I opted to sleep in the living room, stretched out on the black leather sectional.

She never said a word to me, not even to ask about the man from that night, so I let her be. My wife wanted nothing but to hate me and for me to leave her alone, and so I did. All while wrestling with my sanity and desire, which continued to burn hotter and brighter for her.

The one thought that threatened to swallow me whole was how she might have seen

me now. Did she see me as some murderous fucking monster that enjoyed spilling the blood of others? She sure as fuck didn't act that way when she begged me to fuck her right after I killed the piece of shit, but that could have been the situation itself.

She was so wet, though, practically drenched in her arousal.

I had always initiated our sex, but that night was the first time she begged me for it, and at the end of the night, I was left confused about both my feelings and hers.

Where did we go from here? Would she call the police and tell them what I had done? Did she fear me for what I was capable of? Was this the moment where she realized that she could never love me, a man so quick to violence?

It was the same routine day after day.

She left for work early in the morning without so much as waking me.

I would wake up, shower, and change before heading to the Ultrapool by nine, and throughout the day, I would check her whereabouts through my tracking app.

She was always at her Pilates studio until late at night or the penthouse, nowhere else.

After the evening show, I would return to the back alley of Fallout, sit there until close, and then return home.

Every night, while waiting for my target to finally make their appearance, I thought about her. Sienna may have started as just a woman I had the primal urge to claim, but I started developing deeper feelings for her as the days went on.

The thought of loving her terrified me because if she could never love me back... I couldn't even fathom the alternative.

I resisted the temptation to approach her, wanting my wife to come to me when she was ready, but the longer I waited, the harder it became to keep my distance.

When my shift at the bar ended early, and I noticed she was still at her studio across town, I gave in to my desire and deep-seated need for her.

Letting myself into her studio, I wandered the empty space searching for her. She wasn't working out on one of the reformers like the last time I was here, and the lights were all off. I caught a glimpse of light from under the door leading to the private dance room and assumed she was hiding from me there.

I peeked through the crack in the door as I opened it and watched as she danced across the room. Her toned body and wardrobe told me she had a dancing background, so it was no surprise that she was mesmerizing when in her element.

I wanted to know what she was dancing to, the kind of music she loved to listen to.

I wanted to know everything about my wife.

As she spun around the room, I stepped inside, wrapping my arms around her as she crashed into me, catching her off guard.

Her stormy blue-grey eyes stared up into mine, and I knew right then that it was the right decision. I should have confronted her days ago instead of waiting as long as I did.

"What's wrong, love?" I asked, noticing that she had tears staining her cheeks.

I raised my hand to run a knuckle down its path. Her skin was so soft and smooth.

"No—nothing." She stammered. "What are you doing here?"

“What are you listening to?” I glanced down at the earbud she had removed, curious to see what she would do. Would she share that information with me instead of shutting me out completely?

I was surprised when, instead of pulling away from me, she tucked the earbud into my ear and played the song she was listening to. It was an alternative version of “In The End” by Linkin Park, sung with a hauntingly beautiful tempo.

Closing my eyes, I leaned down, pressing my forehead against hers, swaying with the soft cadence of the song, pulling her tighter against me.

I wanted this with her—the intimacy.

I wished she would let me in, and give me a chance to win her heart without dismissing me completely.

“Dance with me,” I murmured in an attempt to be even more intimate with her—to be raw and real for once.

“I don’t—” She shook her head with apprehension.

“One dance, love.”

My eyes pleaded with hers for one chance, just one. If this didn’t win her over, I would leave her be until she was ready to come to me.

She squeezed my hand, gazing deeply into my eyes while tapping her earbud. The song started over from the beginning again, and I took both of her hands in mine, pulling her in close and leading her in an intimate dance across the room to the flow of the music.

I pulled her body in close, my hands gliding along the soft skin of her back as I spun her in my arms and away, before snapping her body back towards mine. She leaped into me and using the momentum, I wrapped her legs around my waist, swinging her upper body around me like a snake as her arms wrapped around my neck to complete the move.

As I released her from my grip, she slid down between my legs, and I stepped over her, widening my stance. With my hands under her arms, I lifted her from the floor. She placed her hands on my shoulders, and I used my knee for support as she pulled her leg upward into an arabesque.

My wife was flawless—breathtaking in her element of dance.

I stared up in awe as our eyes locked with one another. This woman was mine, all fucking mine.

Feeling her weight shift on my shoulders, I bounced her foot off my knee and tilted my head to allow her body to fall against mine. She rolled down my back until her feet touched the floor.

With her back pressed against mine, I gripped her hand and pulled her to my front, grinding my hips against her back with the music, not wanting this moment to end.

A single moment where she no longer fought with me but instead moved with me. I buried my face in her hair, breathing in her scent deeply. It was comforting—how much she smelled like home.

I spun her back out and dipped her body down, her arms flowing above her head and a leg wrapping around my waist for support. She relaxed in my arms, holding her body up with her leg and hips, before I lifted her upper body until it was flush against mine.

My wife's blue-grey eyes swirled with her fierce storm—the one that swept me away, taking me wherever she wanted to go.

“Colby.” My name was a breathless whisper as her eyes searched mine.

She left me just as breathless, my lips parting at the sound of my name on hers, as she leaned up and captured my mouth, kissing me deeper than she had ever kissed me before.

I backed her into the corner of the room as her mouth continued exploring mine, unable to hold back from tasting her.

When she started tugging at my shirt, I smiled against her lips before pulling it off my back and dropping it to the floor.

Her eyes roved my body in awe as her hands trailed down my chest and abs as if committing every dip and curve to memory.

“Are you going to tell me what's bothering you?”

Her eyes flicked back up to mine, and I tensed, feeling her fingertips gliding along the inside the waistband of my sweatpants.

“Why?” Was all she gave as a vague answer, and I knew what she meant by it; I could feel it, but I wanted her to ask me.

“Why what?” I asked, offering her another chance to tell me what had been eating at her this past week.

“Why the sudden space? The silent treatment?”

I drew in a breath, pulling her closer to me. How was I going to explain this past week to her? That I had been out late waiting to catch and murder whoever was still sexually assaulting women in the back alley of Fallout?

At this point, I believed he was the man who had attempted to fuck her in that alley. This had been the longest the club had gone without an attack; I just needed Nick or Dustin to confirm it, and I was done with my job.

“I’ve just been busy with work.” I shrugged, giving her a half-truth. “And I didn’t want to disturb you so late at night; you always look so peaceful when you sleep.” Even though every single fucking night, I wanted to be in that bed pressed right up against her warm body.

“Is there someone else?” She uttered, her eyes drifting away from mine, and I couldn’t help the chuckle that escaped my lips.

Did she genuinely believe that I would have replaced her? That I could find someone else worthy of being my wife besides her? Not a fucking chance.

I gripped her chin, pulling her gaze back to meet mine.

“There won’t and never will be anyone else. You’re it for me, love. All I’ll ever need in this life and the next.” I pushed every ounce of truth into my words, feeling them down to my twisted core.

“I don’t understand. You’ve been avoiding me...” She gave me an aggravated look. “Not a single word as I passed you in the mornings before leaving for work. This is the first time you’ve had contact with me in over a week.”

I rolled my eyes before gripping her head from behind and leaning into her.

“My wife demanded to be left alone, and I gave in to her demands. Don’t tell me you changed your mind about me already?”

The fact that she believed I was intentionally ignoring her told me she cared more than she would ever admit, and her silence at my response spoke volumes to that truth.

“Should I take your silence as a yes?” I teased when she didn’t answer me, and then I crushed my mouth to hers, kissing her deeply, passionately, and with a fervor that I never gave her before.

I could feel her pushing back, but not in a way that told me to back off. She pushed against me to pull me in.

Soft, warm hands glided across my skin, moving from my waist to my back and up to my shoulder blades.

“You break my heart, Colby Bryce, and I’ll slit your throat in your sleep. Consequences be damned.” She breathed a threat, her voice shaking with desire and fear of the unknown—the fear of trusting me.

“If I break your heart, Sienna Bryce, I’ll slit it before you even get the chance,” I confessed.

I would do anything for this woman; breaking her heart wasn’t even a consideration. The fact that she even thought there could ever be someone else for me was an insult.

I would show her exactly what she meant to me, starting with preparing her to pass her test.

A life without her was one I no longer wanted to live, and I would drive a knife

through my heart before I ever came close to breaking hers.

“Then take me home. I’d rather not fuck my husband in the corner of a dance studio when he owns a bed larger than this room.” She insisted, biting her bottom lip and dropping her eyes to my mouth.

“ We own, and I’ll do anything my wife asks,” I growled, picking her up by her thighs and stealing another passionate kiss before carrying her out of the studio.

Chapter 20

Sienna

I ran.

When my husband parked in the underground parking garage, I ran as fast as possible to the elevator—beating him to it and shutting the doors so he couldn't get in.

I laughed as I took out the white keycard I had stolen from his pocket before we left the studio and pressed the button for the penthouse floor. Leaning back on the rail as the elevator ascended, I smirked, thinking of everything I wanted to do to him.

Back at the studio, I felt like a weight had been lifted. The pressure of refusing to allow any attachment or feeling between us, the hate that I tried so hard to maintain, all melted away, leaving me with a clean slate, ready to mold into something new.

Once I reached the penthouse, the elevator doors opened, and as I stepped out, Colby tackled me to the ground almost immediately. His body broke our fall to the floor, his heavy pants blowing warm air across my face.

“Did you run up all of those stairs?” I giggled in awe at his speed, taking in his exhausted and disheveled appearance while pushing away the hair that had fallen into my face.

“You... my love... are in trouble...” He panted his words with a hard swallow, lifting us both off the floor before throwing me over his shoulder and smacking my ass as he

started taking strides to the bedroom.

I didn't quite understand where this playful spark suddenly came from, but I knew I could finally let myself go with him. All those years of following strict rules and never allowing myself a moment to breathe, relax, and be free.

This was as good a time as any to practice what I've been preaching these past five years—that I am no longer chained to the ground by my parents and the unrealistic expectations I left behind.

I was free. Free to be me. Free to be his.

Colby dropped me onto the bed, and I instantly started undressing. Sliding my yoga pants down my thighs before ripping them away from my ankles and tossing them across the room, followed by my bright pink tank top.

After only a week of being without him, I was starved—for his touch, his mouth, his cock.

I could feel myself growing wet as he leaned over me, his hand coming up to caress the side of my neck and jaw. I leaned into his touch, closing my eyes and letting his warmth sink into my skin.

“Tell me what you want, love.” His smooth voice was a purr.

I opened my eyes, looking up at him. I knew what I wanted.

The same thing I wanted when I moved here.

“To start from the beginning,” I uttered. A fresh start. With him.

No more hate or pretending that this isn't what I've desired for so long.

For a man to come into my life, sweep me off my feet, and claim me as his.

Fuck that I was drunk when I married him.

Fuck that he felt as though he could control me with sex and his possessive behavior.

Fuck that he killed a man in front of my eyes in cold blood just for simply touching me.

Fuck. It. All.

This is what I've wanted, and I will take it.

Colby didn't bother putting his shirt back on when we left the studio, and why would he? He looked far better naked than with clothes on anyway.

I gripped his forearm as my eyes wandered down his carved chest and cut abs, landing right at the waistband of his sweatpants. My mouth watered at the sight of his hard, pierced cock pressing against the fabric.

I loved him in these sweatpants, leaving me with nothing to the imagination of what lay behind them. When they sat low, leaving his hips and deep-toned V on display, it made it hard to hate someone so alluring.

"See something you want?" He rolled his hips into me with a low growl, and the way his muscles rippled from the movement sent me over the edge.

I reached forward, gripping the waistband of his sweatpants, and used it to pull myself onto my knees. Our chests barely touched as he leaned back to mirror my

movement.

“I want to taste you.” I groaned, leaning forward, my nose millimeters from his. I wanted to do everything I told myself I couldn’t do before.

Sliding my hand into his boxers, I wrapped it around his stiff cock and began stroking him with long, languid strokes, dragging my thumb over his tip to feel the moisture leaking from it.

I slid off the bed to the floor and pulled his sweatpants and boxers down with me, his cock springing free once they were halfway down his thighs.

I admired his Jacob’s ladder piercing, the four shiny barbells that lined the underside of his thick shaft. My mind had the nagging urge to ask why he got it, but my mouth had other plans.

Parting and licking my starved lips, I glimpsed at the pre-cum that coated the tip of his cock before peering up into his bright blue eyes as I dragged my tongue across it, loving the salty taste that ignited my desire for him even further.

“What is it you men always say when you eat us out?” I cooed with a smirk. “Eyes on me?”

I didn’t let him reply before wrapping my lips around his cock and sucking his length into my mouth as my cheeks hollowed around it.

“Fffuuuccckkkk.” He hissed, running his hands through his hair as his head rolled back and his hips bucked forward.

With a hum of satisfaction, I pulled his cock from my mouth with a ‘pop’ and giggled, wiping the drool from the corner of my lips.

“If you can play games, so can I. Want to try again?” I arched a brow, his head falling forward to meet my eyes.

He licked his lips and nodded breathlessly, his hand wrapping around the back of my head to tangle in my hair. Good, I loved it when he was rough with me, and I knew I could take him in all his fucking glory.

Keeping my eyes fixed on his, I opened my mouth wide as he slid himself inside, the tip of my tongue pressing up against the barbells.

I swallowed around him, squeezing his thighs as silent permission to fuck my mouth like I knew he wanted to.

Colby started slow, allowing me to get comfortable with the position and his length before his hips moved faster and harder, his grip tightening at the back of my head.

As I stared into his eyes, I saw his desire burning deep within them and a fierce determination to match.

Why did it turn me on to know he was about to do something to put me in my place?

I gagged a few times as his cock hit the back of my throat, tears welling in my eyes and drool sliding down my chin. I kept reminding myself to breathe through my nose as his free hand came down to cradle the side of my face while he fucked it.

He tilted my head to angle himself deeper, and after several exaggerated thrusts, I pressed my hands to his thighs as tears ran down the sides of my face, needing a moment to pause.

Colby pulled his slick cock from my mouth, saliva and pre-cum dripping down my chin, and I forced a hard swallow.

“Look at you, love.” He hummed as he dragged his thumb along my cheek, spreading my tears around. “Fuck, if only I knew that pretty mouth of yours could do more than just push me away.”

“We both know yours is better at eating than talking,” I challenged, smirking up at him and wiping my mouth with the back of my hand, ready for more.

“It helps when my wife tastes like my favorite flavor.” He growled, bending down to wrap his arm around my waist, pulling us both onto the bed.

I straddled his waist before he gripped my hips, pulling me higher up towards his chest—his face, tipping forward with the sudden movement, my hands fisting into the black silk sheets above his head.

“And what flavor is that?” I mocked, rolling my eyes before looking down at him between my thighs.

“Home.”

He dragged his tongue through my center, and I moaned in ecstasy, his fingers digging into my thighs. I rolled my hips as his tongue dipped inside me, riding his face like he just fucked mine. Fuck me.

I gripped the sheets tighter as he shifted the angle of his mouth to suck on my clit, teasing it with his tongue and teeth. I never wanted to go this long again without him.

There was nothing I enjoyed more than being eaten out by my husband—other than being fucked, of course.

A week was far too long, and luckily for me, the studio was closed tomorrow.

My legs began to tremble as his tongue continued to explore my cunt, and his mouth sucked harder on my sensitive clit. I was ready to burst; sucking his cock had already wound me up so tight I could have come if he simply told me to.

Unable to hold my climax back any longer, one last graze of his teeth set me off like a bomb. I cried his name as I came over his mouth, a shiver trailing up my spine from the explosive release that tore its way through me. My entire body tensed, and I tugged at the sheets, my knuckles turning white from the strain.

I was panting, gasping for air, when he flipped me off his face—which now glistened with my spent orgasm.

Pushing my hair out of my face, I watched as he spread my legs on either side of his hips and lined himself up with my entrance. He slowly pushed the head of his cock into me, and I whimpered at the sensation, feeling his thick length stretching and filling me.

Before seating himself fully, he bent down, his mouth capturing mine, and kissed me deeply, pulling a pleading moan from my throat as his tongue tangled with mine. His hands caressed the sides of my head as our kiss heated, my hands finding their way up to his.

Something warmed and twisted in my heart; I didn't want this feeling to go away. It was like a warm blanket had been wrapped around my soul, comforting all the sharp and cold edges I had created throughout my life.

Bucking my hips upwards, I begged for him to take me.

“Colby,” I mumbled against his lips. “Please.”

I could feel his smile as he chuckled lightly, pushing himself the rest of the way in

until his hips pressed up against my inner thighs, a gasp escaping my lips with how full he made me.

“How does my wife want it this time?” He offered—a choice for how I wanted it.

Rough, hard, and emotionless like a hate fuck, or something else—something more.

A choice I never thought I’d have to consider with him.

What was this now? What were we? Was I ready to move towards that four-letter word everyone dreams about?

Want and love were two very different things—one more emotionally complicated than the other.

I stared into his eyes, contemplating what I wanted from him, but words escaped me. There were two sides to this coin, and I was stuck right in the middle, questioning which way I would lean.

He was generating feelings within me that I didn’t think possible, at least not for him.

Just rip the fucking band-aid off, Sienna. You asked for a fresh start; here it is.

“Dealer’s choice.” My voice trembled at the rushed words.

I hated my hesitation, my indecisiveness. After years of desperate attempts to control my life, all I wanted to do was surrender that control to him. A nagging feeling demanded that I trust him with that part of me, that he would care for me in a way no one else did.

“It’s not my choice, it’s yours, love. But I know exactly what you need and are too

afraid to ask for.” His voice was a soft and soothing whisper. “Let me show you...”

Repositioning himself, he slid one arm under my shoulder while the other gripped my outer thigh and ass as his hips rolled into me like a wave.

My screaming brain calmed with the movement; all I could see was him. Like an ocean, I was swimming in his bright blue eyes, riding his soothing waves.

His movements were slow and passionate, and not once did he remove his eyes from mine, even when he shifted his weight to be over me completely, settling himself between my thighs with slow, rolling thrusts.

I’ve always loved it rough and fast, but this—this was something else entirely. I never thought you could reach the peak of a climax from movements so gentle and slow.

I wrapped my legs around his waist as he brought his face to mine, his breaths warm against my ear as he started to pant, his thrusts growing faster and harder.

He groaned into my ear, sending shivers down my spine, my cunt tensing from the sweet sound as my climax found its way through me, and I came, seeing nothing but him.

I could get used to this.

All of this.

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Chapter 21

Colby

My phone went off at four in the morning. I had a scheduled training session with Jaxon and Nick that I couldn't afford to miss. It took everything in me to pull myself away from my wife and head to the showroom when all I wanted to do was stay wrapped around her, tangled in our bed sheets.

"Ay, there he is!" Nicks's bright, cheery voice rang across the room as I entered, spying him and Jaxon standing on the stage. "Got good news, mate."

"And I hope I have even better news," Jaxon added.

"So this isn't an early rehearsal training?" Un-fucking-believable.

"Not exactly," Jaxon started, crossing his arms over his chest as I approached the stage. I stopped once I reached the front, leaning the back of my thighs against one of the guest tables as I looked up at them. "First things first—"

"Right, your assignment regarding Fallout." Nick cut in. "There is no need for you to patrol the alley any longer. The owner believes the situation has been resolved. No new incidents have occurred in the time you've been there."

"Do they believe it was the man I stabbed that first night?" I asked, arching a brow in curiosity.

I told Nick and Jaxon what I had done, withholding the details involving Sienna and myself after the fact. I was still awaiting confirmation that I had the right guy and my job was officially done.

“As of right now, he was... Unless the problem presents itself again.” Nick shrugged, resting his hands behind his back.

“The next item we need to discuss is your wife...” Jaxon sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Her test is coming up soon.”

