



Thief (Breeding #3)

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Category: Romance, Young Adult

Description: Sean Sparrow has one more job to pull: break into the bank, steal what he was hired to take, and get out. He plans everything to the very last detail, sure of success... until he sees Tessa.

Tessa Martin lives a humdrum life. With a boring job and a crappy roommate, she's sure there must be more to life than this. She's not prepared for the muscle-bound bearded man who walks into her life, offering her everything she's ever wanted.

When Sean breaks down all of Tessa's walls, she has no choice but to fall hard and fast. But when the truth comes out, and Sean is fully revealed to her, will their instalove be enough to hold them together?

Warning: This book hero is over- the-top obsessed, totally head over heels in love, and desperate to make babies with the heroine ASAP. If you want a fun read with SUPER hot steam, Kindle-melting love, and a beard to rub between thighs, then this book is for you.

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Chapter 1

Sean

“Oh, fuck, just like that. Take it all the way to the back of your throat.”

The slurping noise from the woman on her knees a few feet from me makes me clench my jaw. The smell of cigars and sex coats the air, making me wish I didn't have to breathe in the stench.

“Oh, right there. Swallow it all,” Nick mumbles as the slurping noise grows louder, and he grunts his release.

Fucking hell, this is why I like to work alone. Being in the back of a seedy strip club after hours is making my skin crawl.

One last job. I keep reminding myself why I'm here. I'm going to have to scrub my body with sandpaper when I leave this place. I'll need a scalding hot shower and might even burn my clothes. God knows what's happened in the very seat I'm sitting in.

“You want her next? Maybe she can pull that stick out of your ass.” Nick laughs at his own joke as the woman pulls herself to her feet. She stumbles as she gets up, almost falling over in her heels. Who knows what she's on. From how rail thin she is and the glazed look in her sunken eyes, I'm guessing something heavy.

She steps towards me like my silence is an invitation, but I stop her in her tracks with

a stare. I'd rather cut my fucking dick off than let her anywhere near it.

"Come on, man. Loosen the fuck up," Nick says as he adjusts himself and grabs a beer from the table next to him.

"I'm leaving in five." I clip my words, making them hard. This meeting was supposed to start twenty minutes ago, and I have shit to do. Okay, maybe not shit to do, but I have somewhere else I want to be.

Stuck in the back of a strip club, waiting for the boss to show up, is not my idea of a good time. I took this job for one reason: a diversion. I need these guys, and I'm on a time crunch. Time that is ticking away and being wasted at this very moment. I normally like to work alone, but this job is paying me enough that I can finally retire. I'll be set for life if everything goes according to plan. If being the operative word.

These guys think we're just robbing a bank, which we are, but I'm after something else. A bank job isn't enough to have me hanging up my gun, but my real reason for breaking into the bank will give me the good life. There's a very important deposit box inside that vault, and that's my moneymaker. That box is the real reason I've hooked up with these clowns, and they're the only way I can get into it with the time I've got left.

No one needs to know I was ever in there, which is why I need a robbery to go down. I need chaos to help create a diversion while I get what I'm really after.

"You'll stay until Heavy gets here," Nick says, like he can make me stay.

"You forget who asked who to do this job." I start to rise from my chair, like I don't give a shit about the job one way or another. They asked me for my help, but only because I'd planted seeds for them to do so. I don't want them to know how much this job means to me. It's better if they think I don't give a shit.

Just then, Heavy walks in.

“Out!” he snaps, and the girls who have been roaming around scurry from the room.

Lazily, I drop back down into my chair and wait. Heavy pours himself a drink before making his way over to where Nick and I are sitting, a few more of his crew coming in behind him and joining us.

Heavy is anything but heavy. He’s barely five foot, balding, and wears the most God-awful suits I’ve ever seen. The only reason he’s got himself this little makeshift gang is because it used to be his father’s until he passed a few years back.

What was once a decent crew turned into a bunch of lazy fucks who clearly aren’t making ends meet. Seeing as they all latched on to the stupid idea of robbing a Federal bank, these idiots are dumber than I thought.

Or maybe Heavy’s as crazy as I’ve heard he is, and he just doesn’t care. Crazy is dangerous and makes for sloppy work. Crazy is hard to understand and not easy to predict. I feel like I’ve bitten off more than I can chew with this crew, and I’m starting to have second thoughts. My doubts are bubbling to the surface, and I think maybe it’s time to call this whole operation off.

Right until Heavy drops a stack of pictures and papers on to the table, making my heart jump into my throat.

I sit perfectly still, trying to appear completely unfazed by what I see. The real reason I want to call off the job. I don’t make a single move to indicate I know who the woman is. Her pictures are scattered across the table for all these men to leer at, and I’m cool and calm on the outside. On the inside, though, I’m losing my shit.

I’ve always been known for my control, and for the first time in my life, I feel a crack

split in my facade. The mask I so carefully wear starts to slip, and I have to rein myself in.

“Tessa Morgan.” Heavy says her name like he bought himself a winning lottery ticket. I should have seen this coming, and maybe I did but I ignored it. I don’t even like her name on his lips. She’s too sweet and pure for a man like Heavy to even say her name.

When I knew what bank was my target weeks ago, I started digging up every piece of information I could get my hands on. Tessa stood out to me right away but probably not for the same reasons she stood out to Heavy.

I hate her name on his lips; it makes my stomach clench. I’ve been watching her for weeks already, and I told myself it’s because she’s a part of the job. That’s a lie, because I haven’t watched anyone else at the bank. Just her. I want to watch her now.

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Each day my little obsession for her seems to grow. Now I'm so deep there's no turning back. I have to have her, and I will, by any means necessary.

She's the reason I keep picking up my phone every ten minutes. I've been checking her location. Checking on her.

"What about her?" I manage to ask the question with as much indifference I can muster, but my blood feels like it's ice, moving through my veins as everyone in the room stares down at the pictures of her. She looks like a fucking angel. My angel. That's what I thought the first time I'd laid eyes on her, and I still think it every time I see her.

Her reddish-brown hair falls in waves around her face down to the middle of her back. She has honey-colored eyes like I've never seen before. I didn't even know eyes could look like liquid gold. When I first saw her, I was sure they were contacts. After I planted the camera in her apartment, I learned it was her true color. Those gorgeous eyes hypnotize me.

She's curvy, almost plump, and her short stature makes her seem compact. It's like I could carry her soft little body around with me, and she'd mold against me perfectly. But what drives me wild about her are the little freckles that pepper her cheeks and her little button nose. It makes her look sexy and innocent, all rolled into this fucking package I can't get off my mind.

It started with how she looked, but as the days went on, the more I watched her, it became so much more. She truly was a sweet little angel. Not a mean bone in her body. Always has a smile for everyone, but a lot of the time the smile doesn't reach

her eyes. I want to make that smile reach her eyes. Have it directed at me.

Now all these fucks are standing around, staring at her, and I'm trying not to lose my shit.

I know what Heavy's going to suggest, because I'd thought it myself.

"We're going to use her to glean information on the bank and get our hands on her access keys. She looks easy enough to seduce."

"I'm not into chubby chasing," Nick says, picking up one of the pictures of my angel. I feel my fingers twitch, wanting to grab the blade at my side and slam it through his hand.

"You'll do what you're told," Heavy reminds him, but no way could Nick seduce her. He isn't charming enough. She'd run from his sleazy advances the first time he tried to come on to her. He's used to paying women to fuck him.

Heavy's eyes are on me, but I don't want to seem eager. If I try to jump in, the situation could blow up in my face and ruin everything.

"Sparrow should do it. The ladies always seem to be after him." I have no clue what Heavy means by that. Maybe it's because the whores in his club are always trying to latch on to me, but that's probably because I don't look like I'd beat the shit out of them. Like his whole fucking crew does.

"I'm here to make sure the cops don't show up. I'm cutting the lines and hacking the systems. Those are my skills sets," I remind him, as if I want no business seducing the girl. I'll be the one to do it if it's something he's going to push. "We don't need her. I got you the floor plans, schedules, and I can take their system down easy. We don't need to drag a woman into this, one who can end up identifying us when it's all

finished.”

“Trust me, she won’t be identifying anyone when we’re done with her.” Heavy’s intent is clear. But that’s something I would never allow to happen. “I just want to make sure everyone is on the same page. Let’s not forget she has keys, too. Access to the main vault.”

“And what if shit goes wrong? She could ID me if she slips through our fingers,” I try again, going at him from another angle.

“Why do you care? I hear this is your last job anyways.”

I regret giving him that piece of information, but I had to give him something. I was known for working alone, doing random jobs for crews. Normally, when I did pick up a job with another crew, I still did those jobs alone. Got them what they needed, then stepped out. I had to have a reason why this time I was willing to go in with a whole group, and I used this being my final score as that reason. I told Heavy I wanted to walk away with a lot of money so I could be done. But I have a feeling with all this talk about the girl not walking away and wanting me to get close to her that Heavy doesn’t plan on me walking away either.