“Do you have a date set?” I rushed to ask, hoping to get some sort of timeline.

Since Jaxon first mentioned it, I’ve avoided telling Sienna, waiting for the right moment to present itself. But if she had to perform her test tomorrow, I was shit out of luck in that regard.

“Not yet, but within the month is a guarantee. Dustin doesn’t like loose ends hanging around for too long.”

“Then why do we need to discuss her now if a date isn’t even set yet?” I crossed my arms over my chest with a frown.

“There’s a Gala tomorrow evening. It’s hosted every five years, and all members of the Men Under Revue are required to attend. Those who are married will be accompanied by their wives or partners.” Great...

“Wives who have already passed their tests?” I inferred.

If that were the case, this could potentially be a good thing for her—for us.

“Exactly. This would be your best shot in preparing your wife for her test to come.”

He paused. “Technically, she shouldn’t even be allowed to attend without passing it, but I’ve managed to pull some strings on your behalf... Dustin owes me a favor.” Jaxon smirked with smug satisfaction.

“And I’ve already confirmed with Dallas and Levi that they will be in attendance with their wives, Bria and Tessa. Those two ladies...” Nick blew out a low whistle. “They would be the first women I’d introduce your wife to without hesitation.”

“Why them?” I asked, arching a brow.

He sounded so sure of himself that there had to be something he wasn’t telling me. I knew Nick was friends with Dallas and Levi. He introduced me to them at the mansion for my ceremony five years ago, but I haven’t seen them since, mostly because I keep to myself unless otherwise needed by the brotherhood.

“Similar situations to yours.” Jaxon laughed in response. “You can ask them tomorrow night. They both have quite the stories to tell, especially Levi.”

“I’ll focus on my wife and her test instead.”

I didn’t want to sound ungrateful for Jaxon getting her into the Gala, but I wasn’t interested in Levi, Dallas, and their relationships while mine was still in danger of being ripped away from me shortly after my wife finally gave me a chance to break down her walls.

“Whatever, mate. The Gala is at Dustin’s mansion and starts at nine. Don’t be fucking late, and wear all black.” Jaxon concluded coolly before exiting backstage. Fucking jackass.

Nick crouched at the front of the stage where I stood and smiled softly.

“You got this?” His eyes showed a subtle hint of concern as he asked the question.

“Don’t I always?” I smirked, pushing all the confidence I had left into my words.

I didn’t have a choice in the matter.

She had no goddamn choice.

“Seriously, though, introduce her to Bria and Tessa. If anyone will gently introduce her to our world, it’s them.” He attested. “They’ve done their tests and know what is to be expected. Don’t deny your wife the support they never got.” His eyes softened at his words as if he were remembering their tests—whenever those occurred.

I nodded in silent agreement. No matter how badly I wanted to be the one to bring her into this world of ours, I knew there were things I wouldn’t be able to explain in a way she could understand without freaking the fuck out.

I had one shot at explaining everything to her, and if I fucked it all up, it was over for the both of us—a risk I wasn’t willing to take.

I took a detour on the way back home to pick up a few things for tonight. It was well past nine when I returned to the penthouse, having left at five to meet with Jaxon and Nick. I expected Sienna to be up and wondering where I had gone, but she never texted me, leaving me to believe she was either still sleeping or didn’t care that I had left.

When I stepped off the elevator, the place was dead silent, so I quietly made my way past the kitchen and down the hall to our bedroom.

Opening the door, I found my wife, still fast asleep, bundled up in the sheets. Wanting to take advantage of the opportunity, I placed the boxes I had brought back

with me on the dresser and crept across the room, sliding back into bed behind her.

She radiated warmth as my body pressed up against hers.

I wrapped my arms around her tightly. She stirred with a low groan as I buried my face in her hair, soaking in the warm coconut scent from her shampoo.

Her arms stretched out above her head, rolling her wrists before she turned over to face me, her sleepy eyes slowly blinking open to meet mine.

“Mmm... morning.” She hummed with a groggy voice. “You’re back.”

So she did wake up while I was gone...

“Morning, love.” I pressed a kiss to her forehead as she nuzzled herself up against my chest.

“Where did you go?”

“I had a training session with Jaxon and Nick at the showroom.”

“Oh...” She yawned, her eyes looking over to the blackout curtains I had drawn closed before leaving. “What time is it?”

“Almost ten—Don’t you have classes to instruct today?” I asked.

She didn’t usually take time off; if anything, it seemed like she had been adding classes to her schedule—most likely to avoid me.

“No. I canceled classes today. I needed a break. Perfect timing, right?” She giggled, pressing kisses to the front of my shoulder.

I hummed in response, pulling her closer to me. This is exactly what I wanted from the beginning with her. I knew it would take time, and honestly, I was shocked that she reconsidered so quickly. I almost wanted to ask her where the change of heart came from, but the last thing I wanted to do was give her a reason to change it back.

“There’s a Gala tomorrow evening,” I said, unsure how to explain what it was for and who was hosting it.

I stared at the wall across the room as I contemplated my explanation. I knew I would have to tell her everything eventually, but now felt like too soon.

“You’re quiet...” She murmured against my chest. “Not what I’d expect after everything that’s happened...”

I couldn’t help but chuckle. She wasn’t wrong.

In twenty-four hours, she went from hating me to letting me in, and I went from obsessing over fucking her to feelings that were far more complicated.

Did I marry her as a means to claim her for myself? Yes.

Did I want her to love me? Abso-fucking-lutely.

Did I expect to fall for her so soon myself? Honestly... No.

But I was falling for her. She took my breath away every chance she got, and I loved it when she attempted to put me in my place.

I was falling in love with my wife, and now, more than ever, was the worst time for it to happen.

One wrong move. One mistake, and she would be ripped away from me for good.

There were no second chances with the Men Under Revue, and she was about to be thrown straight to the wolves.

We didn't leave our bed all day. I couldn't get enough of my wife. I wanted her in every position, every possible way, and even then, I needed more of her.

I spent the entire day between those beautifully toned thighs, and if it weren't for the show tonight, I would have stayed even longer.

"Don't wait up for me, love." I leaned down and kissed her gently on her bare shoulder.

She was curled up in the pillows and rolled to face me when I pushed myself off the mattress.

"Do you have to?" She opened her exhausted eyes and dropped her arm to the now-empty space beside her.

How did we get to this point so fast? Where I would give anything to drop all my obligations just to stay here with her.

I thought I was obsessed with her before, but that was just infatuation. This was an obsession—craving her like a fucking drug.

I stared into her stormy eyes, returning a soft smile as I grazed my fingers lightly along the back of her outstretched hand.

"I won't be back late like all those other nights."

“Why were you always back so late?” She looked up at me with curious eyes.

Searching mine for the truth.

“I’ll tell you everything in the morning.” Another promise.

I would tell her everything. I had to. There was no other choice. By this time tomorrow evening, she would be entering the wolf’s den regardless of whether she knew the truth or not. I only hoped she would accept everything I had to say and not run away once I was done talking.

I turned to exit the bedroom, picking up my gym bag as I reached the door.

“Colby?” Her voice carried across the dark room, and I could see the silhouette of her body sitting upright when I glanced back over my shoulder. “I’m not afraid.” She paused. “Whatever it is, whatever you’ve done... I’m-I’m right here, and I’m not going anywhere.”

Sienna's attempt at reassurance meant nothing when I knew there was still a good chance she would change her mind once I told her the truth.

Until she confessed to loving me, our relationship was a grenade, just waiting for someone to pull the pin and throw it away.

I didn’t respond. Instead, I left the room and shut the door behind me.

Chapter 22

Sienna

I remembered that night behind Fallout vividly.

The man who was grinding up against me on the dance floor before escorting me out into the back alley.

His hand creeping up my leg even though I told him no and attempted to push him away.

Colby's eyes when he exited the shadows that kept him hidden from view.

The look of anger and betrayal before he stabbed his knife through the man's throat, spraying his blood and killing him instantly.

He still hadn't brought that night up once.

Was he bothered by what happened? Worried that I saw him differently for what he had done? Did he believe I was scared of him or feared what he would do if I left?

That night had replayed in my head on repeat, and my impression of him never changed. I didn't know why, but for some strange reason, seeing him that unhinged, with blood covering his hand and streaked throughout his hair...

It turned me on—a protector in his element right before my eyes.

I should have been mortified; any sane woman would have. But I wasn't, and I didn't know if that made me all the more fucked up for it.

Would he see me differently if he knew exactly how I felt that night? If he knew the dark thoughts that ran through my head as I imagined holding that knife myself instead.

"Oh, Sienna..." I sighed, grabbing a pillow and covering my face with it, inhaling my husband's comforting scent of teakwood and leather. Fuck, I love how good he smells.

There wasn't a doubt in my mind when it came to my burning desire for Colby. He could be a deranged serial killer, and I'd still want him just as bad.

"Oh god, woman, you've really gone off the deep end, haven't you?" I groaned into the plush pillow before rolling onto my side and tucking it under my head.

I reached forward and picked up my phone from the bedside table, checking the time. Eleven. Had it really been over two hours since he left already? His show would have ended at ten, meaning he would be home soon, that is unless he had to stay behind for other reasons.

Searching through my recent contacts, I found Chyler's number. Staring at my screen, I debated texting her. I knew she hoped I wouldn't ever need her, but I just wanted to be reassured that I was making the right decision—that I wasn't losing my mind over an unhinged man I had just met and married in a single night.

Me: Chyler...

A few minutes passed after I sent the message, and I dropped my phone on the bed with a deep sigh of defeat. She was probably ignoring me, cutting ties just as I did

with Lily. I wouldn't blame her for wanting to leave her life here behind; I sure as shit did it when I had the chance.

My phone vibrated on the bed, and I quickly picked it up to see a new text from Chyler on the lock screen.

Chyler: Don't tell me... Do you love him?

Me: Am I that obvious?

Chyler: Girl, I've known you for almost five years.

Chyler: Of course you are!

Me: What do I do?

Chyler: Fuck if I know.

Well, that wasn't helping... While texting with Chyler, out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of two elegantly wrapped boxes on the dresser. They were beautiful—expensive. I couldn't help but roll my eyes as I thought those fucking better not be for me.

Chyler: Do. You. Love. Him?

Me: Does it matter? I don't know...

Me: It hasn't even been two weeks.

Chyler: If you love him, and he loves you, nothing else matters. Fuck what anyone else thinks.

Me: Thanks...

Chyler: Bye bitch.

I laughed at her last message before locking my phone and dropping it on the bed again.

Did I love him?

There were strong feelings that pulled at my heart last night. Feelings I haven't felt before for anyone. Could I?

Laying on my stomach and squeezing the pillow under my chin even tighter, I stared out the sliding glass door at the bright lights emanating from the Strip, my eyes growing heavy with exhaustion.

I wanted to stay up and wait for my husband to return home from work, but I was so tired, and sleep eventually dragged me under before I ever heard him enter the room.

I woke with strong arms wrapped around my middle and a warm body pressed up against my back.

When I went to sleep last night, I felt a pit in my stomach. I wondered if Colby would sleep in the living room and start avoiding me all over again, that the past two days were nothing more than a fever dream created by my imagination.

It was comforting to know that nothing had changed, at least in terms of his proximity to me, and I snuggled myself against him, my ass grinding against his already hard cock.

"Keep doing that, and you'll be late for work." He mumbled with a long groan,

stretching his arms out before wrapping them back around me.

I rolled to face him, his eyes still closed.

“What if I want to be late?” I teased with a smirk, raising my hand to caress his cheek and running my thumb along his stubble.

His eyes flared open from the touch, and his bright blues swallowed me whole as he lifted his body over mine, pressing me into the mattress with his weight, his hips roughly grinding between my thighs.

“Then I’ll make you late the whole fucking day, love.” He growled, capturing my mouth with his. “Is that what you want? Because it sure as fuck is what I need right now.”

I moaned into his mouth, my lower belly tensing from his words and the feeling of his hard cock pressed up against it. I could feel his Jacob’s ladder through his boxers as he rolled his hips, dragging his length along my clit.

“I haven’t called in sick since I opened, and while I want your cock more than anything...” I sucked in a breath, trying to hold myself together, which was no easy feat considering the man on top of me. “I’m not ready to break that streak.”

He bit my bottom lip before pulling back to stare into my eyes. I was panting in desperation for him, like a bitch in fucking heat.

Colby remained quiet as he continued to search my eyes, and I couldn’t help but frown, my brows creasing.

“You need to open up to me if you want this to work,” I stated, trailing my hand to the back of his head, playing with his soft, messed-up bedhead while the other

gripped the back of his shoulder from under his arm.

He sighed, dropping his head down to the pillow and burying his face in the crook of my neck, his warm breath doing nothing to cool my flushed skin. Colby always had me burning for his touch.

“Where do you want me to start, love?” He mumbled into the pillow, and I tilted my head to rest against the side of his.

This conversation wouldn’t be easy for either of us, but I was prepared to keep an open mind. I was sure I had already seen the worst—I hoped.

“Fallout,” I answered, considering my next words. “Why was it so easy for you to kill that man in the alley?” I knew the answer; I saw it in his eyes that very night. But I wanted to hear him say it, to tell me that he did it for me.

“There are two answers to that question...” Colby spoke as he lifted his head to meet my eyes, shifting his weight to the side. He fell back onto the bed and pulled me up against his chest as if I were about to bolt from the room at his following words.

“One, he was touching you, and that alone drove me over the edge.” He ground out through a clenched jaw, his eyes shifting across the room as he recalled the events of that night. “And two... I was ordered to.” He hesitated with the last part, glancing back at me nervously as he spoke.

“You get orders to kill people?” I asked, simply curious. Why was I not surprised or phased by this? “Are you some kind of contract killer? Is that why you can afford all of this?” It would explain a lot. There was no way a simple male revue dancer and bartender could make enough to live a life this luxurious.

Suppose my suspicions were right about him.

“No.” He chuckled, gently running a hand through my hair and massaging my scalp as he did so. “I’m not a contract killer... but occasionally I have to perform jobs like one.” He sighed, breaking our eye contact to stare up at the ceiling.

“I don’t understand—”

“I’m a member of a secret society...” He started, sighing heavily with the burden his words carried. “We run the Strip, and the jobs are both to maintain order and keep the revenue flowing.”

“How did I not know this?” I shook my head in disbelief.

After living here for over five years, how could I not know that a secret society like this even existed?

“It’s not common knowledge. Only those who belong know its existence and how to identify its members.” Colby held up his right hand with the black ring, and I looked down at my wedding ring. They were made from the same black stone. Obsidian.

That explains a lot, actually...

“You don’t seem too phased by any of this information.” He voiced, taking my hand in his and interlacing our fingers together.

Did it phase me? I was shocked, I’ll admit, but was I really? I knew something was sketchy with his penthouse and everything that had gone on between us.

Was my reaction, or lack thereof, a red flag? Should I have been more perturbed by his words?

“I—No... I’m not.” I stammered, looking from our joined hands back up at him. “Is

that bad?”

He laughed with what sounded like relief, relaxing into the pillows and squeezing my hand lightly.

“Love, absolutely nothing you could think or do would be bad. Not in the least.” He rubbed his thumb around the back of my hand. “I thought you’d be halfway out the door by now if I’m being honest...”

“What if I told you I thought the same thing about you?”

Colby huffed with a soft smile, shifting his grip and pressing a kiss to the palm of my hand.

“There is something that might change your mind...” He swallowed, contemplating continuing with his train of thought.

“Go on...” I encouraged. “It can’t be that bad.”

Whatever he had to tell me, I could handle. What could be worse than being married to a man who murdered problematic people?

“When we are initiated into the secret society, we must complete three tests, all of which entail spilling blood.” He paused, waiting for any kind of reaction from me, and when I said nothing in return, he continued, “As a wife of a member, you aren’t required to complete three tests, but you do have to pass one.”

And that is where my stomach leaped into my throat.

“I—I have to... kill someone?” I breathed as my eyes widened at the thought.

Not just him but me. Could I kill someone? Could I have stabbed that man in the alley at Fallout if I had the chance? I knew there had been times when I imagined holding the knife instead of him. Was it that simple?

“Most likely... I don’t know all the details, but tonight, the Men Under Revue are hosting a Gala, and we are required to attend. There will be other wives there who have completed their tests and can help to prepare you for yours.”

I lay there in silence, unable to formulate the words to describe my current emotional state. My eyes drifted to the ceiling as I rolled onto my back in thought.

His fingers gripped my chin, pulling me to face him. Colby’s eyes softened as he stared into mine, and in that moment, I knew just how fucked up this entire situation was, but I couldn’t bring myself to pull away from him, no matter how hard I tried. Not like before.

“Say something, love...” His voice trembled. Was he nervous? Scared of my reaction?

“Whatever you need me to do,” I whispered, almost feeling numb from the bombshell he had just dropped on me right before work—I was going to have to kill someone.

Colby released a held breath before his lips came crashing onto mine, and I allowed him full access, tasting his sweet kiss on my tongue.

This is what a husband and wife do, right?

They accept one another for their flaws, nurture their strengths, and, I guess, in our fucked up situation, commit murder, too.

Chapter 23

Colby

When I returned home after meeting Nick and Jaxon yesterday, I set two boxes on the dresser. They were still sitting there now, unopened and untouched. Both boxes were an elegant matte black, with white satin bows holding them together. Sienna hadn't even mentioned the boxes since they showed up, not even out of curiosity.

I picked up the largest of the two and set it on the bed while my wife showered after a long day at her studio.

My anxiety was running high in anticipation for tonight and how she would react to everything the night entailed—starting with her gifts.

“Colby, I can't find a—” She paused after exiting the bathroom, a towel wrapped around her body and her hair dripping wet from the shower. “Hair dryer... What is that?” She pointed at the box I had just set down as she approached the bed.

“You needed a dress for this evening, and I knew you wouldn't have time to go out and find one yourself, so I went shopping for you.” I smiled warmly, placing her hand on the satin ribbon. “Go on, open it, love.”

Her eyes beamed as she took in the box, glancing back up at me hesitantly before pulling at the ribbon, letting it fall away before propping the lid open. Inside, wrapped delicately in a deep red tissue paper, was her dress.

Reaching in, she pulled out the floor-length black satin dress, holding it up by the twin-thin straps. The bodice had a deep plunge neckline that stopped about two inches before the top of the skirt, with soft boning to shape and a corset-style laced back. The bottom half of the dress was fitted with a slit that started roughly three inches below the seam where the top and bottom halves of the dress met.

I couldn't wait to see her in it. When I walked into the store that morning and saw it on display, I knew it was made for her, just as she was made for me.

Sienna stared at the dress silently, taking in every silky inch of it.

“Colby, I can't—”

“Of course you can.” I didn't let her finish what she was about to say as I cupped her cheeks in my hands and stared deeply into her eyes. “You are my wife, and I will give you everything.” I had said it before, and I would continue to say it until the day I died. She was it for me, and I would spoil her—and not just with pretty little things, either.

Before she could say anything more, I opened the second, much smaller box and pulled out a white gold chain necklace with an obsidian heart pendant—my heart.

The glow that emanated from her eyes as she took in the necklace was otherworldly, like a child opening their favorite gift on Christmas morning.

I wanted this woman to bear my children when she was ready.

I wanted everything with her, a life I never thought I needed.

She was changing everything about who I used to be, and I was becoming a better man for it.

“Turn around, love.” I softly ordered, and she complied, pulling her wet hair aside and up, exposing her neck to me so I could secure the chain around it.

Once I had the clasp in place, I released the necklace, and she dropped her hair, turning back to face me as she admired the rough-cut stone that lay just shy of her breastbone.

She stared longingly at the heart pendant before gazing up at me, stormy eyes searching mine. From her apartment and how she rolled her eyes at the penthouse from day one, I could tell that she never lived a life of luxury.

This was all new to her, and unlike most women who would take advantage of me by spending every dime they could on stupid shit, Sienna never changed who she was, and I think right then and there is where I fell for her even more than I already had.

“I need to finish my hair and makeup,” She whispered before clearing her throat.

“There's a hair dryer in the bottom drawer of the vanity.”

Sienna took a deep breath, processing the two new items I had given her, before turning on her heel and heading back into the bathroom with the dress in hand to finish getting ready.

My wife had become everything to me, and the stakes were growing to unfathomable heights with every passing hour—minute.

Chapter 24

Sienna

When I shut the bathroom door, I immediately turned and pressed my back against it, clinging to the black silk Chanel dress he had purchased for me. The dress had to have cost more than my entire life savings—and the necklace...

Stepping towards the vanity, I tossed the dress over the shower door to hang while I stared at my reflection in the long mirror. My hand grasped the chain that hung around my neck, and it felt like a heavy weight pulling me down.

I didn't know how to react to his gifts. One part of me was in awe that he would have even considered doing something like this, spending an unnecessary amount of money on me, but the other felt like he was buying my affection or at least attempting it.

Was this who I was to become? A killer wife with her murderous husband? The insanity of the idea alone made me laugh like an unhinged psycho.

How the fuck was I okay with this?

I didn't run when the truth came out. I very well could have, but I didn't, and honestly, I didn't know why. Could I be falling in love with him? Is that why I could look past something as life-shattering as his true profession behind closed doors?

My mind raced as I stared at the woman in the mirror, attempting to figure out who

she was and who she wanted to be. A question I thought I had answered five years ago, but now I wasn't so sure.

Fuck!

I pounded my fists onto the black and gold marble vanity before sinking to the floor, curling into a ball, and resting my shoulder against the cabinet door.

I didn't cry; I was too angry to cry, but I was at war internally with my emotions—myself.

What the fuck do you want, Sienna? I could hear my husband's voice in my head, and I knew that was precisely what he was asking me every time he stared into my eyes with that look of devotion and adoration.

Did he love me? Or was I just a trophy for him to keep? Why was I even still arguing with myself over this?

I told myself I was going to give us a chance, knowing that I had started developing feelings for him.

So why did my thoughts never cease to spiral out of control every waking minute?

Lock it the fuck up, Sienna...

Chyler: If you love him, and he loves you, nothing else matters. Fuck what anyone else thinks.

Chyler's text sat in the back of my mind like a beacon, and as I pulled myself back up to face the vanity, I took a deep breath, letting go of everything I thought I knew about myself and submitting to the now—the unknown.

I closed my eyes with a slow inhale, holding it for a few seconds. As I released the breath I held, I opened my eyes to stare back at a woman who would do anything to become a force to be reckoned with—one who would break the rules to get anything she wanted in life.

Chyler was right, fuck what anyone else thinks .

Chapter 25

Colby

Before Sienna exited the bathroom, I changed into my all-black Armani suit, with a black cotton dress shirt and a black satin tie to match the material of her dress.

She had been in there longer than I had expected, and I wondered if she'd been having second thoughts about everything now that it had time to sink in. Suppose the dress and necklace I had bought her had been too much in addition to how I could afford all of it.

Sitting on the long bench at the foot of our bed, I had just finished lacing my black leather dress shoes when I heard the sound of a lock turn. The door in front of me opened, and light spilled onto the white marble floor, framed around a dark silhouette.

I looked up from the floor, and there she was, standing in the doorway—my wife, looking like a goddess of the night. Her makeup was smokey and flawless, just like her, and her hair cascaded down her body in loose waves.

She was a vision to admire and took my ever-loving breath away.

Tucking a stray strand behind her ear, my wife padded towards me.

“I don’t—” She sighed, picking up the right side of her dress to expose her left thigh and bare feet through the long slit. “I don’t have the right shoes to go with this dress,

Colby.” She groaned in frustration.

“Of course you do, love.” I reached back, picking up her shoes before leaning forward and holding them out with the backs hooked over my fingers.

A sarcastic chuckle escaped her lips as she stared at her bright, hot pink heels.

“Those are cheap party shoes, and don’t go with this dress at all.” She rolled her eyes, releasing her dress and crossing her arms over her chest. I loved how sassy she was.

“They’re my favorite heels, and I want you to wear them. The contrast between the all-black and bright pink is just like you.” My eyes flicked up to hers as I set one of the heels down and patted my thigh. “Here. Give me your foot.” I ordered.

With no reason to argue further, she did as she was told and lifted her right foot, placing it on my thigh. I glided my hand down her calf before lifting her ankle up and sliding the heel onto her foot, gently releasing it to the floor.

She then lifted her left foot to do the same, only this time, when I finished, I tugged at her calf, causing her to fall forward, her hands bracing themselves on my shoulders.

I looked up into her eyes as she stared down at me, hers wide from being caught off guard.

Her breaths quickened as I slid my hand up her thigh, her shin firmly pressed up against my chest, wrapping it around her now exposed ass cheek, my finger grazing against her through her underwear which had started to dampen.

“See...” I breathed, not once dropping my eyes from hers. “They’re perfect. Just like you.”

“Colby, I—”

I captured her mouth with mine to stop her from talking. There was only one sentence that I wanted to hear from her soft, smooth lips, and I knew she wasn’t ready to give them to me—at least not yet.

She moaned as my tongue continued exploring her mouth, and I pushed her underwear aside to dip a finger inside her tight, warm cunt. Surprised to find that she was already soaked for me, and all I could think about was bending her over and fucking her against the edge of the bed.

Unfortunately for me, that would make us late for the Gala.

No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn’t keep my hands off of her. She consumed me inside and out, pulling me under, threatening to submerge me in her storm—and I’d gladly drown for her.

She had no idea what kind of power she held over me.

Sienna spent the entire drive to the mansion fidgeting in her seat. At one point, I had to reach over the center console to calm her down.

“Why are you so nervous?” I asked, looking at her from the corner of my eye. “It’s just an over-the-top party.” I attempted to make this event sound like it wasn’t a big deal when, in all actuality, it was the most crucial night for us.

“A party filled with killers,” She mumbled, and I released her hands, abruptly pulling us over on the empty desert road and parking it. “I’m sorry, I didn’t—” She rushed out in a panic as I gripped her chin with my fingers and forced her to face me.

“Sienna.” I searched her eyes, anticipating fear of me, but there was none. Clenching

my jaw, I thought through my words carefully. “If this isn’t what you want, then you need to tell me right now because once we step through those doors, everyone will know who you are—what you are to me.” I swallowed at the last part.

She knew everything but didn’t know just how high the stakes were, and I wasn’t about to break that news to her now. She gripped my wrist with her hands, not to pull away, but to calm my heart, which I didn’t realize had started racing.

“The past two days have been a lot to unpack...” Her eyes shifted to the side as she thought of what to say. “I want you, Colby.” She admitted, her eyes flicking back to meet mine, soft and gentle. “I just... this will take a lot of getting used to.”

She wasn’t wrong. I had dropped the biggest bombshell of my life and expected her to accept it without any issue.

“Are you sure?” I felt so fucking stupid in that moment.

Realizing that while I had wanted her—married her, even. I never even considered that I would have to tell her what I actually did for work and about this whole secret society and killing shit. What the fuck was I thinking?

My wife caressed the side of my cheek, her thumb running along the rough stubble on my jawline.

“I’ve had a lot of time to think, all things considered—” She murmured, dragging her thumb along my cheekbone. “I know it holds no weight right now... But I think I’m falling for you, Colby.” She dropped her hand from my face, and I caught it with mine after releasing her chin.

I felt my heart squeeze in my chest, pressing my lips to the back of her soft hand. I wish I knew everything that ran through that pretty little head of hers. She was perfect

beyond measure.

Bria and Tessa would change everything for us tonight. Fuck my pride. I couldn't help her on my own; perhaps they could be the bridge of acceptance she needed to be mine entirely.

Releasing her hand, I switched back into drive and headed the rest of the way to the mansion, my hand gripping tightly to her bare thigh the entire time.

We pulled up the long circle drive, the mansion fully lit like the night of my ceremony. I glanced over at Sienna as we pulled around the fountain, and she stared up at everything in awe, her eyes wide and bright from the reflection of the lights.

I pulled up to the front of the mansion, jumped out of the driver's seat, and rushed around the front to escort my wife from her side. I tossed my keys to the waiting valet before wrapping my arm around her back, placing my hand on her hip as we stepped towards the large open double doors.

As we entered the grand foyer, we were greeted by a sea of black suits with a few elegant dresses dispersed among the crowd. I didn't realize how few men were married, less than a third by far.

"Oi! Colby!" I heard my name and jerked my head around to see Nick, who was maneuvering his way through the crowd.

Trailing behind him were Dallas and Levi. That was quicker than I had anticipated. Tugging Sienna against my side, I turned to face them as they approached.

"I see you wasted no time rounding up Levi and Dallas." I chuckled, nodding to them in greeting as they stepped up beside him.

“Of course not. Besides, they are the only two worth hanging around.” Nick laughed, gripping them both by the shoulders. “I’ll let you all get better acquainted while I round up some drinks and champagne for the women.” He winked at me before disappearing into the sea of suits once again.

“How you manage to put up with him every night is beyond me.” Dallas chuckled, placing a hand behind his wife’s back and guiding her forward. “Bria, sweetheart. This is Colby and...”

“Sienna.” My wife rushed out with a weak smile. She was still unsettled, but I had high hopes that after talking with Bria and Tessa alone, she might warm up a little more.

“Oh my God, I love your heels!” Bria exclaimed as her eyes dropped to the floor, catching a glimpse of my wife’s shoes.

“Thank you. Colby chose them...” She replied, her voice slightly shaky, and I pulled her in tighter for comfort.

“Well, he sure has immaculate taste.” Bria grinned, giving me an approving side-eye. “In shoes and women—”

“I believe congratulations are in order. You two married—what? Two weeks ago?” Dallas asked, cutting off his wife as she giggled and wrapped herself around his arm.

“Close enough.” I shrugged, not caring to disclose the full details of our marriage. They didn’t need to know we had only been wed for a little under that; it was none of their business. “But thank you, all the same. Best decision of my life.” I squeezed Sienna’s waist reassuringly as I felt her arm creep its way up my back.

“Levi, where’s Tessa?” Dallas inquired, arching a brow as he peered over Levi’s

shoulder.

“Most likely fucking Luke in a closet or spare bedroom somewhere.” He casually answered, sliding his hands into his pockets, completely unbothered.

Odd that he seemed not to care at all that his wife was fucking another man...

“Oh? Lucas is here? When did he get back from his tour?” Dallas inquired, not even remotely concerned.

I kept my mouth shut, it was none of my business, but I was genuinely curious as to why neither of them gave two fucks about his wife .

“Yesterday morning, so as you can imagine—”

“Levi!” A short woman appeared beside him, wrapping her arms around his forearm and squeezing tightly. “We’ve been looking everywhere for you.”

“There’s my beautiful girl.” Levi smiled, cupping her cheek before a man came up from behind her and lifted her into his arms.

“My beautiful girl tonight.” He chuckled before capturing her mouth with his as she giggled. I felt my jaw drop to the floor as I gawked at him as he made out with Levi’s wife.

“Colby, meet Lucas—” Dallas laughed at the surprised look of shock I had on my face. “Levi’s identical twin brother, and don’t worry, it took us a while to understand their relationship dynamic, too. But to each their own.” He shrugged, squeezing Bria’s shoulder as he lovingly gazed down at her.

“We share DNA; might as well share a wife.” Lucas laughed, dropping Tessa to her

feet before she immediately wrapped her arms back around Levi's.

Dallas cleared his throat, and my attention switched back to him.

"Sweetheart, why don't you and Tessa take Sienna to the ladies' lounge and relax? I'll have Nick drop off the champagne."

"I'd love nothing more." Bria beamed up at him, holding her hand out to my wife. "Come with me; the men are awfully boring until their drinks settle in." She giggled, rolling her eyes at Dallas before grabbing Tessa's hand and dragging her along.

"Always the life of the party," Dallas muttered, smacking his wife's ass as she crossed in front of him.

I pressed a kiss to my wife's forehead before Bria and Tessa swept her away to another section of the mansion—anxiety gripping me like a vice.

They would take care of her...

Chapter 26

Sienna

They were gorgeous. I couldn't imagine Bria and Tessa being killers just by their looks—so warm and welcoming.

The three of us stood around the same height, maybe an inch difference, if at all, and they were both toned and trimmed bombshells. I had the sudden urge to ask if they were dancers, too, but I didn't want it to look as though I was observing them with such close attention to detail.

Bria had long fire engine red hair. With a peek at her roots, I could tell her natural color was closer to mine: a dark, warm brunette. Her dress matched her hair, bright red with layers of tulle that flowed from her hips to the floor. She looked like a fire, ready to burn this mansion to the ground if anyone so much as looked at her wrong.

Tessa reminded me of a short Victoria's Secret model with blown-out, voluminous light brown hair, and deep teal eyes that rivaled the Caribbean sea. She stood with such a commanding presence that she owned every room she entered. Her black dress, with white outlining details, hugged every single curve of her body as if it were custom-made just for her figure.

I had never been intimidated by a woman and never saw them as some form of competition, but these two—intimidated was an understatement for how I felt around them.

The small women's lounge was filled with wives just like them, and suddenly, I felt so small in comparison.

"Hey," Bria's soft voice caught my attention as she touched my shoulder and handed me a glass of champagne. "I know you are overwhelmed right now, but please, don't be. We've all been where you are." I assumed her husband had already informed her of my current situation—my test.

I sipped from my glass, unable to find the words for how I was feeling.

"Bria's a literal badass; most of the women here are scared of her, so don't feel bad." Tessa laughed with her valley girl accent, guiding me to an open sofa, and the three of us took a seat, with me in the middle. "If anyone here is going to help you get through your test, it's her." She added before taking a long sip of her champagne.

"As far as Levi had told me, you passed yours with flying colors, too, Tess." Bria giggled, bringing her glass to her bright red lips and pausing briefly. "Ignore her, Sienna. She thinks she's the cock of the walk because she has the twins wrapped around her finger."

Tessa poked her tongue out at Bria.

"You're just jealous I got the two-for-one special." She leaned towards me and whispered, "They are the only twins in any of the revues."

Bria rolled her eyes, downing her glass in one long pull.

"Right, well, talking about our husbands—" She glared daggers at Tessa. "Is not what we are here for, Sienna. What can we do to help you pass your test?" Her eyes glanced around the room, searching for another glass of champagne.

“I—I don’t even know what my test is. How can I prepare for something I don’t know?” I stammered, my voice slightly shaky. I didn’t want to come off soft and meek in a room full of predators, but how could I not? I was out of my element here.

“Oh honey, the tests are all the same... The scenarios are always different, but the objective is the same.” Tessa chimed in, and Bria cleared her throat, a silent threat to shut the fuck up .

“What Tessa means to say is that all of the tests involve spilling blood. Are you sensitive to blood by chance?” She asked with a hint of concern.

I thought back to the night behind Fallout. The man being stabbed in the throat, his blood spraying both my husband and myself, and then the sight of him dragging his bloody hand through his hair.

I could feel myself growing hotter, subconsciously pressing my thighs together as I finished off my champagne.

The memory of that night constantly turns me on, the unhinged sight of Colby and how he looked at me with his bright blue eyes full of rage and desire—my protector.

At my silence from reminiscing, Bria continued, “It’s alright if you are, we can find a way to—”

“No—” I rushed to cut her off, choking on my last sip. “No, I’m not sensitive to blood.”

“Oh, thank god,” Tessa held a hand to her chest, rambling on, “Because one of the wives had a problem with blood, and let me tell you the end result of her test and what her husband—”

“Tessa!” Bria whisper-shouted as her eyes shifted between mine and hers. “Shut... the fuck... up.”

“I don’t understand...” I raised my brows in curiosity. “What happened to her husband?”

“Not to her husband—” Tessa arched her brow as she spoke into her glass.

“Ignore her; she’s being over dramatic—” The death glare that shot from her eyes into Tessa’s was forbidding. “All you need to focus on is yourself and your husband, and know that he can assist you—and he should. But you need to be capable of making the... kill. Do you think you could handle that?” Her bright green eyes searched mine. “Do you trust your husband?” Did I trust my husband? The real question being asked here was, did I love my husband?

“Yes,” I answered without hesitation. Yes, I love Colby.

“Then you have nothing to worry about. You’ll do just fine, Sienna.” Bria patted my thigh. “Here, give me your phone. I’m going to give you my number. You can call or text me at any time. Us wives need to stick together.” She winked as I reached into my purse and handed her my phone.

“Add mine too,” Tessa added, waving down a waiter carrying a tray of champagne flutes.

When Bria finished, she returned my phone to me, beaming from ear to ear. Once I had tucked it back into my purse, Tessa gave me an overflowing glass of champagne with the same warm and sweet smile.

“To the sisterhood,” Tessa winked, clinking her glass against mine.

“To the sisterhood. Welcome to the club, Sienna.” Bria added, copying the motion and repeating Tessa’s words, giving my thigh a firm squeeze before pulling her hand away.

We sat there for what felt like hours, telling stories of how we met our husbands, our childhoods... everything.

These two strong, beautiful, and brave women were slowly becoming exactly what I needed in close friendship. Perhaps this wouldn’t be as bad as I had initially thought. Maybe this was everything I needed in my life—along with my husband.

Four glasses of champagne later, Bria pulled out her phone to check the time, “Right, now let’s go find our husbands and give them hell. Their meeting should be done by now.”

Tessa laughed as she got up from the couch, barely able to stand.

“Oh, Tess, you are going to be an absolute handful tonight, girl.” Bria chuckled, covering her mouth.

“Well, it’s a good thing I have two husbands then, right?” She quipped before swaggering back to the main foyer, picking up a fresh glass of champagne as she passed the waiter.

Bria just shook her head with a bright smile as she stood and sighed, holding her hand out to me.

“Come on, before she takes all our husbands.” She added with a sarcastic eye roll.

After leaving the ladies ' lounge, we found our husbands waiting for us back in the grand foyer. Tessa was already wrapped around both of hers like a horny fucking

pretzel. That woman was something else, but I admired her just as much as Bria, nonetheless.

“This is where I leave you, Sienna. Remember, you have my number. Text or call anytime, and that is not a suggestion.” Bria spoke before releasing my arm and taking her husband’s as he approached us.

“Ready to go, sweetheart?” Dallas leaned down, cupping her cheek.

“Mhm...” She hummed, resting her head against his shoulder and shutting her eyes as he escorted her out the double doors of the mansion. I could feel their love for one another as it radiated off of them.

I couldn’t help the longing sigh that fell from my lips as I watched them leave the mansion together.

“Love.”

I turned my attention from Dallas and Bria’s exit to find my husband standing behind me. I didn’t know what had shifted between us from when we arrived until now, but I couldn’t stop myself from running into his arms and capturing his mouth with mine as I locked my arms around the back of his neck.

Colby groaned into my mouth as his hands gripped my hips, pulling me in closer before breaking our heated kiss and looking deep into my eyes—the same look he always gave me when he asked me what I wanted.

“Something wrong?” He panted, breathless from the spontaneous kiss.

“No,” I rushed out, biting my bottom lip as my eyes flicked down to his. “Everything is right—so right.” I breathed, trailing a hand up the back of his head to feel his soft

hair between my fingers. “Take me home.”

When my gaze met his once again, he grinned and quickly picked me up, cradling me in his arms as he carried me out of the mansion and back to our vehicle.

I giggled, relaxing in his arms and resting my head against his shoulder. His warm scent wrapped around me like a blanket.

So, this is what it feels like...

To finally surrender and let go...

To admit that I was in love.

Cloud Nine had nothing on this.