Chapter 2

Sean

Silently, I scream inside, knowing that if I seem too eager, Heavy will sense something is up. But now if I don’t agree to go along with his idea, it would draw just as much attention.

“Fine. You’re running the show. I’ll take care of it.” I concede to what he wants, knowing that it could be her life if I refuse and someone else takes over. Not that I

would have ever let that happen. No one is getting close to my Tessa but me.

“Good. Get it done. We’ve got to tighten up everything before next week. Monday morning, it all goes down.”

Heavy scoops up the envelope containing Tessa’s pics and tosses it to me. I pick it up and check inside to make sure I’ve got all of them. I slide it into the inside pocket of my leather jacket, wanting to keep it close.

“We done here?” I look at Heavy, waiting for him to say anything else I might need to know. I’ve got to get out of this shit hole; the stench is starting to make me sick.

“Yeah, Sparrow, we’re all good. You just make sure everything’s in place when the times comes.” He pops a toothpick in his mouth and leans back in his chair. I feel the need to kick his teeth in, but instead I stand up and turn to walk out the back door.

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Just as I take a step, I hear Nick over my shoulder.

“Good luck with Tessa.”

I stop and turn back to see him taking a seat in the chair I just got up from. The way he said her name, like he was tasting it in his mouth, has me on alert. Do they know something already? Have I not been careful about how much I watch her? I don't have time to think on it right now. I file it away.

Lifting my chin in acknowledgment, I turn back around and make my way out of the club and to my ride. Once I'm outside, I take a deep breath of fresh air, cleansing my lungs from the stink of that place. Goddamn seedy-ass club has my skin crawling.

Hopping into my black 1970 Chevy Chevelle, I crank up the engine and put it in gear. It's a cool night in downtown Chicago, so I've got the hardtop on. I drive away from the club and make my way out of downtown and west to a small suburb. It's about a twenty-five-minute train ride, but it's a lot less by car.

My Tessa.

I've been waiting all night to be able to go check on her, even though I know it's late. Although I know she'll be in her room sleeping, I'm still going to go by and check. If I don't know, I'll just crawl out of bed in a few hours and do it anyways. There's no fighting this pull she seems to have on me. How could someone own me and not even know I exist?

Tessa rents a small two-bedroom apartment just outside the city. She's lived there,

from what I can tell, most of her life. She lived there with her grandmother up until about six months ago when her grandmother Alma passed away. She lived alone for about three months after Alma passed away, then her co-worker moved in with her.

It's really amazing what you can find in a few internet searches. For example, I looked up the apartment lease and her grandmother's death certificate on business and county tax documents. Only a little more searching revealed her co-worker Harper has some loose lips, blasting her personal business on her unblocked social media accounts. She's got a Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and too many more to name.

Harper likes to take an unnecessary amount of selfies with the hashtag #HarpersWorld. She also loves to talk shit on her roommate, who doesn't have any kind of social media to see what she posts. Harper is a typical bitch who tries not to be one, and I get annoyed just looking at her. I'm even more annoyed by how nice my Tessa is to her, but that's also one of the reasons I can't seem to keep away from her. She knows her roommate is a bitch but still always tries to see the best in her, giving her chance and chance again. Let's hope she'll be able to do the same with me when all the dust settles.

Pulling onto Trent Street, I drive down two blocks, then park. I get out of my car and walk in the direction of the train station, which happens to pass right in front of Tessa's building.

I take a quick look around, seeing no one out at this hour, and sneak in the shadows to the alley beside her apartment. I walk around and spot a stray cat. I smile to myself. My Tessa likes to feed him in the mornings, dropping off her sandwich crusts to him on the way to the train. Harper is usually shouting at her to hurry up and stop feeding the rats, but I think it's sweet she takes the time to love something that's been abandoned. It gives me hope that she could want me. I'm not above using whatever I have to to have her.

Once I get around back, I reach behind the dumpster and pull out the metal pole I left there. I walk over to the fire escape, reach up with the pole, and pull down the ladder. Once it's down, I walk back over to the dumpster and put the pole back. I like keeping it there in case I need to get to her.

I make my way back over to the ladder and climb up the four flights until I get to her story. I'm quiet as a church mouse as I move onto her fire escape and peek inside her windows.

There's a light on in the living room, and I look in there first and see Harper laid out asleep on the couch. The television is on, and she's got a carton of melted ice cream in one hand and her cell phone in the other. She's snoring so loudly I can hear it through the glass, and I roll my eyes.

I move over a little to the next window, and there she is. My Tessa. Her bed is on the other side of the room, this window letting in a little of the moonlight. I can't see her as much as I'd like between her curtains blocking my view and it being after midnight.