Chapter 27

Colby

I didn't know what the fuck those women had told my wife or what they talked about all night besides her test to come, but whatever it was—it changed everything. She was all over me for the first time since we met, and I knew it wasn't from the sweet champagne that lingered on her lips and tongue.

As soon as we reached the parking garage below our penthouse, my wife dragged me into the elevator, which opened just as we stepped up to it. Her mouth was on mine almost immediately, and I cornered her in the back, one hand cupping her cheek while the other gripped the rail to keep me steady as it ascended to the penthouse floor.

Something was different; a layer of passion had risen from within her, and I could feel it wrapping around me like a chain. She pushed herself against me, backing me up against the elevator door as her hands unbuckled my belt and unbuttoned my slacks, reaching in for my cock that was already hard and ready for her.

When we reached our floor, the doors opened, and I fell back, dragging Sienna down with me. She laughed as we lay there momentarily before crawling up my body and looking down at me with stormy eyes, which swirled and shined like a full moon.

The penthouse was dark; our only light came from the skyline that filtered through the floor-to-ceiling windows of the living room.

“What happened?” I asked softly, dragging a knuckle down her cheek.

Her hair was pulled off to one side and cascaded to the floor beside us like a waterfall.

“What are you talking about?” She chuckled, shaking her head in denial. “You just fell out of the elevator.”

“I’m not talking about that, and you know it.” I lifted myself to sitting, unbuttoning my coat and loosening my tie, while she fell back to straddle my thighs with her knees on either side of me.

I wanted to know what happened back at that mansion. What Bria, Tessa, and her had talked about that changed the way she saw me—our relationship, because I sure as shit could tell that she was seeing me in a completely different light than when we left for the Gala.

“I don’t—”

I gripped her behind her head, hard enough to interrupt her words and gain her attention but not enough to hurt. She whimpered, sucking in a sharp breath.

“I’m done playing these games, love.” If she couldn’t be honest with me and her feelings, which I knew were there, then there was no chance for us, no matter how hard I pushed her.

Releasing my hold on her, I stood from the floor, pulling her up with me, my slacks sagging on my hips as I shrugged off my jacket and started unbuttoning my shirt.

“You came into my life at a time when I believed I had everything figured out—” She started, and I stopped what I was doing, my attention entirely on her. “And then

suddenly I realized that I didn't." She kicked off her hot pink heels, stepped around me, and down into the sunken living room, dropping onto the black leather couch.

"I grew up in a life where I had no control. Everything was planned out for me; all I had to do was please everyone around me until I couldn't. Until I failed, again and again, and again..." She continued. "I was so tired."

She fell back, her head turned to face the windows, as I stepped down into the living room beside her. I rested my hands on the back of the couch and admired how the lights danced across her skin, how the chain of her necklace glowed with the moon, and how the obsidian heart nestled itself against the curve of her clavicle.

"When I moved here, I had nothing—nothing besides a dream of being someone I couldn't be before." And there it was... where we were exactly the same. "I figured it out five years later, and then you showed up and blew everything to fucking pieces." She spoke so calmly as she stared out the window, ignoring that I was hovering over her from behind the couch.

She lay there in silence, and I let her, not uttering a word until she was ready to hear me talk. I could see her mind working through everything, her breaths slow and deep, as her chest rose and fell with every breath.

"And then you showed up and..." She shook her head, pressing her lips together. "And that dream became you..." She finished with a long sigh, her eyes now locked on mine, glistening with unshed tears that threatened to spill over the sides at any second.

"So... what happened— love ?..." My wife breathed, using the nickname I had given her. "You happened—" She lifted herself up, hand reaching to grab the loose tie that hung from my neck like a noose, and pulled me down towards her. "And I have fallen in love with my husband..." Her eyes dropped to my lips before pulling me even

closer. “I’m done talking now.” She whispered against my ear, and I swear my heart fucking exploded within my chest like a grenade.

I leaped my ass over the back of the couch, picking my wife up to cradle her in my arms before crushing my mouth to hers and tasting what was finally mine in every way.

“You may be done talking, love, but you’ve got a whole night of screaming left in you,” I murmured against her lips. “And I’m going to make sure that by the end of it, you know exactly how much I fucking love you, Sienna.”

My wife whimpered against my mouth as I carried her to our bedroom, ready to open my heart to her just as she did with me.

I set her legs down in front of the bed and started unzipping the back of her dress, not wanting to wait for her to insist on doing it herself. She’s my Miss Independent , except for tonight. Tonight, everything was about her, and I’d get mine after she got all of hers.

With the dress fully unzipped, I grazed my hands across her shoulders, sliding the straps of the dress until it fell and pooled on the floor around her feet; I then pushed her back to lie flat on the bed.

Bending over her, I interlaced our fingers and brought her hands up above her head, my hips nestled between her eagerly spread thighs. She didn’t say a word, but her breathing alone said everything she was thinking—that she was hungry for me.

Sienna’s throat bobbed as my eyes met hers, and I bit my bottom lip, leaning down to suck on the side of her neck before trailing kisses down her shoulder and collarbone.

She started to squirm as I made my way down her body, releasing her hands and

dragging mine along her arms as I descended to my favorite place: between her thighs.

As my lips reached her cleavage, I brought one hand down to palm her breast while my mouth sucked and teased the peaked nipple of the other, rolling it between my tongue and teeth.

She sucked in a sharp breath as my teeth grazed against her sensitive skin, moaning as her back arched off the bed.

I released her nipple, peppering kisses over every inch of her stomach before I sank to my knees at the end of the bed.

Using my teeth, I bit down on the strap of her thong by her hip and started pulling it down her thighs, kissing her soft, smooth skin along the way. When it had reached her ankles, I dropped her thong to the floor.

Wrapping my arms around the back of her thighs, I pulled her towards me, spreading her wide. I leaned in, blowing a cool breath across her wet cunt, and she whimpered, her legs tensing in my arms.

My eyes locked with hers as I slowly lowered my mouth to her clit and sucked hard, my tongue pressing up against her nerves, dragging circles over them like my own personal hard candy. Her hands came down to grip my hair, and I chuckled against her.

“I have every intention of devouring you until you no longer have control of your legs,” I murmured against her delicious cunt. “And then, I’m going to fuck you until you lose control of your goddamn mind.”

As I continued to spoil her clit I slid two fingers into her, brushing them up against

her G-spot, her hips bucking from the sensation. I dug my fingers into her thigh in an attempt to keep her still as I tasted every part of her.

I groaned as I felt her come against my mouth, her walls tightening around my fingers and her thighs squeezing my head between them.

Pulling my fingers from her dripping cunt I dragged my tongue across every inch of her, lapping up every drop of her sweet cum.

Shifting my grip to hold her down with my hands on her thighs, I dipped my tongue inside of her, twisting it before moving back up to suck on her clit once again, teasing it with my teeth.

She was fighting the urge to moan for me, but I would make her scream before I was done with her; I loved it when she gave me such a delicious challenge.

I switched between driving my tongue inside of her and tugging at her swollen clit until I felt her come again, grabbing the closest pillow and covering her face with it to muffle any kind of sound, her legs now trembling in my hands.

I ripped the pillow from her hands, pulling myself up her shaking body. She bit down on her bottom lip, her breaths turning into heavy pants.

“I didn’t realize we were playing the quiet game, love.” I pulled off my boxers, fisting my hard cock in my hand and running my fingers along my piercings. “If you won’t scream for my mouth and tongue, I bet you’ll do it for my cock.” I growled, flipping her onto her stomach and lifting her hips to meet mine before lining myself up against her soaked entrance.

I gripped onto her shoulder and hip before slamming myself inside of her tight cunt, a cry escaping from her beautiful lips as she fisted the sheets and clenched her teeth.

“There it is.” I teased, tasting her on my lips as I dragged my tongue across them. “Give me more of that, love. Your screams sound sweeter than you taste.”

With every hard thrust, she moaned louder, backing herself up against me and opening her hips for me to go even deeper.

She enjoyed it when I was rough, and while I wanted to take things slow and make love to her tonight, I’d fuck her with just as much passion regardless of pace. I didn’t need to be gentle to make her feel just how much I loved her, and if she’d rather fuck than talk, I’d do whatever my wife wanted.

I bent over her back, my lips brushing up against the shell of her ear.

“How does that feel, love?” I asked, bringing my hand that was on her hip between her legs to tease her clit as my hips rolled up against her. “Go on, come on my cock like my perfect, beautiful wife.” I ran my teeth along her shoulder before sucking the side of her neck.

It didn’t take much longer for her to find release around my cock, collapsing down to her forearms and screaming my name into the sheets; her cunt squeezed me like a vice as I came right along with her, our mixed pleasure dripping down her inner thighs as I pulled out.

I grabbed a towel from the floor to clean her up, dragging kisses along the side of her smooth ass as I did before she fell to the side, staring up at me longingly.

I dropped the towel to the floor as I crawled into bed beside her, wrapping my body around hers in a tight embrace.

“You don’t have to say anything more,” I spoke as I pressed kisses to the back of her shoulder. “But know that you are everything I was searching for, and I love you.

More than anything in this world.”

Nuzzling my face into the crook of her neck, I didn’t stay awake to hear if she had anything more to say to me. Instead, I passed out, knowing that the first thing I would do once we woke up was tell her everything about me and who I once was. I owed her that, at the very least.

It was raining, and I woke up to an empty bed, my wife nowhere to be seen. I pulled myself from the sheets. The room was dark from the storm clouds that had rolled across the city. I softly padded my way across the bedroom and down the hall.

When I turned the corner, I saw her sitting with her knees up to her chest, arms wrapped tightly around them, and her shoulder resting against the glass window, staring out into the grey and gloomy skyline.

I pulled a cream jersey blanket off the couch as I passed by it, draping it over her shoulders as I sat next to her on the floor.

She didn’t acknowledge me, and we sat silently for several minutes before I finally found the courage to say something to her.

“I grew up in the country, on a farm...” I started, staring out in the same direction as her. She didn’t shift her gaze or display any reaction to my words, so I continued.

“I was the eldest of seven kids, four sons and three daughters. After graduating high school, my parents expected me to play a much larger role. They expected me to be their golden boy—to take over the farmland entirely when the time was right, marry a sweet local woman, and raise my own family, continuing the tradition they held so near and dear to their hearts—” From the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of her, turning her head towards me. Still, I continued to stare out the window as I spoke.

“That farm had been passed down to the eldest son for almost seven generations, and I went and fucked it all up for them by running away to the opposite side of the world.” I chuckled at the memory, seeing just how stupid of a decision it was now, looking back on it.

“When I stepped off that plane, I had nothing but a duffle bag and what little cash I had set aside—I was cut off the moment I left Australian soil.” I sighed, my eyes shifting to meet hers as she stared up at me in surprise. “Just like you, I came here with a dream to be anyone but who I once was—who I was expected to be.”

My wife’s hand raised to cup my cheek, and I leaned into its warmth, shutting my eyes and breathing in her soothing coconut scent.

I had never wanted to be vulnerable with anyone. I buried my past and intended to keep it that way, but something about Sienna just begged me to be real with her. To tell her where I came from and how I got here.

Maybe because our stories were so similar, I knew she would understand me when no one else could.

Her eyes matched the color of the skyline as her gaze softened, and a small smile pulled at the corners of her lips.

“Well, would you look at us... Just a couple of dreamers searching for a new purpose.”

“I’m no longer searching.” I huffed with a soft smile. “I haven’t been searching since the night I laid eyes on you, love.” My fingers gripped her chin, and I pulled her lips towards mine, the sound of the rain crashing against the glass enveloping us in the moment.

“I see you, Colby Bryce.” She smiled before pressing her lips to mine.

“I’ve always seen you, Sienna Bryce,” I murmured against hers.

I’d sacrifice everything for my wife. I’d burn for this woman.

Chapter 28

Sienna

“Wear the red ones this time,” I spoke from our bed, lying on my stomach, while admiring my husband’s ass as he got dressed for work.

“Why red? What’s wrong with the teal?” He chuckled, reaching back into the dresser and pulling out his red Heaven Down Under branded boxers.

“You always wear the teal.” I groaned, stretching out my arms like a cat before folding them underneath my chin.

“Teal looks good on me. You’ve said so yourself—numerous times, I might add.” Colby smirked as he pulled on the red boxers and swaggered over to the foot of the bed.

I rolled onto my back to look up at him as he pressed his hands into the mattress beside my head. God, I was obsessed with him, from his bright blue eyes to his sharp jawline, carved abs, and soft dark hair. He was perfection, and he was all mine.

“True, but tonight, when all those women are dragging their hands down your chest—” I followed my words with my hands. “Caressing your abs... gripping onto your waist and hips...” My eyes flicked to his, and I grinned. “I want them to know it all belongs to me.” I shifted my wandering gaze to his cock that hovered just near my forehead with his current position.

“And red boxers are going to leave that kind of impression?” He just laughed, leaning down to press a kiss to my bare stomach. I was wearing nothing but a black thong and one of his work-branded black tank tops.

“Maybe not for them, but at least I’ll know.” I giggled, wrapping my arms around his head and tugging at his hair as his stubble grazed along my belly.

“Know what, love?” He asked, pulling his body back to stare down into my eyes.

I innocently bit my bottom lip, holding back the biggest smirk I had ever given him from all the dirty thoughts that raced through my mind.

“That you are mine—all mine.” I beamed, reaching up to wrap my hands around the back of his neck, pulling his face down to meet mine. “And no one can have you for as long as I live,” I murmured before capturing his mouth with mine and kissing him deeply.

On second thought, obsession might be an understatement when it comes to my husband.

“Obsessive, possessive, and jealous are a good look on you, love.” Colby chuckled, returning the kiss with just as much fervor before pulling back and standing to his full height. He did not just comment on my red flags, which he so obviously had first.

“But you’re going to make me late—again.” He growled, walking over to grab his jeans and T-shirt. These past two weeks had felt like a honeymoon, the best time of my entire life, and every night, I had made him late for his show—only by fifteen minutes, but apparently, Jaxon had been giving him hell for it.

“I’ll beg.” I breathed, watching him closely, my head tipped over the edge of the mattress. Even upside down, he was gorgeous.

“You’ll beg when I get home, love.” He assured me, picking up his gym bag and pulling the strap over his shoulder, and I moaned in disapproval. “I love you.” He spoke, bending down to press a kiss to my stomach and lips once more before exiting the bedroom.

About an hour after my husband left for work, I padded out of the bedroom and into the kitchen to grab myself a snack.

When I reached the kitchen, I opened the refrigerator and played with my heart pendant, pressing it against my lips while searching for something to eat.

I tried going to sleep but couldn’t. Before Colby came into my life, I was almost always home by nine and in bed by ten, but now, with his routine and late work schedule, I don’t go to bed until well past midnight.

It’s not that he wakes me up when he gets home or that I stay up worried that he’s out late with another woman—that fear ended the night of the Gala—I had just become accustomed to the routine of waiting for him to get home so I could wrap myself around his muscular body and have him make love to—or fuck me—until we both passed out.

I was definitely feeling the high effects of the honeymoon phase, and I didn’t want to come down from it, not even for a second.

If you had asked me three weeks ago if this is where I saw our relationship going, I would have told you there was no chance in hell—not a single one. But I don’t feel weak or controlled by him like I had initially thought I would; no, he makes me feel empowered, just as I viewed Bria and Tessa that night at the Gala. I’m sure their husbands made them feel just the same.

I still needed to reach out to Bria and take her up on her offer of friendship. I’ve just

been too busy with work and Colby to do so. Knowing how she and Dallas met three years ago, I'm sure she'd understand my lack of contact.

I pulled a lemon meringue yogurt from the fridge, grabbed a spoon from the cutlery drawer, and climbed onto the kitchen counter facing the windows. I ripped the top of the yogurt off, setting it next to me before diving into my late-night treat.

There wasn't much on my mind anymore, with our relationship seeming as normal as it could possibly get. That is, not counting the test I had still not heard any update on. It was as if it had been swept under the rug. Colby never brought it up, and I sure as fuck didn't feel like talking about murdering people while he pounded away between my thighs.

And yet, the question I asked myself weeks ago lingered like a sour taste on my tongue. Could I murder someone in cold blood? My husband had obviously done so himself; I didn't dare to ask how many times.

I sucked on my spoon as my thoughts continued to descend into a realm of what-ifs.

What if I fail? What if I enjoy it? What if I fuck it all up?

Tessa had mentioned a woman who had failed her test... her husband... No, I won't follow that train of thought—not tonight.

The elevator doors opened, and my attention snapped to the light that filtered through the entryway.

Colby stepped out of the elevator with an almost grim look on his face, and I swallowed, dropping my spoon to the counter as his blue eyes met mine.

“Something wrong, love?” I asked, using his nickname for me.

I didn't use it regularly, but I noticed he reacted to it when I did, and this looked like a time when he could use that comforting and warm feeling it gave him.

He huffed sarcastically, running a hand through his dark, mussed hair as he approached me in the kitchen. My eyes tracked his movements like a hawk. He stopped, stepping between my thighs, and pressed his forehead against my shoulder, nuzzling up against me.

"Aside from receiving your test assignment?" He released a strained breath, and I set down my yogurt cup, wrapping my arms tightly around him.

"Tell me," I murmured into his neck. "I'm ready... just tell me." I was ready.

No matter how often I questioned the 'ifs,' I was ready. I would do anything for him at this point. He was worth everything to me.

With a heavy sigh, Colby leaned back to stare into my eyes, his blues pulling me deep as they always did when he was like this, all soft and sentimental.

"Two days... Your test will be here in two days at Neon Palms. A resort guest who has been on the society's radar for the past two months is arriving." He paused, chewing his lip. "It's a high-profile test; the man is dangerous."

I didn't react to his words, not wanting him to see my fear buried beneath my calm and collected facade. I was strong and fierce to him, and that's all I would allow him to see while, deep down, I was screaming. Of all the times I had been vulnerable with my husband, this was the one time when I didn't want to—to be weak.

"I can handle it, Colby. You don't need to worry about me." I pulled him against me, burying my face in the crook of his neck, inhaling his intoxicating scent.

“Sienna...” He sighed, and I could feel the weight on his shoulders as they tensed. “It’s not that simple, you don’t underst—”

“Understand what? How dangerous this will be?” I interrupted him, pulling myself back. “I am well aware of how dangerous all of this is. You can’t tell me there is any test they could give me that wouldn’t be considered dangerous.” I stared at him incredulously.

While his intentions were good, he made me feel like he didn’t believe I could do it. Colby roughly cupped my cheeks, our noses just barely touching as he glared at me, demanding my full attention.

“You don’t understand what you mean to me.” He breathed, his voice shaking. “You don’t understand what I would do if anything happened to you.”

I had a pretty good idea, and it all started with a book of matches and a can of kerosene.

I gripped his hands, slowly pulling them away from my face and placing them over my heart.

“You feel that, right?” I asked, looking from his hands on my chest to his face. “As long as that keeps beating, you don’t need to worry about me.”

“Never in my life did I think I would have something to lose.” He confessed. “I knew there was something about you when you caught my attention that first night in the showroom. I just didn’t anticipate that magnetic pull I felt for you to turn into something so consuming. You have no idea what kind of power you hold over me and what I’d do to give you everything you ever wanted.” His face brushed up against mine as he spoke into my ear, the stubble on his cheek tickling my sensitive skin.

This man fell for me—hard, and I fell for him just the same.

I let go of everything and crashed into the unknown, all for him.

My husband pulled away, and I captured his mouth with mine, moaning into the deep kiss as my arms wrapped around his head.

His hands gripped my ass, pulling my hips towards his, and I smiled against his mouth.

I found my happy ending and will do whatever it takes to keep it.

Chapter 29

Colby

I couldn't sleep, so instead, I spent most of the early morning hours pacing between the kitchen and living room. I wasn't ready for my wife to take her test, one which could go sideways within the blink of an eye, but I was grateful that I could assist her with it, a rule designed to show that a couple could work together if ever requested.

Occasionally, certain tasks can only be completed by married couples, so Dustin wants to ensure they can work together rather than independently.

Sienna would never be assigned a task to work alone.

As long as she made the kill, I could handle the target for her. Lure him into a secluded area where she would be waiting and hold him down while she took him out—a plan that sounded easy enough, but would it be?

Fuck ... I roughly ran my hands through my hair and tugged as I drowned in my thoughts of how the fuck we would do this with no chance of harm coming to her.

I would protect my wife at all costs, but if she could not complete her task... I didn't even want to think about what I would be required to do if she failed. I wouldn't do it, no way in fucking hell. I'd slit my own goddamn throat before I even considered harming my wife.

"Colby." I heard Sienna's sleepy voice from over my shoulder, and I turned to see her

standing in the hallway, her shoulder propped up against the wall with her arms crossed over her chest, wearing nothing but my black tank top that she loved so much. “What are you doing out here? It’s not even six.” She paused, taking in my disheveled appearance. “Have you slept at all?” Yes... No...

No, I haven’t slept because the thought of her dead had me fucking reeling and unable to do anything but pace back and forth in this fucking kitchen.

At my silence, she pushed off the wall and walked towards me, her arms still crossed and her brows creased.

“You should go back to bed; you’ve got work in a few hours,” I uttered as she approached, not wanting her to see just how fucking distraught I was over the entire situation.

“So do you. Come back to bed with me.” I shook my head as she reached out and touched my forearm.

My eyes dropped to her chest when I saw the necklace I had bought her for the Gala. She hadn’t removed it once since that night, and I loved seeing it around her neck—seeing her carry my heart out in the open right next to hers.

“I don’t have work until after your test.” I released a long sigh. I knew this would hit me hard, so when I received the information from Dustin directly, I informed Nick and Jaxon that I would be taking time off from the show and my duties between now and then.

“All the more reason to return to bed with me and relax then.” She looked up at me, her eyes soft and pleading. “Don’t make this more stressful than it has to be; we can do this—I can do this. Trust me, love.” She reassured me, gripping my forearm and tugging me back down the hall.

I loved the way she called me by her nickname. Something about her using it made me feel just a little more at ease as I followed her, my feet feeling heavier than ever.

I was supposed to comfort and reassure her right now, not vice versa.

I should have known my wife would be a woman who could stare death in the face without batting an eye.

I must have been more exhausted than I thought because when I woke up, I heard pots and pans clinking in the kitchen. When did she get home? What time was it?

The blackout curtains were drawn, so I had no clue what time of day it was. It couldn't possibly be that late. Did I sleep the entire day away?

Sliding out of bed, I pulled on my sweatpants that I had thrown on the floor earlier and made my way out of the room and down the hall to where I could hear my wife rummaging around the kitchen.

As I entered the main living area, I glanced out the windows to see that the sun had already started setting over the Strip. I had, in fact, slept the entire day; it was evening, and Sienna had just returned home from work.

"Glad to see that you listened to me for once and actually slept." She chuckled, taking in my bedhead and lack of clothing. "But I must say..." She added, stepping over to me, wrapping her arms around my neck, and pulling herself up on her toes. "It's entirely unfair for you to look this good afterward." She pressed a tender kiss to my lips before releasing her hold on me and returning to whatever she was doing in the kitchen.

"What are you up to?" I questioned, arching a brow as I rested a hand on the edge of the kitchen counter, the other ruffling my already messed-up hair even more as I

scratched my head.

“Well, seeing as the sun is setting and you’ve been sleeping all day, I assume you haven’t had anything to eat, so I am making us dinner.” She spoke, staring into the refrigerator as if waiting for something to jump out at her.

With a light chuckle, I stepped up behind her, shutting the door and wrapping my arms around her chilled body.

“Why don’t we just order some pizza instead,” I murmured, brushing my lips along the shell of her ear.

Leaning back against my chest, she groaned, tilting her head to the side, exposing her neck to me.

“But I want to cook for you.” She whined as my lips trailed up and down the side of her neck.

“I’m sure you do, but you won’t find anything worth cooking inside that refrigerator.”

I always ate out before I met her. There was never enough time to make myself anything more than a simple protein shake before leaving for work or training. Something that would change now that she had entered my life—a change I’d be more than happy to make with her.

“Fine. I’ll place an order. What do you want on yours?” She asked as she pulled out her phone and opened the menu for Pizza Rock in Downtown Las Vegas.

“I’ll share whatever you are having.” I was curious to know what her favorite was, the small things we overlook at the beginning of a relationship. I wanted to know

everything she liked and disliked, the quirks of her personality, and who she was.

“Hmm... For you, I’ll order the Margherita; for me, I want the Hawaiian Hitman.” She giggled with a smug smile, and I playfully rolled my eyes, squeezing her even tighter in my arms. I loved the sound of her laugh.

“Are you assuming I don’t like pineapple on my pizza, too?” I raised a brow, taking her phone from her hands and scrolling through the menu.

“I—No, I just thought you’d be more of The Butcher, actually—all meat.” She mocked. “I was always made fun of for my love of pineapple on my pizza.”

“Yes, to The Butcher, but their Margherita is the best I’ve ever had, so we’ll stick with that,” I submitted our order and handed back her phone, kissing the side of her head. “But I love pineapple on my pizza, too.”

“Duly noted.” She dropped her phone on the counter and turned to face me. “About tomorrow...” Her eyes looked up to search mine, changing the subject. “I’m more than ready for it. There isn’t an ounce of doubt left in my mind.”

I almost had the urge to question what happened today at work that could have given her that kind of determination and confidence, but I thought better of it.

Whatever made this test easier for her, I was all the more for it.

After the pizzas arrived, we curled up on the couch together, eating, teasing, and talking as if everything were normal and I wasn’t about to subject my wife to her first kill tomorrow.

Chapter 30

Sienna

There wasn't much information given surrounding my test. Colby just stated that Dustin had given him the date, time, and location and that we would have to improvise once we arrived. He didn't seem too phased by the lack of details, which led me to believe that improvisation was typical for this line of work.

I couldn't believe I was going through with this. It was easy to brush off the idea of killing someone when it was simply that from the start, but now that I was walking into my task in real time, everything just felt so much more daunting.

It was like getting cold feet before walking down the aisle at a wedding, except I wasn't even considering running. I was nervous, yes, but I was determined all the same.

I wanted to prove to my husband that I was more than just a pretty little thing in hot pink heels. I was his wife, and like Bria and Tessa, I was nothing short of fiery and fierce.

"Are you ready, love?" Colby's voice broke my train of thought as he stepped up behind me and wrapped his arm around my waist. Was I ready? "I'll be with you the entire time. You don't need to be afraid." He added, gripping my chin and tilting my face upward to meet his.

"I'm not." I insisted. "I've been ready for this since yesterday. I can handle this on

my own.”

“I’m allowed to assist you, and I will—”

“Don’t.” I rushed out, my hand wrapping around his wrist. “It will be easier for the both of us if I do this alone. If I need your help, I’ll signal for you, but really... I can do this on my own, Colby.”

His lips pressed into a hard line as he fought to hold back all the words he had for me. This was no time to argue, and he knew that.

Another reason I didn’t tell him I was doing this on my own until now is that if I had told him last night or this morning, it would have become a fight, and I didn’t want that to be my last interaction with him, not if I could help it.

He pulled me tightly against his side as we stepped into the Neon Palms Casino and made a beeline for one of the bars on the casino floor—The Olive Pit, a cocktail bar specializing in creative and unique martinis.

I wore the same black mini dress from the night at Fallout, along with a pair of new, simple, strappy black heels. I was to assume the role of a cocktail waitress, serving drinks to the poker tables as the guests played.

Colby pulled out an empty chair for me at the bar, and I sat as he glanced around the room as if looking for someone.

“There he is.” A male voice came from over my shoulder, and I turned to see Nick approaching us. “Sienna.” He nodded to me before clapping my husband on the back of the shoulder. “Didn’t think I’d miss your wife’s big moment, did you?”

Colby gave him a weak smile, still not coping well with what I was about to attempt

this evening. Honestly, I was handling it far better than him.

“Good to see you, Nick.” He sighed. “Thanks again; I know you didn’t need to be here.”

“Ah, it’s nothing. The Nashville blokes will get along just fine without me. I’ll catch them on the next trip.” He winked without a hint of remorse.

Colby had mentioned that Nick loved to travel and took the offer every chance he got, but it sounds like he passed it up this time. But for what? For me?

I was grateful for him to be here for Colby. I sure as fuck knew that he would need him. Nick had been his only support system since he moved here. I barely knew Nick, but from Colby’s stories, I knew he was a good man.

Nick was almost as attractive as my husband. His baby blue eyes, long blonde hair, and tattoos that peeked out from the top of his shirt always caught my attention. Unlike Colby, he favored blue jeans and a loose white button-up, where he intentionally left the top two buttons undone to show off his chest tattoos.

It truly baffled me to see that he was single. A man that looked like him usually didn’t stay that way long.

“So, has he arrived yet?” Nick asked, signaling the bartender and rubbing his hands together.

“Over there, table twenty-four.” Colby gestured out to the crowded casino floor.

It would seem nearly impossible to remove anyone from this place without someone catching on. Luckily, we had already considered most of our options, and isolating the target off the floor would be the easiest way to take him down.

The casino was packed full of guests, but then again, it meant that disappearing after the fact would be far more manageable for us.

“Seriously?” Nick gawked. “The guy looks like he is barely twenty-one. Who the fuck is he?” He asked before turning his attention to the bartender. “Two dry martinis with extra olives and a lemon drop for the sheila.”

“Jameson Ashburn. Dustin said he was just some kid involved in a large contract killer organization. I guess they’ve been establishing themselves in various cities nationwide and are attempting to set up a headquarters here next. He wants him taken care of before they can destroy the empire he’s worked so hard to create.”

I couldn’t help but overhear their conversation, eavesdropping as I peered out from the bar towards the table where Colby mentioned my target, Jameson, was sitting.

“Sounds like your wife got an easy one then; no need to question her moral compass with the likes of him.” Nick chuckled, grabbing his martini off the counter and taking a sip. “Killer versus killer. I’d take that kind of task any day.”

Hearing one of them speak so eloquently about what they did in their line of work always surprised me. Even Bria and Tessa made my test sound like nothing more than a day spent lounging by the pool or at a spa.

I tipped back my drink, needing the liquid courage to get me through what I was about to do, and grabbed my husband’s hand off the bar, squeezing it tightly in mine.

His attention snapped to me, and he set down his glass before dragging a knuckle down the side of my cheek.

“You’re going to be brilliant, love.” He smiled in an attempt to reassure himself more than me.

I knew I could handle what was about to happen out there, but buried beneath his calm demeanor, he was reluctant to let me go alone. Colby trusted me so much that it crushed me on the inside.

Nick would hold him back. Keep him safe while I handed Jameson over to his fate.

Before I lost my nerve, I picked up the empty service tray at the far end of the bar and made my way down the steps toward the row of poker tables. A few other waitresses were on the floor, and I was dressed similarly to them, leaving nothing to suspicion for the gambling guests.

To play the role more convincingly, I served two of the tables first, running back and forth between the bar and casino, my husband giving my ass a playful squeeze each time I strolled past him.

When I approached table twenty-four, I tried my hardest to avoid direct eye contact with Jameson.

“Can I get anyone here a drink?” I offered as I watched the dealer sweep all the cards off the table and slide them into the shuffler.

I internally rolled my eyes at myself for the weak-ass impression I gave. My nervousness affected my ability to appear flirty and approachable, the two traits I needed to attract Jameson's attention.

Taking the hint from the table's silence, I turned to leave, concerned as to what the fuck to do now. I couldn't lure him away from the table and casino floor if he weren't even remotely interested in me.

I may need to reevaluate this situation with Colby...

Just as I had moved to step away from the table, a hand shot out and gripped my wrist tightly, jerking me backward.

“Excuse me!” I growled, inadvertently glaring at the man who had dared to touch me. There goes Miss Flirty and Approachable... Fuck.

“Interesting choice of jewelry—for a casino waitress,” Jameson smirked as he inspected my ring. “Tell me, is it common for women around here to wear obsidian?”

How did he know what kind of stone it was? I could barely tell when I first saw it. I jerked my wrist out of his hand, resisting the urge to glance at the bar, hoping my husband didn’t see Jameson grab me.

“That is none of your business, Sir. But if you must know, they were family heirlooms.” I snapped, attempting to play ignorant, hoping not to give him even more reason to press me with questions.

“It’s a very unique choice in stone. Why don’t you enlighten me with its family history?” He spoke, grabbing my wrist again and pulling me into his lap. I bit back a whimper, feeling even more uncomfortable than before.

Calm down, Sienna; maybe this is just his fucked up way of flirting... you have a test to complete; he’ll be dead soon enough.

I tensed as I felt his hand creep its way up my back, my jaw clenching at all of the unwanted contact.

“I need to get back to serving the other players on the floor.” I gritted out, glancing around my surroundings to see if anyone had taken notice of what he was doing to me.

“Four other waitresses are serving the tables here; you won’t be missed,” He assured me, and I felt as if I had stopped breathing. My lungs were tightening, closing in on themselves, and my throat was turning dry and numb.

How did he know how many waitresses were working? Had he been paying that close attention to his surroundings? What other observations had he made from me?

“When you work in a similar field to mine, you learn to keep your eyes open at all times.” He murmured, dragging his cold lips along my shoulder, a shiver trailing down my spine from his touch. “Don’t want anyone sneaking up on you, creating an unfair advantage now, do we?” He added, ignoring the game being played at the table with me in his lap as I tried my hardest not to glance over to the bar.

“Are we working alone, little dove?” He asked, wrapping an arm around my waist, taking my left hand in his, and rubbing my ring with his thumb. “How would your husband feel knowing his wife was sitting in the lap of one of his biggest threats?”

I swallowed a dry lump as I locked eyes with Jameson. My lips parted, but I found myself unable to speak.

“That’s what I thought.” He snarled before wrapping his arm around my chest and lifting me to stand with him. I dropped my tray to the floor, two glasses spilling and shattering on the rug.

He tightened his hold on me, my back pressed firmly up against his chest. I could feel the cold bite of a knife at my throat, my pulse racing as I struggled in his grasp. No, no, no, no... fuck... how did he know?

There were screams and shouting from startled guests as guns were drawn, and the casino floor was filled with dark green law enforcement uniforms.

“Let the woman go, Jameson.” A deep, authoritative voice called across the room, and his grip tightened on me further. I squeezed my eyes shut, wishing I wasn’t here.

“I don’t fucking think so.” Jameson hissed. “If you want to keep this woman alive, you will turn a blind eye and let me the fuck out of here, Officer Landon.”

Breathe, Sienna... Breathe...

I couldn’t hear anything over the two shouting at one another. Most of the floor surrounding us had cleared out; we were the only two standing within a fifty-foot radius.

“You know we can’t do that. Perks of being a wanted man.” Officer Landon crooned, and I opened my eyes to see him aiming his handgun directly at us, my stomach twisting at the sight of the barrel.

This was it, wasn’t it? The moment I had been dreading?

My frantic eyes searched the bar on the opposite end of the room for the one thing that could comfort me: Colby .

Tears welled in my eyes as they locked onto my husband’s bright blues that I loved so fucking much.

He appeared almost frozen in time, with Nick holding him back against the bar.

I couldn’t breathe, my chest growing tighter with every passing second.

“You’ve got to the count of three to release her, Jameson. We aren’t fucking around with you, playtime is over, and you’re coming with us.” Officer Landon started. “One...”

“I’ll gladly slit her throat before you pull that fucking trigger, Landon.”

Let me go, let me go, please just let me go...

“Two...”

“Do you want this woman’s blood on your hands tonight, Officer? Are you willing to sacrifice such a pretty face just to get to me?”

I didn’t dare tear my eyes from those of my husband’s as I inhaled deeply, dropping my hand to my side and pressing my palm firmly against my thigh. I released my held breath and mouthed the words ‘ I love you’ before closing my eyes and surrendering to my fate.

Three...

Bang!

Chapter 32

Colby

All sound surrounding me had stopped, nothing more than murmurs and muffled tones as I stared across the floor at the man holding my world against his chest with a knife to her throat.

My eyes flared wide, taking in the scene unfolding before me.

I couldn't move, couldn't speak, couldn't breathe.

It all happened so fast.

One minute, she was executing our plan to lure the man away from the poker table, and the next, he had his arm wrapped tightly around her with a knife to her neck as if she were nothing more than an expendable shield.

Nick was shouting something at me, but I heard nothing that came out of his mouth between my anger and the blood that rushed through my ears.

I had to help her—to save her, but for some fucked up reason, I couldn't move.

What the fuck Colby, fucking move!

Nick restrained me from charging the man, and I had no fucking clue why he would prevent me from saving my fucking wife.

All I could do was stare at her over his shoulder, seething with feral rage.

My wife looked at me with her big, stormy eyes in shock and fear at her situation before they softened into an apologetic and pleading look as she mouthed, 'I love you' before her hand, which was fighting Jameson's grip, dropped down to her side.

Instead of feeling the warm sensation of that love around me, my heart shattered into a million fucking pieces.

It wasn't a declaration; it was a silent goodbye.

She was fucking saying goodbye.

The only sound that I heard over all the muffled screaming and shouting was from a gun being loaded off to my left, and no more than a second later, the trigger was pulled.

"Colby!" Sienna screamed as sound finally broke through the barrier of my mind.

Bang!

I watched in horror as a bullet ripped through my wife's chest, and she dropped to the floor, nothing more than a limp and lifeless body.

Nick finally released me from his hold, and I hauled ass across the casino floor, falling to my knees at her side before pulling her into my lap.

"Everything's going to be okay, love. I've got you." I choked out; her eyes were closed, but I continued repeating the words, believing she could hear me. "I've got you, Sienna. I've got you..."

Tears streamed down my face, landing on her flawless cheek, her excruciatingly slow breaths nothing more than a whisper. I put pressure on the bullet wound with my hand to prevent her from losing any more blood while the other felt for a pulse.

As long as that keeps beating, you don't need to worry about me.

"Nick!" I shouted, not taking my eyes off my wife and her paling face.

She was losing too much blood, and who knew if the bullet hit any major organ? The sight of her condition alone had me dreading just that. Fuck, fuck, fuck! "Nick!"

Breathe.

I could hear her soothing voice in my head, begging me to calm down and breathe. I had fallen so madly in love with her that I would be nothing if she were gone. My free hand pulled her body tightly against my aching chest.

I was suffocating.

Breathe.

To hear my name on her lips just once more...

Breathe, Colby.

To see her bright, beaming smile as her stormy eyes fixated on mine.

Breathe, love.

To feel her love squeezing my heart and chaining me to her side forever.

“Breathe, mate!” Nick had been violently shaking my shoulders as I snapped out of my hysterical trance, eyes desolate like hers.

I could feel the warmth leaving her body, slowly turning it cold within my arms.

“Bring her back, Nick,” I begged, my voice cracking with the strain to compose words. “I can’t—I can’t live without her.” And I didn’t want to. A life without Sienna was a life I no longer wanted. “Fucking save her!”

“I can’t do fuck-all with you unconscious, so take a minute—”

“She’s fucking dying in my arms, Nick. She doesn’t have a fucking minute!” I barked before my swollen, tear-filled eyes met those of the man who had pulled the trigger. “You.” I snarled, releasing my wife’s body to Nick as I forced myself to stand, fists clenched so tightly they shook.

“Your wife is quite the performer—” He started before my fist smashed into his jaw, my knuckles splitting from the impact.

“Don’t you dare say a fucking word about my wife, you trigger-happy motherfucker.” I sneered. “Just who the fuck do you think you are?”