The room she's in looks tight and cramped. The whole apartment is less than a thousand square feet, but I've seen the blueprints, and the other bedroom is much bigger with an attached bathroom. I can't ever figure out why Tessa wouldn't take the bigger room if this was her place first.

I touch the tips of my fingers to the glass, wishing I could trail them down her soft skin. I've never been close enough to her to touch her, but I bet it would be like touching a dandelion. Soft, delicate, and can be broken by the slightest puff of breath.

She's lying on her side, and the curve of her hip sticks up under the sheets. I want to run my hands over that curve to her waist and wrap my arm around her. I want her thick curves molded against me as I spoon her body into mine. I want my hand

overflowing with her big, full breasts as I pinch and pluck her nipples. I need her big, sexy ass cushioning my hard cock as I rest it there, ready to fuck her.

Her lips, a lush cupid's bow, are parted slightly, and her eyes are closed sweetly as she dreams. Her auburn hair is spread out messily on her pillow, and all I can think about is fisting it in my hand as I thrust into her.

Shaking my head, I try to stop the desire that's rushing through me. Now is not the time to lose my head.

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I lean in closer to the glass, gently pressing my lips against the cool surface, kissing her goodnight from a distance. I take one final look at my angel and move away from the window. Glancing into the living room one last time, I see Harper still in the same position. There has got to be a good reason she'd want to live with Tessa. The only conclusion I can draw from what I've seen is that she's there out of sheer desperation.

I make my way down the fire escape. When I get to the bottom, I grab the ladder and push it back up. We wouldn't want any creeps trying to sneak a peek now, would we?

I feel a wicked smile on my face as I turn from the building and make my way back to my car.

I'm living on the other side of downtown at the moment, in a warehouse. I like to move around a lot to keep hidden from any enemies who might try to find me. The people who need me for jobs know exactly how to get in touch with me.

There's an old bar on the East Side. An old guy named Sal works behind the bar. If you go in with my name and a piece of paper, he'll get it to me. I used to run jobs for Sal back in the day, and he's about the only person I can trust. I think back to my childhood on the streets and shake my head. No time to dwell on the past.

Getting behind the wheel of my Chevelle, I think of my Tessa. I've got to go home and get a few hours of sleep. I plan on introducing myself to my love tomorrow. Her fate has been set. She's mine now.

Chapter 3

Tessa

“Are you going to eat that?” The breakfast burrito pauses halfway to my mouth as I glance at Harper across the counter in the kitchen. She’s got her eyes trained on her phone as she hurriedly types away at a speed that seems almost impossible. If only she could work that fast on the computer at work, maybe I wouldn’t have to help her out so much. Who she could possibly be texting this early on a Thursday morning, I have no idea, but as always that thing is glued to her hand.

“What’s wrong with it?” I look down at my breakfast burrito. It’s nothing fancy, but it will hit the spot. I popped it in the microwave, and it will mostly keep me full until lunch. I tend to get grumpy when I go without food, and being in customer service, grumpy doesn't bode well.

“It’s fattening.” I look past her to the container of melted ice cream that she went at last night and which is still sitting on the coffee table. The thing is, Harper can eat and eat and eat and she’s still rail thin. I wasn’t blessed with the same gene, but I’d long ago given up caring what I ate. No diet on earth seemed to work, and I didn’t have the energy to worry about it anymore. Not like I was dating. No one was going to be seeing me naked, so I might as well enjoy the burrito. It would probably be the most orgasmic thing I’d experience today.

I go to take my first bite, and Harper makes a disgusted noise. I clench my jaw, and embarrassment hits my cheeks. I can feel the blood rush to my face, making my fair skin light up. I’m not great at hiding my feelings. Everything’s always on display for everyone to see. I might not want to diet, but it still hurts when someone calls you out on your weight. With her one sound, my appetite is gone. Maybe that’s the key to a successful diet. Always try to eat with Harper in the room. You’ll be stick thin in a month.

I drop the burrito onto the counter and move past her towards my bedroom to get

ready for work. "I'll be ready in a second," I mumble, upset she got the better of me. I thought I got over those silly things like my weight a long time ago, but it seems to be rearing its ugly head lately. This might have something to do with Harper, but my grandma always told me when someone pokes at you, it's usually their own insecurities showing. That makes me feel bad for Harper. I think a lot of her comments have more to do with her than me.

Why did I ever agree to let her move in here? Rent, I remind myself. Also I'm a sucker for a sob story, and I've been lonely since my grandma passed. I thought at least having someone around would help push those feelings away, but now three months of living with Harper and I'm not so sure. Harper isn't the best for conversation. Oh, she can ramble on and on, but she seems to have this way of making me feel like shit about myself.