His uniform and full tactical gear told me exactly who he was, but I was still reeling from a shockwave of emotions while attempting to process what the fuck had just happened, that that was all I could bring myself to say.

Chapter 33

Sienna

THREE WEEKS AGO.

Every group I instructed went through hell today. I took my rage out on my classes, and while everyone left complimenting me for the best workout they've ever had, I was still in a pissy mood.

Colby had been ignoring me, and I assumed intentionally, not wanting to talk about the night at Fallout and what happened between us—what he did in front of me.

I shouldn't be pissed off at him; I should be happy that he's finally leaving me alone and feels more like an unwanted roommate than my husband, but no... All because my dumbass wants what it can't have, and now that he isn't fucking me, I want him like a fucking drug.

Fuck! I smashed my fist on the front desk just as the door opened.

"Carter." Double fuck... I knew that voice. One I had hoped to forget and never hear from again, and yet here he was, standing before me in full tactical gear as if he had just returned from a raid.

"Officer Landon..." I crooned, glaring daggers at him as he approached the desk. "To what do I owe this unpleasant visit." Please fucking leave.

The last thing I needed today was to deal with one of Las Vegas Special Forces assholes.

“Well, aren’t you always just a ray of fucking sunshine.” He grunted, removing his dark sunglasses and nestling them in his short blonde hair. “I’ve got a job for you.”

“I told you I was done working for you.” I snapped, standing from my seat.

I was only five-five, but I knew how to make a six-foot-tall man feel small.

“And we told you that if we ever had a job that you—and only you—could perform, we would be in touch to collect the last payment of your debt.”

“What the fuck kind of job could the LVSF possibly have that only I could do?” I shot him a skeptical look just as he glanced down at my hand.

“Married now? I’ll have to tell Officer Travis; he’ll be devastated.” He smirked, arching a brow. Oh, fuck... don’t tell me...

“My life is none of your, Travis, or the LVSF’s fucking business,” I growled. “Now get the fuck out of my studio.”

“It is our business when you are married to a member of the Men Under Revue.”

“The fucking what?” I sarcastically laughed, rolling my eyes at the ridiculous name. “You’ve got to be joking. My husband is a male revue dancer, not... whatever the fuck you just said.”

“Didn’t you ever question how a guy who dances for a living could afford a penthouse with a skyline view of the Strip and, let me guess, a nice car?” He offered. “I know you aren’t that dense, Carter. Your husband is a walking red fucking flag—”

“Don’t you fucking dare,” I cut him off. “After all the shit you pulled with Travis. Don’t. You. Fucking. Dare. Tell me what a red fucking flag looks like.” I sneered with aggravated venom. “You have no fucking right.”

He covered up for Travis once upon a time when he attempted to take advantage of me—using his job and title to abuse the system and use me like I was some fucking toy. He never actually did, but his threats left their mark on me all the same. Like them, I was supposed to be a highly regarded LVSF Officer, but they drove me away from the career, and I was better for it now that I look back on it.

“You do this last job for us, and we won’t come near you ever again.”

“That better be a goddamn promise, and I want it in writing.” I knew how these men played their games and wouldn’t help them without insurance this time.

“Deal.” He agreed without pause.

Landon knew what I would want; I’m sure he had the agreement already tucked inside his vest, ready and waiting for me to sign on the dotted line.

“What is it you need me to do?” I asked, raising a curious brow.

“That all depends. Have you had your test as a wife?” He asked, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Test? What test?” I scoffed. “Why would I need to be tested to be his wife?” For STDs? A stupid thought...

Landon sighed and rubbed his eyes with his index finger and thumb before pinching the bridge of his nose.

“The Men Under Revue is a secret society; that should be explanation enough...” He paused. “If they haven’t tested you yet, they will sooner rather than later to ensure you can keep your mouth shut and their organization a secret.” Way to put things bluntly.

“Fine, whatever. No, I haven’t been tested yet.” I crossed my arms, mimicking his stance.

“If that’s the case, then you are more valuable than I initially thought you would be.” He pursed his lips in thought before chewing on his cheek. “We need you to essentially—play dead.”

“I’m not a dog, Landon.” Play fucking dead...Woof. “Quit tiptoeing around and just tell me what the fuck you need me for, or get the fuck out.” My patience was wearing thin, and I needed a break from everything, including his unwanted ass.

“Your test will require you to spill blood—commit murder—if that wasn’t obvious.”

“And let me guess, you want me to off my husband?” Not a fucking chance in hell. I may hate him, but not enough to kill him. “Or perhaps set him up for you to arrest and kill him instead?” The sarcasm that dripped from my lips was clear as day.

“No, now let me fucking finish...” He hissed through gritted teeth. I loved pissing him off.

“Your target is the same one we’ve been hunting down for months, a high-ranking member of a cult that has been slowly creeping its way into cities across the nation. We don’t want them here infiltrating Las Vegas, so we need to get a handle on it before things escalate any further. To do that, we need this man alive, which means you need to allow him to take you as a vulnerable hostage. Then, when the time is right, you’ll take a bullet and fake your death so we can arrest him before the Men

Under Revue can take him out.” That was a fucking mouthful.

“Why the fuck would I take a bullet for you?” I huffed a sarcastic laugh. “A badge of honor that means jack shit to me?”

“You aren’t taking it for me; you are taking it for your husband. He will want to help you with your test, but you need to force him not to. Taking the bullet will save his life because we will not hesitate to shoot or kill anyone who might prevent us from taking our target—alive.”

“How do you know my test and your target are the same person?” I questioned.

How could he possibly know who my target would be if I was only just now learning everything about my husband and this secret society he apparently belonged to ? This was all too much for me today; my head was swimming with all the new information he was feeding me.

“That’s classified; if you had stuck around longer, you would know just as much as we do.” He shrugged. “But it’s the truth, and we need your help if you intend to keep your husband around well past this next month.”

A morbid statement coming from him. The thought of Colby dying to protect me from... what? My test? The LVSF? If what Landon was saying was, in fact, true... how could any of this be true?

“Faking your death will isolate all of the attention to you, distracting everyone while the rest of my men secure and extract our target from the area.”

“You’re asking too much of me.” I breathed, considering all of the complications that could arise from this.

“We are asking more than enough if you want us to leave you alone for the foreseeable future.” He admitted. “When the time is right, you’ll inject yourself with an antifibrinolytic cocktail serum to slow your heart rate and prevent bleeding out from the gunshot wound until medics can attend to you. Contact me once you receive your test so I can walk you through further instructions.”

And without another word, he turned and left the studio, my heart and soul feeling heavier than ever before. Why had Colby never mentioned I would need to pass a test?

After Landon had left, I made my way into the back of the studio, where my private dance room was set up, and I sat in the middle of the floor, staring at my reflection in the mirrors.

How the fuck was I going to pull this off...

FORTY-EIGHT HOURS PRIOR.

After my husband confirmed the when and where of my test, I contacted Officer Landon and had him meet me back at the studio to discuss precisely what he needed me to do.

I closed the studio but didn’t tell Colby. As far as he was concerned, I was working a regular shift today, nothing more.

Since he arrived home, he had been reeling about this test, and I didn’t want to worry him anymore by adding the extra layer of complication with the LVSF. It killed me to lie to him, to act as though I didn’t know anything but what he had told me.

I would have a lot of explaining to do with him later, and this alone may ruin our marriage, but I had to do whatever it took to save him—and us if I could. I just hoped

he would understand.

“Carter.” Landon entered the studio, and I pushed away from the front desk and stepped around it to meet him. “I’ve got your contract.” He held up a long white envelope, and my eyes snapped immediately to it—my freedom from them.

“Let’s get this over with. I don’t have all day.” I snapped, crossing my arms over my chest.

“How your husband puts up with your bright attitude, I’ll never know.” He sighed, gesturing to the back room of the studio. “I’d rather not be seen discussing this with you here. Can we?—”

I rolled my eyes before turning on my heel and escorting him to the back room of the studio. I chewed my cheek, the only thing on my mind being my husband, who I hoped would peacefully sleep the day away.

When I caught him pacing the kitchen this morning, he looked pale and exhausted. It broke me to see him in such a state of distress and not be able to disclose everything I knew to comfort him. Fuck, I was a horrible wife right now...

“Alright, talk.” I slammed the door shut behind us once we entered the studio space.

“Eager to be shot, are we?” Landon chuckled as he handed me the envelope. I opened it, pulled out the contract his superior had already signed, and inspected the wording closely.

“Far from it, but I have better things to do today than socialize with you,” I mumbled, tucking the contract away when everything looked good.

“Fucking your husband couldn’t be any better than being here with me.” He smirked,

and I cringed at his words, a shiver trailing down my spine. He had the worst sense of humor.

“Just—” I sighed, pinching the bridge of my nose and squeezing my eyes shut. “What do you need me to do?”

“Catch.” He spoke as he tossed me a disk that looked no bigger than a button on a coat.

My eyes widened in surprise when I opened them and reached out to catch the flying object before it hit the ground.

“What’s this?” I asked as I examined the quarter-sized black button in my hand.

It had one smooth side, and the other had sharp prongs, almost like tiny needles embedded into it.

“That is what you are going to inject yourself with right before I shoot you.” He pointed at the button in my hand. “You press your palm to the back while the sharp side rests against your skin; the dome will pop and inject you with the cocktail.” I continued to inspect the small disk, rolling it between my fingers, avoiding the sharp prongs on the underside. “That cocktail will give you roughly an hour before you bleed out.” Good to know, not at all reassuring...

“And where are you shooting me?” I asked, not actually wanting to know his answer, but it was all I could think of as the thought of bleeding out before I could get medical attention wracked my brain.

“Your chest. It has to look believable; shooting you anywhere else won’t pose a convincing impression.”

My attention snapped back up to him, my lips parting in shock.

“My chest?” Now, I really didn’t want to go through with this anymore. “And how can I be sure you won’t shoot me in my lung or heart at the same time?” I wouldn’t put it past him to set me up to get a cheap shot at me.

“You know our training. I won’t hit anything major, and if I do, our medic will be on you faster than your husband.” He assured me, seeming far too confident with his plan.

I stood there for several seconds, my hand wrapped around the disk and my head swimming with unsavory thoughts of death.

“Are we good here?” He asked at my extended silence.

I swallowed a dry lump in my throat and nodded.

“Yes...” I breathed, my anxiety soaring through the roof. “I got this.”

I could and would do this; there was no other choice. Colby or me.

I had training just like Landon; I knew how to handle extreme-pressure situations.

The only thing I had to do now was ensure my husband stayed out of the way. I would need to convince him I could handle this test independently without his assistance. Fuck.

Chapter 34

Colby

“Alex, get in there and help her.” The officer ordered as I gripped onto his tactical vest tightly, ready to drive my fist through his jaw a second time. “You need to calm the fuck down, your wife will be fine.”

The man he called Alex skirted around us as he approached Nick and my wife with what appeared to be an oversized and fully stocked medical bag tucked under his arm.

“Fine? Does she look fucking fine to you?” I seethed, my eyes zeroed in on his. “You shot her in the fucking chest.” My voice cracked at the admission, understanding the gravity of her condition.

“And we were prepared for this—she was prepared for this.” He gripped onto my shoulders, and I loosened my hold on him.

“No... She wouldn’t—” I stammered, unable to comprehend his words—what he was claiming. My wife would never work with the LVSF. No fucking way.

“Ask her yourself once Alex brings her back. She’ll tell you everything.” He laughed as if this was all some sort of big joke and I had missed the punchline.

I was fuming inside, ready to burst into flames and burn this entire casino to the fucking ground with me.

I released the man, now numb from the bomb he just dropped on me. He stepped aside before moving to join the rest of his team across the casino floor; Jameson, Sienna's target, was already handcuffed and being hauled out of the building, confused and shocked guests giving them their full attention.

My chest tightened as I turned to see Alex examining my wife—a blood pressure cuff on her arm, his stethoscope at her chest to measure her breathing.

Nick looked up at me with her head in his lap, a grim expression on his face as he shook his head slowly.

I was falling apart by the second, seeing her body lying there, motionless and pale.

How the fuck did this happen? Who the fuck set my wife up?

I ran my hands through my hair in an effort to calm the adrenaline rushing through my veins. Pacing from side to side like a madman, I tried to keep a grip on my reality.

“Colby,” Nick spoke as he gently slid out from under my wife's head to stand by me, his hand squeezing my shoulder, grounding me as my mind drifted away. “Colby, stay here with me. She's going to be fine.”

“Why the fuck does everyone keep saying that?” I choked out the words, feeling strangled by their weight. Why was everyone insisting that she was fine? She wasn't fine, she was bleeding out from a fucking bullet to the goddamn chest. FUCK!

“Look, mate.” Nick shook my shoulder and pointed down to my wife, whose chest I could see rising and falling with every deep breath she took. Her eyes were still closed, but her breathing had stabilized to a more regular rhythm, which was better than nothing. “The medic said she had injected herself with a drug cocktail designed to slow her heart rate and prevent her from bleeding out.”

“He what?” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. Was the LVSF Officer telling the truth?

“Exactly what I just said. It seems as though she knew this was going to happen to her and had planned for it.” Nick inferred, crossing his arms over his chest.

Why would she have been working with the LVSF? And why the fuck would she have taken a bullet for those sorry-ass motherfuckers?

I didn’t know who or what I was more pissed off with anymore: The current situation, my wife’s involvement with the LVSF, not knowing what the fuck was going on this entire time?

“What does this mean for her test, Nick?” I glared at him, well aware of what happens to those who fail to complete their tests.

I didn’t want it to come to this. I’ve already lost her once; I couldn’t lose her again, regardless of how much I wanted to strangle her for what she had just done to me. The pain she had put me through as I stood there watching her lay on the casino floor, bleeding to death from a planned gunshot wound to the fucking chest.

“We’ll discuss this with Dustin later; that isn’t a priority right now.” He sighed, rubbing his brow with the back of his thumb. “Your wife needs you, mate... Go on.”

I stepped back towards Sienna and Alex, falling to my knees beside her and gripping her hand tightly. Her body was no longer cold like I dreaded it would still be; she was warm.

“She’s all patched up, nothing serious, but she will be sore for the next week.” Alex, the medic, spoke as he pulled a syringe from his bag and filled it with a clear liquid from a small vial. “I’m going to wake her up now; this will shock her system and

bring it back into action.”

I nodded, taking a deep breath before he inserted the needle into her arm and plunged whatever that liquid was into her.

Within a second, Sienna’s eyes flared open as she inhaled her first conscious breath in minutes, her hand reaching for my shirt, shoulder, or whatever she could grab onto.

“Colby.” She gasped, a hand fisting in my shirt as she pulled me down to her level. “I’m s—I’m so—sorry.” Her breathing was erratic, unable to control her words.

I gripped her cheek with my hand, locking my eyes with hers, all the anger and rage I had building up inside of me slowly melting away with every breath she took.

“You’re okay, love. I’ve got you.”

I wasn’t going to forget what had happened and what I had learned from Nick and the LVSF Officer, but there was always a time and a place to get the answers I needed from her, and right now was neither. I may feel betrayed by her, but I still loved her nonetheless and would figure this out.

My wife’s eyes filled with tears as they ran down the sides of her face. Her sobbing was the only sound I could hear as she leaned forward to bury her face in my shirt, which was soaked in her blood from moments ago.

I wrapped my arms tightly around her, pulling her into my embrace, never wanting to let her go again. I had just experienced the most terrifying event of my life, losing my entire world in under a second.

We sat in silence for what seemed like mere minutes before Nick approached us, clearing his throat and crouching down.

“Mate, You two have been sitting here for far too long, I think we need to get the fuck out of here before we attract even more unwanted attention.” He mumbled, nudging my shoulder.

I looked up from Sienna and glanced around the room. The vast majority of the crowd was still fixated on the lingering LVSF officers, giving us time to leave before any of the guests realized we were still there.

Sliding my arm under her knees, I quickly picked her up and followed Nick out the rear of the casino floor and towards the back exit.

“I need to get her home, Nick.” I urged as we cleared the doors and made a beeline into the parking garage, not wanting to waste any more time.

She was in no condition to handle the repercussions of failing to complete her test, and neither was I.

“I’ll take care of Dustin—explain everything to him.” He assured me. “You just take care of your wife.” His eyes softened as he blew out a sigh.

“I can’t follow through if he doesn’t reconsider.” I could feel the lack of strength in my voice.

“I know, mate... I know.”

Nick pulled out his phone as he headed towards his car, and I carried my wife in the opposite direction towards ours.

She passed out in the passenger seat before we even made it out of the garage, her adrenaline high finally wearing off.

Chapter 35

Sienna

True love doesn't come without sacrifice, and sometimes, that could seem more like a betrayal than anything else. When I took that bullet, I took it to protect my husband, but because I had to leave him in the dark, I betrayed him.

I betrayed his trust, and now I hesitated to wake up and deal with the consequences of my actions as justified as they felt.

The pain I saw in his eyes that night broke me in more ways than one. I deserved his wrath and whatever punishment lay in my wake. I deserved the repercussions for failing my test when I didn't have to.

I could have killed Jameson, but instead, I chose not to.

Instead, I chose to play along and hand him over to the LVSF.

"I know you're awake..." My husband's gentle but stern voice cut across the room, and I peered through narrowed eyes to see him standing at the far end of our bedroom, leaning his back against the dresser.

His eyes darkened as he glared at me, and I knew nothing I could say would change his mind—he was done with me.

And yet, why was I tucked into our bed, clean of any blood, my wound covered with

a fresh bandage, and wearing one of his white T-shirts?

Was I imagining things?

You didn't care for the person who wronged you; my husband would be the last to care about anyone who betrayed him.

I rubbed my eyes with my knuckles before opening them fully, focusing on Colby and his hardened appearance.

"I—"

"Why?" He demanded, crossing his arms over his chest.

"I didn't—"

"You didn't think to tell me about your involvement with the LVSF? How they hijacked your test, and you fucking let them?" His voice was unnervingly calm—almost lethal.

One wrong word, and he would rip me to shreds.

"I did it to protect you," I whispered, my voice trembling with anger and fear.

I did this for him; I did everything for him.

"For fuck sake, Sienna. Do I look like the kind of man that needs protecting?" He barked, stepping towards the bed and flexing his hands in and out of fists. "Why didn't you fucking tell me?" His eyes burned into mine with feral rage.

"We had just—I couldn't—and I wasn't..." Stammering, I couldn't find the words I

was searching for—a valid excuse for my deceit. There was no good excuse for what I had done, and he knew it.

He slammed his fists into the mattress and I scurried up against the headboard, hissing from the sharp pain in my chest as I curled into a ball, my arms wrapped around my legs.

Colby released a long sigh and laughed softly to himself.

“Fuck, love. I’m not going to hurt you...” He ran a shaky hand through his hair before turning to sit on the edge of the bed. “Do you have any idea how hard the last thirty-six hours have been for me?” Thirty-six? What time was it?

I looked over towards the blackout curtains; a tiny crack of light bled through the edge of the fabric along the wall.

“I’ve been asleep for a day and a half?” I asked, pulling the sheets up to my chest as the cold air bit at my legs, causing me to tremble.

“I almost thought you wouldn’t wake and that whatever the medic had given you didn’t work or was administered too late...” His voice trailed off as he hung his head in thought.

The medic . I remember seeing the medic kneeling beside me before I buried my face in my husband’s shirt and was urgently carried away from the casino floor as Nick escorted us out the back entrance into the parking garage.

Everything went black once Colby had set me down in the passenger seat, my initial adrenaline wearing off.

“There’s a glass of water on the nightstand.” He sighed, falling back on the bed to

stare up at the ceiling.

I looked to my left and leaned over to pick up the glass, taking a long sip, which turned into finishing over half of the contents as I avoided speaking.

What was there to say? I'm sorry? As if those two words would be enough to justify my actions?

"If you're thinking the worst, don't." He continued at my silence. "There are a million things you could do that would upset me, but none of them would ever stop me from loving you the way I do." Colby angled his head to look up at me. "But don't you dare go behind my fucking back again, love." He rolled onto his chest before crawling up the mattress to where I sat, his warm hands cupping my cheeks as his blue eyes searched mine.

"Believe me or not, but I had no choice. Landon would have killed me and anyone else who got in his way." He was a piece of shit with nothing to lose and everything to gain from our transaction. "This was the only alternative to protect you and me from the LVSF. They were ready to gun down anyone who interfered with their plans to extract Jameson unharmed."

"Did you even consider the consequences for failing your test? What the Men Under Revue would have me do to you?" There was panic lacing his words and in his eyes.

I vaguely remembered Tessa speaking about a woman who failed her test...

"There is a reason why so few of the men are married, love; if a wife fails her test, we are responsible for ending her life, and unfortunately, the risk outweighs the reward."

"But—that's monstrous." I gasped, covering my mouth with my hand. To kill your wife for her inability to murder someone in cold blood?

“It’s necessary to keep the Men Under Revue a secret from the public eye. We can’t have wives running around and gossiping to their friends about who their husbands are and what they truly do.”

“Wait... So that means—” I swallowed the bile that burned the back of my throat from what I had just realized—that my husband was going to have to kill me.

“No—” He gripped my hands tightly in his. “No. I’ve already spoken with Nick. We have a meeting with Dustin Slate at the mansion this evening. I’m going to fix this, Sienna, trust me.” His eyes bore into mine, begging for me to trust his words.

“Colby, I—”

“I will take care of you, love.” He spoke softly, tucking a stray hair behind my ear before caressing the side of my face. “I won’t let anything happen to you, not if I can help it.” His eyes softened with his promise. “I’ve already lost you once...”

Tears welled in my eyes as I stared into his bright blues and squeezed his hands, grasping the magnitude of just how badly I fucked everything up for us.

There was a moment of silence between us before I finally found the courage to speak.

“Before I opened my Pilates studio, I worked as an informant and undercover officer for the LVSF,” I spoke, breathing through my sobs as I felt my world crumbling around me.

“After the first year, one of the officers I had a close relationship with crossed far too many lines. He was abusive—physically. Although he put his hands on me several times, he never left marks that anyone could see. If they did, they always turned a blind eye in his favor, and I could no longer continue working in that kind of

environment. So I quit, but not without ramifications.” I didn’t want to share the details surrounding Officer Travis—to relive the nightmare that he was. But I wanted to give him the truth behind my involvement with the LVSF and why it was so easy for them to sway into sabotaging my test for them.

Colby released my hands, wrapping his arms around my trembling body, and pulled me into his lap. He held me close, running a hand through my hair for comfort, and I continued my story, not wanting to stop for fear of shattering completely in his embrace.

“For three years, they left me alone, and I thought they had forgotten about me completely until three weeks ago when Landon came into my studio looking for me.”

Special Forces had access to and knew everything about the city and its people, so it was no surprise that he had found me so easily.

“He saw my ring and immediately knew who you were and about my upcoming test, stating that he needed me to play the bait so they could take Jameson alive but never disclosed the reasoning behind it.”

It was an oversight, and I should have grilled him for more information while I had all the chips in my hand.

“When a compromise was made, we signed a contract that promised for the LVSF, him, and Travis to leave me alone—for good and to never come near me again.”

I looked over to my gym bag, tucked in the far corner of the room, where I knew the contract was signed and waiting to be placed somewhere safe.

“I had no other choice. It was either be shot and have a chance at surviving from their plan or be shot and nothing more than collateral damage to their mission.” I looked

up at my husband as the words sank into me like sharp claws.

I had no choice; I've never had a fucking choice.

Sadness and pain were being overshadowed by anger and rage. How is it that everyone in my fucking life always seemed to find a way to control me? Fuck!

My breathing turned erratic as my thoughts began spiraling out of control. Memories of my parents and childhood, glimpses of the first few days of our relationship—our marriage, and now this.

My husband squeezed his arms tightly around my body as a means to slow my breathing and ground me with him.

He pressed his lips against my ear and murmured as I shut my eyes.

“Breathe, Sienna... Breathe, love.”

I broke—shattered, my eyes turning red and swollen with tears as they flowed in streams down my cheeks, my sobs hysterical and uncontrollable. I was losing the one thing I fought so hard to finally have—control.

Unable to help myself, I did the one thing I knew would take my mind away from the current situation—the one thing that, as of recently, was all I felt I needed.

With one hand fisting into his white T-shirt, I wrapped my other hand around the back of my husband's neck before crashing my mouth onto his—my lifeline when cast out to sea by a raging hurricane.

He returned the passionate kiss, his warm hand holding the side of my face while the other remained wrapped around my waist, holding me tightly against his hard body.

I didn't care that I was crying into his mouth because the more he let me in, the easier I could breathe and the calmer I felt as I slowly melted into him—my person. The man that I once couldn't stand and wanted to get away from, the man that was now my everything.

“What happens now?” I sniffed, pulling back to stare into his eyes, my voice cracking from the strain my crying had caused.

“What happens now is you will lay with me and sleep until we need to leave for the mansion. You let me worry about handling Dustin.”

“But I—”

“It doesn't fucking matter what you did. What matters is that you are in my arms and breathing. That's all that fucking matters to me right now.”

I nodded in response as he pulled me down to the mattress, not letting go as if I would disappear if he released me from his grasp.

His warm body curled around mine, holding me close as my breathing finally returned to normal, and both physical and mental exhaustion pulled me under.

My husband would save me from my colossal mistake...

Chapter 36

Colby

My wife never ceased to surprise me. I knew she was different and had an attitude to match, but I never considered her someone who would have worked for the LVSF, even as an undercover informant.

I had so many questions about her reasoning for leaving and wanted the name of the officer who dared to make her feel as though she could no longer work for them—to make him regret everything he even remotely considered doing to her.

I wanted that fucker's head on a stick.

Once Sienna had fallen back asleep, I adjusted myself to sit with my back against the headboard and her head in my lap, with my fingers subconsciously dragging themselves through her long, dark hair.

I was too on edge to sleep, anxiety gripping me like a vice as I considered what I would say to convince Dustin to give her a second chance. What in the ever-loving fuck was I going to do?

Nick texted me throughout the afternoon. He planned on being at the mansion with us to support Sienna and testify about what had happened at the casino, knowing how everything played out firsthand.

There was no way to avoid disclosing my wife's involvement with the LVSF, seeing

as she would be dead right now if she hadn't been.

However, knowing her history with them made it easier to prove that she was coerced into working with them instead of willingly.

Nick: How long ago did she work for them?

Me: Three years... Why now?

Nick: There could be more behind the organization that Jameson works for if the LVSF is interested in keeping him alive.

Me: Dustin won't accept that as a reason for her failure.

Nick: I'll see what I can do before your meeting. Hang tight.

Me: Thanks, Nick. I owe you one for this.

Nick: Don't thank me just yet. Your wife is still a target until Dustin says otherwise.

"Colby?" Sienna groaned as she stirred in my lap, rolling onto her side and burying her face in my shirt.

I stroked her hair, eyes still closed, and wished everything would be okay after tonight. I'd give anything for a second chance to love her without complication.

I gave my wife another hour before waking her to leave for Dustin's mansion. Her body was still recovering from the gunshot wound, and it was consuming all of her remaining energy.

To see someone so fit and agile, now wounded and weak, was heartbreaking.

When we pulled up to the mansion, I parked outside the main doors, noticing Nick's Lamborghini already there. A black Escalade was parked beside his, unfamiliar to me, but I assumed it belonged to Dustin—although, why would he park in the front of his mansion?

I escorted Sienna up the steps, my arm wrapped tightly around her waist for support as she insisted on walking herself.

“You don't need to coddle me, Colby; I'm highly capable of getting myself into this mansion on my own.” She elbowed me in the ribs with a low growl, determined to piss me off.

That was my wife, ever the challenger of my sanity and patience.

“You were shot in the chest less than forty-eight hours ago, and I don't know what to expect in there, so let me fucking help you,” I grumbled through a low hiss, squeezing her waist even tighter to get my point across.

I was nervous about this meeting; I had been since the incident at Neon Palms. Nick had given nothing to reassure me of her safety, and the thought alone of what I would be forced to do to her made my stomach turn sour, and bile burn the back of my throat.

I had known of a handful of men over the years who had been forced to end the lives of their wives, all because they couldn't handle the task set before them.

I've seen a broken man and wasn't ready to become one tonight.

Sienna huffed, relaxing her body against mine as we continued up the steps and through the double doors.

Upon entering the grand foyer, we were met with Dustin's butler.

"Mr and Mrs Bryce, I presume? Please follow me to Master Slate's office." He greeted us before turning on his heel and making his way down a long corridor to the left of the foyer. When we approached a large open black door, he stopped beside it and gestured us inside, addressing Dustin directly: "Your guests have arrived, Sir."

"Thank you, Avery. That will be all for now." Dustin replied with a wave of his hand as he turned to face us.

I guided my wife into the room and gestured for her to sit in the empty spot on the black leather loveseat beside Nick, who had his arm fanned out over the back, looking far too comfortable. I glanced at him for any sign of hope as Sienna took her seat, but all he did was return a grim-looking smile and a subtle shake of his head.

"Colby..." Dustin sighed, running a hand down his face before pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration. "Excuse my language tonight, but do you have any idea just how fucking badly your wife fucked up?"

Not what I had expected of his first words for me, but they were better than the alternative of getting straight to the point.

"Dustin—"

"Before you attempt to sway me into giving your wife a second chance, Nick has already done most of that work for you." Dustin cut me off, and I crossed my arms over my chest to stand my ground, not willing to give an inch without a fight when it came to her life. "What I didn't account for was someone else speaking up on your wife's behalf as well..." Wait, what?

I dropped my arms in surprise as a man I didn't recognize entered the room, shutting

the door behind him before stepping up beside Dustin's desk. Who the fuck?

I peered down at my wife, whose eyes flared wide at the sight of him. She shook her head in denial before shooting up to her feet and pointing at him with a dark, menacing glare, forgetting any pain she once felt in her chest.

"Who the fuck invited him to this." She seethed through her teeth, looking ready to charge him at any given moment. I wrapped my arm around her waist to hold her back and prevent whoever the fuck he was from being mauled to death by my freaked-the-fuck-out wife. "Why the fuck are you here, Travis! Haven't you and Landon done enough!?" She shouted with a venom I hadn't heard from her before.

The man she called Travis laughed, running a hand through his short, dusty brown hair before sliding it into his jeans. His dark green eyes hardened on my wife.

"Relax, sunshine. I'm just here to help." His eyes flicked to meet mine before returning to her, and I could see red bleed across my vision. "Unless, of course, you no longer want it?" He crooned, holding up the back of his right hand, displaying an all too familiar black ring—Sienna paled at the sight of it, sucking in a sharp breath.

This couldn't be the Travis she spoke about earlier, could it? How could he be a member of the Men Under Revue and work for the Special Forces? We had no members working in any form of law enforcement. What the fuck was going on?

"I thought we were done with your shit, Travis." Nick chimed in, sounding almost bored. "Didn't Dustin tell you to stay in your fucking lane?" And how did Nick know him?

"Someone tell me what the fuck is going on here." I barked, losing my patience as I glanced around the room. I was far too sober and stressed out for this shit. Fuck sake...

“Sit the fuck down, Travis...” Dustin growled, resting his palms on the desk. “I assume the first thing you are questioning is how a member of the Las Vegas Special Forces unit came to be a member of the Men Under Revue?” He arched a brow at me.

“That would be a good place to start.” I clipped, pulling Sienna’s back to my chest while wrapping my arm around her upper body to keep her in place.

I could feel the anger radiating off her flushed skin, her heavy breaths pushing her chest against my arm.

“Dustin wanted an in with the only field of work he could never penetrate, at least not without help... Simply put, I had what he needed, and he had what I wanted.” Travis spoke like a cocky motherfucker, tilting his head as his eyes examined my wife—and I wanted nothing more than to drive a knife through his throat.

“An in which would ensure that all Las Vegas Law Enforcement would stay the fuck out of our business. Except this time, they didn’t.” Dustin glared daggers at Travis as he hissed his words through a clenched jaw. “Travis confirmed the LVSF knew about Jameson and what we had planned for him. It just so happened that us choosing him as your wife’s target played into their favor, and Travis took advantage of that by leaking information to one of the officers who, in turn, persuaded her into sabotaging herself.”

“We needed him alive, and you needed him dead,” Travis added matter of factly.

“And where does this leave her now?” I questioned, looking between the two of them.

“Colby, you know what happens to those who fail their tests—”

“That’s fucking bullshit, and you know it; he set her the fuck up!” I shouted with

rage, gesturing to the piece of shit who put her in this situation to begin with.

“However—” Dustin’s voice rose, holding up his hand to stop me, growing more frustrated with this meeting as it continued. “Seeing as Travis came forward and admitted to interfering with your wife’s assigned test, I have decided that we will issue her a new one in a week’s time.” He finished, picking his phone up from the desk. “Consider this a second , first chance. Now, all of you, get the fuck out of my office.”

I didn’t hesitate for a moment to pull my wife out of that room; I didn’t need to give Dustin any more reason to change his mind after getting away with what we just did.

What he just did was unheard of; a man known for being so ruthless and unforgiving to give my wife a second chance.

As we started making our way down the hall to the front entrance, her hand tightly held in mine, Sienna abruptly stopped and spun herself around, jerking me back in her direction before she released her grip on my hand and pulled away.

“You son of a fucking bitch!” She screamed before slamming her fist into Travis’s jaw. “How fucking long?—” She demanded. “How fucking long have you known?”

I could see she was still reeling from his surprise appearance, her chest rapidly rising and falling with her heavy breaths, and her jaw clenched so tightly that it was a miracle her teeth didn’t shatter from the strain.

“Christ almighty, sunshine. If I had known our reunion would be the same as our departure—” Travis rubbed his jaw with a chuckle. “Although I have to admit, I should have seen this coming. You certainly have a type.” He added, his eyes inspecting me before catching her wrist in his hand as she went in for another swing.

“Get your hand off my fucking wife.” I sneered, launching myself forward, gripping his wrist and squeezing hard in a silent order to release hers.

He let go of her wrist, and I tucked her behind me.

Sienna didn’t need my protection; my wife could sure as fuck handle her own, but I knew she was still weakened in her current state, and I didn’t need her overexerting herself for someone like him.

“She would have been my wife if she hadn’t run away from me first.” He crooned, sliding his hands into his pockets. “Although I never pegged you for the marriage type, Sienna. You were always one to fight instead of surrender.”

“Fuck you, Travis. As if I would have ever considered being tied down by you.” My wife gritted out, hands squeezing my forearm, her nails leaving half-moons in my skin from the tight grip.

“No, but I suppose all I needed to do was get you drunk enough to sign the paperwork. Isn’t that right, Colby?”

I was more than sick of his shit. How did he even fucking know what had happened between us that night?

“Oi! Knock it the fuck off, you two.” Nick’s voice cut the tension between us like a knife as I was about to introduce Travis’s jaw to my fucking fist, just as my wife had done moments ago. “Dustin made his decision, and I suggest we all get the hell out of here before he reconsiders it. I sure as fuck know that he won’t appreciate you two pissing all over his foyer over a woman.”

Fucking Nick...

I leveled a vicious glare at Travis before turning to escort my wife out of the mansion.

“You stay the fuck away from my wife, Travis, you hear me?” I growled over my shoulder as we reached the main doors. “Or I’ll fucking kill you. I don’t give a fuck how valuable you are to Dustin.”

Nick came up behind me as we reached the steps outside and mumbled, “Watch it, Colby. Travis has more influence over him than you think. Stay the fuck out of it, for your wife’s sake.” He gestured his chin to her. “He just saved her ass in there. Dustin was ready to watch you slit her throat before Travis showed up and convinced him otherwise.”

I couldn’t believe Nick was choosing to stand by his side—but I had to agree, he had a point.

If it weren’t for Travis, her blood would be on my hands tonight, but I wasn’t about to thank the asshole for saving her life when he was the one who had put her in that position in the first place.

“Let’s go, love,” I murmured to my wife as I gestured to the passenger seat.

As she got herself situated, I glanced over my shoulder to see Travis standing pompous and proud in the doorway, his arms crossed over his chest.

“Colby.” Nick barked, snapping my attention to him as he stood beside his car door. “Leave.” His stern hiss sent a shiver of warning down my spine, and I did as he ordered, getting into the driver’s seat and leaving the mansion behind us.

Chapter 37

Sienna

I couldn't fucking believe what I was seeing. Travis just showed up out of fucking nowhere, and for the first time in my life, I welcomed the adrenaline that surged through my veins, masking the pain in my chest from the bullet wound, where his words hit just as hard.

Fucking marry him? I would have never even considered the sorry fuck as boyfriend material, let alone a fucking husband.

Words didn't even begin to describe my animosity towards him. Then rubbing my past in Colby's face like salt on a goddamn wound? Fuck.

"Want to tell me what that was all about?" My husband asked, glancing over at me as I fumed in the passenger seat, twisting the seatbelt in my fists out of frustration.

I sighed, releasing the seatbelt from my white-knuckle grip, and leaned back into the seat.

"Once upon a time, I was reckless..." I mumbled, staring into the dark desert landscape as he drove us back towards the city.

"And you're not now?" He chuckled in sarcasm, and I could sense his smile within his light-hearted laugh.

“I’m reckless with standards now; there’s a difference,” I smirked—at myself more than him, biting my bottom lip as I crossed my arms over my chest. “I’ve done a lot of regretful things over the years...” My voice drifted with my thoughts and memories on the warm desert breeze. “And yet, no matter how many times I revisit that first night—I can’t see myself ever regretting you.” I turned to look at my husband and admire his profile as he focused on the road ahead.

I caught a glimpse of a sly grin pulling at the corner of his lips before my husband abruptly pulled off to the side of the road. It didn’t take him longer than a split second before he leaned over my body, unbuckled my seatbelt, and pulled me over the center console to straddle his lap.

“Colby!” I stared down at him, wide-eyed and confused, my hands gripping his shoulders to keep me from falling forward with the steering wheel digging into my backside.

He looked up at me, licking his hungry lips as his eyes wandered my face, almost as if committing every little part of it to memory.

“What is it?” I asked at his silence, curious as to why he had pulled over on this dark, dirt road. There were no street lights between the mansion and the city. The long drive out here was dark and desolate.

“You—” He whispered, his hand sliding up my side, wrapping around the back of my head, and threading my hair between his fingers, “are everything I imagined a perfect life would be. A life I only ever dreamed of having with this career.” Leaning up to press his forehead against mine, he inhaled deeply, closing his eyes as he released his breath. “When I look into your eyes, I know that I have everything I’ll ever need in this life and the next. You’re a woman worth more than any Men Under Revue check could ever cover.”

I lowered myself to my forearms on his shoulders, tilting my head to nuzzle against the crook of his neck. I inhaled deeply, committing his signature scent to memory. It was not the overwhelming smell of AXE body spray that he soaked himself in every night before a show, but the teakwood and leather scent that came from him, just being him.

Clinging to my husband tightly, I could feel my body shaking with the emotions I had fought so hard to hold back. I had given myself to him weeks ago; however, after everything we had just gone through, I felt like I was giving myself to him all over again—recommitting myself to our relationship, our marriage, and my love for him.

The first time I told him I loved him was the last time I thought I would ever have the chance to say it. I felt stupid for waiting so long after he said it the first time, just waiting for me to reciprocate my feelings, only to be shot down straight after mouthing those three simple—yet complicated—words.

Pulling back, I locked eyes with his bright blues, mine swollen and glistening with wet tears that I cried into his neck and shirt, giving in to everything I felt.

“I love you, Colby Bryce,” I spoke through my sobs, not wanting to regret waiting any longer. I didn’t know what would happen in a week with my next test, and I sure as fuck didn’t want to chance never getting to tell him how I truly felt face to face.

My husband beamed up at me, his eyes almost glowing in the light of the moon and stars. I had nearly forgotten how incredible the night sky looked without all the light pollution from the Strip. I now understood why he stopped here, so far away from the city—the stars.

“I’ve always loved you, Sienna Bryce.”

I felt his words hit their mark deep within my heart and soul before he captured my

mouth and pulled me completely under his spell.

My fingers explored their way down his body to his jeans, tugging at the waistband for the buttons and zipper. He chuckled against my mouth, shifting his hips to give me better access as I pushed up on my knees, sliding my hand into his boxers and freeing his cock, which had already started growing hard.

I stroked him a few times before attempting to work my way out of my shorts. Colby huffed a laugh, pulling his lips from mine with a smirk that screamed trouble.

“Allow me, love.” He crooned, gripping either side of my shorts by my ass and splitting them in half at the seam.

“Again?!” I shrieked, feeling the cool evening breeze where the fabric no longer covered my skin. “Let me guess, you’ll buy me a new fucking pair?” I growled, wrapping my hand behind his head and pulling hard on his hair, jerking his chin upwards.

“Always, love.” He teased, tugging my hair by the root just the same as he brought my neck to his lips and started sucking on the sensitive spot where my neck met my shoulder. “Now sit on my cock and fuck me like you love me.” He murmured against my skin.

I sucked in a breath before pulling my thong to the side and lowering myself onto him, his thick cock sliding effortlessly into me. I had been wet for hours, I wanted to fuck him before we left the penthouse, but he was too concerned with our meeting to let me.

When I was fully seated on his cock, I moved up and down his shaft, feeling his length as it filled me to the base and back out till just the tip was inside of me. I couldn’t help the moans that escaped my lips between his mouth, sucking on my neck

and his cock driving into me deeply; I was a mess of desire and lust.

His free hand gripped my ass while the other still held my scalp tightly, his hips now thrusting up against mine, our pace gradually growing quicker and harder. He bounced me on his cock, groaning into my neck with every fully seated thrust.

I released his hair, digging my nails into his shoulders as I rolled my hips against his, feeling his piercings hitting just the right spot that drove me absolutely insane.

“Look up, love.” He whispered, my head tilting to the side as he dragged his tongue up my neck and tugged on my ear. “I’m about to show you how bright the stars can truly be.”

I captured his mouth, my cries muffled by his lips as I rode him until I reached my breaking point. My climax ripped through me, sending a shiver up my spine as he followed me with his own, my cunt squeezing his cock as he shuddered inside of me.

Collapsing against his chest, I concentrated on slowing my heavy pants, burying my forehead into the side of his neck as I stared out of the corner of my eye to where the desert plain met the night sky.

I didn’t want to move, to leave this spot with him. His arms wrapped around my waist, holding me tightly against his warm body as I trembled from my climax. His soothing touch and the sound of his heart beating in his chest made my eyes grow heavier by the second.

Together, we were everything.

ONE WEEK LATER.

It felt like only yesterday we were leaving Dustin’s mansion with a second chance. I

tied my hair into a thick ponytail before sliding into my black leather high-heeled boots. A low whistle carried across the bedroom, and I paused while sliding into my last one.

“You know, I think black is my favorite color on you.”

I turned my head to see my husband leaning against the doorframe with his arms crossed over his chest as he admired my ass from my bent position. “Especially those tight black leather pants.”

“If you rip these in half, I swear to God, Colby...” I sighed as he laughed, pushing himself off the wall, and swaggered his way toward me. When he reached my side, he wrapped his arms around my waist and dragged his lips down the side of my neck, peppering kisses along the way.

“These can stay, but I want to see you crawling in them later.” He murmured against my skin, a shiver trailing down my spine as I bit my lip at the thought.

“Only if you crawl first.” I teased, sucking in a sharp breath as I felt his teeth sink into a sensitive spot.

“Done. Now let’s go before we’re late.” He smirked before releasing me and smacking my ass with his palm before he turned to leave the room.

Today was the day we had been anticipating, and although I was fully prepared to pass my assigned test, I dreaded going through it all over again—flashbacks to the casino flooding my memory.

I no longer feared blood and killing. Not when I knew the extent of the reward for doing it as part of the MUR. Fucked up, I know, but I loved my husband, and I would do anything to keep him by any means necessary.

“Mrs Bryce.” His mocking voice echoed down the hall. I could hear the over-dramatic eye roll in his tone, and I couldn’t help but giggle.

I loved it when he called me that, almost as much as when he called me love .

Pulling up the zipper of my boot, I dropped my foot to the floor and grabbed my black leather jacket as I passed the dresser on my way out of the bedroom, shrugging it over my shoulders.

“Tell me again what the plan is,” I said as I stepped into the elevator beside him.

I checked my phone for the time before sliding it into my jacket pocket as the doors closed and we began descending floors. It was almost three in the afternoon; we wanted to get an early start to formulate a solid plan before going after my target later tonight.

“Oh, you’ll love this one. Kevin Scott owns two escort services and has recently had several complaints filed against him for misconduct toward his employees. Some of the complaints note that he has threatened assault and other unsavory things.”

“Sounds like Dustin wants me to pass if he’s giving me such a red flag to take down.”

“Our targets are never innocent, love. There is always a reason for what we do; we aren’t serial killers.” He laughed as the elevator stopped and the doors opened to the parking garage.

“If you say so...” I rolled my eyes as I strolled towards our motorcycle and climbed into the passenger seat. “So what am I to do? Pretend to be a new escort and stab him in the dick when he threatens me with a good time?”

Colby shook his head as he chuckled and looked at me with a broad smile that

reached his eyes.

“You truly are something else, love.”

“You’re right. I am everything.” I cooed, leaning over the center console and lightly kissing his lips before buckling myself in. “Let’s do this so we can ride off into the sunset like murderous bandits and wash our hands off in Lake Las Vegas.”

“Whatever my wife wants.” My husband winked before pulling out of the parking garage toward Sunset Boulevard.

Source Creation Date: August 7, 2025, 2:08 am

Colby

I didn't think it would be possible for a woman to whip me as hard as my wife did, but I consider myself entirely whipped at this point.

When I married Sienna, I knew she was the only one for me, but I never thought she would be as unhinged as she was now.

While I had been hesitant to trust Sienna with her test all over again—images of her taking that bullet still vivid in my mind—I stayed back until she needed me. She had something to prove, and I would let her.

I dropped my wife off in front of Solitude before heading into the connecting parking ramp in the back. She had planned to enter alone and lure her target, Kevin Scott, to the limousine pick-up.

I made arrangements earlier in the day with Dustin to request that one of the MUR limos be ready for us to utilize. Once I had parked, I slid into the driver's seat and put on the black Chauffeur hat and sunglasses that were sitting on the passenger seat.

Not too long after I had gotten into position, Sienna made her way out of the hotel with her target wrapped around her. It took everything in me to resist killing him myself while I watched his hands slowly descend her body as they approached me.

Being a gentleman, Kevin opened the door for my wife, and she crawled in with a seductive smile, pushing her ass out as much as she could to keep his attention.

“Do you have to lay it on this thick?” I growled when I had the chance.

Sienna glared at me with a hiss before effortlessly snapping back to her bedroom eyes and the persona she was wearing as a mask. I had to hand it to her; she definitely was quite the actress.

Once Kevin had entered the limo and they were snuggled up in the back seat, I pulled out of the ramp and started driving us away from the Strip. I watched my wife work in the rear-view mirror, ready to pull over and take care of the man myself if she ran into any trouble.

She whispered something into his ear before giving me a wink and sliding herself over his lap to straddle him. I couldn't hear their conversation with how far back they were—not like I would want to listen to the unsavory things he was most likely telling her.

I took my eyes off of them to make a turn onto the highway, and in those split seconds, I heard Sienna's boisterous laughter before the all-too-familiar sounds of strangled, gurgling gasps for air filled the back of the limo.

I abruptly pulled over and jerked around in my seat to see my wife lock eyes with mine over her shoulder, her face and chest spattered with blood, straddling a lifeless and blood-soaked Kevin Scott.

“He told me I would be his most prized asset but required a sample of what I could do before confirming.” She shrugged, dropping the bloody knife onto the black leather seat before she removed herself from his lap and crawled her way towards me. “I think I've proven myself.”

When she reached the window, I wrapped my hand around the back of her head and pulled her blood-covered face towards mine.

Not only did this woman take a bullet and nearly die to protect me out of love, but now I had just witnessed her kill a man in cold blood to protect a future for us—one she didn't even choose to begin with.

“You're far more than just a mere prize, love.” I scanned her face in awe before capturing her mouth with mine. She was perfection.

Since passing her test with flying colors, she had become a force to be reckoned with, even giving Nick a run for his money. He recently mentioned that she was a natural for this line of work, nearing the same level as Bria and Tessa.

I couldn't be more in love with my wife. She was the best thing that ever happened to me, and every day was like living in a dream with her.

Sienna had been spending a lot more time with Bria and Tessa. The three of them had become thick as thieves in the past year, going out for lunch, drinking, and even getting their hair and nails done together.

I was grateful she had formed such a close bond with those two women. They had been there for her whenever she needed someone—who wasn't me—and had grown to see each other as more like family than friends.

Some nights, Sienna would stop by the showroom to watch me perform, sitting in the far back where no one would notice her presence but me.

Of course, I couldn't acknowledge her during the show, but after the final curtain call, she always got every single second of my attention without fail.

My life was good—our life was exceptional.

“So I've been thinking...” My wife trailed off as she plopped down on the couch next

to me, laying on her stomach and propping her chin on the heel of her palm.

“About?” I peered over at her from the corner of my eye as I scrolled IG on my phone.

“Put your phone away for once.” She groaned, rolling her eyes and reaching out to snatch my phone from me.

“Alright, alright.” I chuckled, turning off the screen and tossing it on the end table. “You have my full attention, love.” I smiled, angling my body to face her as I stretched an arm across the back of the couch.

“Don’t hate me—” She winced, biting her bottom lip. “But have you ever thought about or considered having kids?” Her eyes searched mine, and I could see her hesitation.

I had thought about them multiple times, especially in recent months. I didn’t want to be the first to bring it up because I didn’t want her to feel pressured to do something as significant as having kids if she wasn’t ready yet.

I wanted the discussion to happen when she was ready; apparently, that time was right now.

“I mean, it’s fine if you haven’t; I just—”

“I do want kids, love.” I beamed down at her before cupping her cheeks. “More than anything, I want to create a family with you.”

I thought I had everything I’d ever need right here in front of my eyes, but a family? That would be the greatest gift she could ever give me—that we could give each other.

She tugged at her hair nervously as it fell from behind her shoulder. She twirled a thick section around her fingers before pulling herself up to a kneeling position beside me, my hands releasing her face.

“What’s wrong?” I frowned at her silence.

I figured she would be elated with my answer, yet here she was, looking almost—disappointed by my response.

Did I not give her the answer she was hoping for? Did she not want kids?

Blowing out a heavy sigh, Sienna pulled a stick out of the back waistband of her leggings and dropped it in my lap without uttering a word.

Her eyes fixated on mine as I looked down to see she had dropped a pregnancy test into my lap.

I picked it up, turning it over to see the test window, and right in the center, clear as day, was a dark blue plus sign. My heartbeat accelerated as I realized what she was telling me—showing me.

She was pregnant.

My wife was carrying our first baby.

I immediately dropped the test to grab her around the waist and pull her to straddle my lap, holding on for dear life.

I didn’t fight the tears that fell from my eyes as I buried my face into the crook of her neck, breathing in her sweet scent.

“Are you okay?” She sobbed against the side of my head—happy tears.

She started crying the moment my eyes left hers to check the test. I was sure her hormones and emotions were off the charts right now. She was pregnant with our baby...

“Am I okay?” I chuckled into her neck. “Love... I’m more than okay.” I pulled my head back to look into her tear-soaked, swollen eyes. “Are you?”

She nodded, biting down on her lip to hold back her sobs before burying her face against me once again.

“How far along?” I asked, rubbing her back as she sniffled and slowly relaxed her body onto mine.

“Eleven weeks...”

“Eleven—” How did she keep this from me for so long? How did I not notice any signs or symptoms? “Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

We had just recently completed a task where she almost got herself stabbed by the target. If I had known...

“I wasn’t sure how you’d react, and I didn’t know how to bring it up.” She whispered, wiping her nose on the back of her hand before gripping my shirt. “You’ve never asked me if I wanted to have kids, and so I assumed you either weren’t interested or didn’t want them, period.”

“Love.” I ran a hand through her hair, tucking the stray strands behind her ear before resting my hand against the side of her face and neck. “I’ve always been ready; I just wanted you to be the one who chose when to start.”

Sienna always wanted control; it was the one thing she had been so desperate to have her entire life, and I wanted to give her that—control of our future.

“So you’re not mad? Or upset?” She questioned, her voice slightly shaky from crying.

“Never,” I answered, gently squeezing her waist as my hand dropped to her stomach. “I’m all in, love. There isn’t a single thing you could do that would change that.”

I pressed a kiss to her forehead as I sank further back into the couch with her weight on my chest.

I couldn’t wait to be a father and see my wife become the perfect mother to our children. I only hoped she would be open to having more than one, but I’ll leave that decision up to her, as I always would.

Source Creation Date: August 7, 2025, 2:08 am

Colby

TWENTY YEARS LATER.

I never sold the penthouse.

After finding out Sienna was pregnant, we started looking for our dream home—somewhere to settle down and build our future and our family from the ground up.

It took us several months, but we eventually found the perfect plot of land right outside the inner city. Perfect meaning, it was close enough for us to commute to and from work every day and far enough away to see the stars at night without light pollution from the Strip.

I let my wife have creative control over the entire project, giving her everything she wanted, including a small dance studio.

Every once in a while, I would stop by our old home to stare out at the skyline—the whole reason I purchased it—and reminisce about where it all began for us.

I still worked for the Heavens Down Under show but on a significantly reduced schedule; twice a week unless otherwise necessary. Bartending at the Ultrapool at Neon Palms was still my daily job, except for the off-season when I wasn't required to work.

Sienna continued to own and operate her Pilates studio, expanding the business to a

more prominent location on Sunset Boulevard with a small staff of qualified and professionally trained instructors. The additional help enabled her to start teaching freestyle and ballet dance classes—all for fun and fueling her passion, of course.

After having kids, we were no longer at the top of Dustin's list for assignments, but to keep our status within the Men Under Revue, we had to complete at least two mandatory tasks per month—

“Colby.” Sienna’s soft voice called across the dimly lit room, returning my mind to the present.

It was cloudy and rainy outside, reminding me of the day I confessed my life to my wife—the day I let her see the real me—the boy I was before I found her.

Everything in the penthouse was the same as the day we left it, the space aging like a time capsule but with a thick layer of settled dust. Usually, I would stop by here on the way home from work and always came alone—but not this time.

“It’s almost as though so much has changed, and yet... nothing has changed at all.” She spoke as she stopped beside me, wrapping her arms around my waist and pressing her weight into my side. I wrapped my arm around Sienna, pulling her in close as I leaned against the window, admiring the view we left behind and remembering the sunsets I replaced with her warm smile.

“Where are the kids?” I murmured, pressing a kiss to her temple with a long sigh.

“They’ll be up shortly... Are you sure you want to do this?”

“I’ll never give this up, love. There are too many memories worth saving.”

“You know they’ll just trash it with parties and whatever else they have planned. It will become a frat boy clubhouse.” Sienna chuckled with a soft smile.

“Let them, as long as it still remains ours in the end, it doesn’t matter what they do with it.” I gripped my wife’s chin, tilting her head to face me.

I lovingly stared into her eyes that matched the weather, admiring their beauty as I remembered our time here and the life we built after.

Becoming a family man made me realize why my family had passed down their farm for generations—where the tradition started in the first place. I wanted something to pass down to my kids while keeping the memories of my past within arms reach.

Sienna had asked countless times why I never sold the penthouse—why I just left it here unoccupied and collecting dust for years.

“I hope you two realize what kind of madness you are about to unleash once the twins see this place.” Kelsey laughed, and we turned our attention to our oldest, who had just arrived.

Kelsey was starting her second year of college in two weeks and would be leaving us for UCLA in California. She wanted to be close enough to visit when she felt homesick but not too close that her brothers would bother her. They were the primary reason she transferred from LVU over the summer.

While they were younger, they acted as if they were her bodyguards—scaring off her last boyfriend after they threatened to tie him up in the basement for calling her a bitch in one of their petty fights.

I don’t know if that was the whole story, but she avoided talking to them for months after the breakup, and Sienna spent weeks trying to make her feel better.

“Well aware of what your brothers will do to this place.” I laughed, releasing my wife as she pulled away to embrace our daughter.

“Are you? Do you know what they will call it?” Kelsey added as she approached the windows and stood beside me, Sienna returning to nuzzle against my side.

“I have a few ideas in mind...” I smirked, knowing our sons all too well.

They were carbon copies of me in both looks and personality, while Kelsey was every ounce of her mother; she even performed on her high school’s varsity dance team for all four years of attendance. Sienna was hesitant for Kelsey to join a competitive dance team, but she couldn’t have been more proud of her. They would train together every evening after school, and in her junior year, she was voted in as the Varsity captain—

“Holy fuck, no way!” Nickolas shouted in awe as he exited the elevator and took everything in.

“This isn’t real, right? You guys don’t actually own this?” Elijah added, following his brother’s lead.

The twins were starting their first year at LVU, and what better graduation gift than a fully furnished penthouse where they could begin creating memories?

“There will be rules,” Sienna warned, glaring daggers at them as they ran through the kitchen and living room, taking in the expansive space and every single detail.

Nickolas jumped over the back of the couch, landing hard on the cushion and causing dust to stir around him. I just shook my head with a smile as Elijah joined him in the same manner, the two lounging and covered in years of unsettled dirt.

“Fucking animals,” Kelsey muttered, crossing her arms over her chest in disgust; she was always too proper for how they behaved—again, just like her Mum.

“Don’t be jealous, Sis. You’re more than welcome to crash at our mile-high bachelor

pad whenever you feel like it.” Elijah teased, giving her a sly wink as he rested his hands behind his head.

“Gross... I’d rather sleep in an alley on the Strip and risk tetanus.” She rolled her eyes, turning her attention out the window and away from them.

“Still sour about Ethan, I see,” Nickolas mocked, high-fiving Elijah.

“You arrogant piece of—”

“Oi! None of that!” I barked at the three of them. “We didn’t bring you here to fight, so knock it the fuck off.”

“Colby.” Sienna hissed, and I sighed, pinching the bridge of my nose. This was not how I had hoped this day would go.

“Look...” I started, squeezing Sienna’s hand in mine. “This penthouse was where it all began for your Mum and I, and we want to pass it down to you boys.” Looking down at my wife, I smiled warmly as my heart squeezed with all my adoration for her.

My wife, my love, and the radiant mother of my—sometimes not so sane—kids.

“A long time ago, your Dad moved to Las Vegas with nothing but a dream...” She spoke, staring deeply into my eyes. “And we found each other on our path for a purpose.”

I could feel the kids heavily rolling their eyes and cringing at us, but I didn’t care. They had their whole lives ahead of them to discover what love could do—how it could lead you down a path you never even imagined possible.

Not a day goes by that I don’t think about where I was, how I got here, how this

beautiful woman came into my life and changed everything.

“You’ve never told us how you two met...” Kelsey stated with curiosity. “I knew Dad came here from Australia—obviously. But where did it all start?”

I huffed a laugh as I thought back to the first time I laid eyes on my wife and the one thing that immediately caught my attention.

“Did you know your Mum’s favorite color is hot pink?”

The End.