When she came to me about needing a place to stay, saying that her boyfriend was kicking her out, I felt bad for her. I knew what it was like to feel alone, and I didn't want anyone else to have that feeling. Little did I know she's never alone, what with the trail of men always following her. Lately, though, I've noticed many don't stay for long, and I don't think it's because she's asking them to leave.

Her sob story got to me, and plus, I needed the help with rent. I've lived in this apartment for as long as I can remember. My grandma raised me here, and I never knew my parents. Over the years, I finally got the story of my parents out of my grandma. She said she had no idea who my father was, and my mother just kind of dropped me off one day and never came back. It stung a little to hear that, but I'm thankful enough to be happy that at least my mother had the decency to give me to someone who cared.

When Grandma got sick my last year of high school, we knew it wasn't a battle she was going to win. She fought hard, but cancer took her from me six months ago after her body finally gave out. I'd put off going to college to be by her side, wanting to

have every moment I could with her before the last piece of family I'd ever had slipped through my fingers.

As she grew sicker and sicker I seemed to become more disconnected with the outside world. I went from work to home, home to work. Nothing in between. One by one, my friends started to trickle off. After she passed away, I looked around and it was then I saw how alone I really was. I wouldn't change the choices I made, though. I'll cherish every moment I spent with my grandma.

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“I’m catching a ride, so I’ll just meet you there.” I turn to look at Harper, but she still has her eyes on her phone. We always take the train into work together since she moved in as neither of us has a car. I had my grandma’s, but I sold it to help cover the funeral cost. It wasn’t a fancy funeral, but I did the best I could with what we had. It was small, but I bet she’s cursing me for having it to begin with. She probably would have rather I saved the money, but I needed it. It helped give me some of the closure I needed.

“I guess I’ll see you there.” I turn to go back to my room, Harper never once looking up at me. I have no problem taking the train; it’s just a little rude for her to have a ride to work and not offer to take me. I always go out of my way for her if I think something might be helpful, so it’d be nice if she would do the same from time to time. Leading by example doesn’t seem to be paying off with her. But I find Harper to be a little self-centered. Sometimes I wonder if she even knows how she’s acting.

There are times she can be sweet. Like inviting me out tonight to hang out. I don’t have many friends. I had actually hoped when Harper moved in we would get to know each other, and that maybe I’d discover that underneath some of her snottiness there might actually be someone nice under there. That has yet to be seen.

I pull off my pajamas, put on a bra, and slip on a halter dress with a long-sleeved cardigan. I pull on some funky leggings to match and opt for simple boots to go with. I spend most of my day on my feet. I have a small office, but we’ve been short staffed, and I’ve been working the front counter most days. I need shoes that won’t kill me by the end of the day when I’m making my way back home on the train.

I trudge to the bathroom and put on a little make-up and pull my hair up into a ponytail, not wanting to mess with it.

When I walk back into the kitchen, Harper is still standing in the same place, staring at her phone, but I know she's moved because her clothes have changed. Her skirt looks a little short for appropriate work attire, but I keep my mouth closed. I learned the lesson of commenting on her clothes before. She might be quick to give criticism, but she isn't great at taking it, and her responses tend to come back with a slap to my own ego.

"Well, I'm heading out," I tell her, grabbing my purse and jacket from the stand by the front door.

"Oh, I'll walk down with you. Nick should be here any second."

"Nick?" I've never heard her mention this name before. I'm pretty sure it was a Ted the last time we talked about who she was dating. I think it was Ted whose ass I got to meet last week when I walked in to find them going at it right on the sofa. I haven't sat on the thing since.

This explains why she's done up more than normal this morning. Her make-up seems to have an extra layer to it.

"Like my dress?" She gives a little wiggle, and I can't find it in me to give her a backhanded response like she would me.

"It's really pretty," I reply, because it's true. It is pretty, just a little showy for my taste. It would look better at a club than at work.

"You should really let me dress you tonight when we go out. Maybe you could finally snag a man."

She opens the door and I follow her out, locking it behind us.

“Sure. Sounds like fun.” This is all a first for me. I was shocked she even invited me out to begin with, but now she wants to dress me up. Maybe there is something underneath her hard snotty exterior, and it’s starting to finally show. It may just be that she has walls around her that need help coming down.

I’ve never seen Harper with other girlfriends, and it’s been so long since I had any of my own. It’s worth another chance with her. What do I really have to lose? It couldn’t get any worse than what we have going right now. I’m living with her, and it might make things a whole lot easier if we could be friends. And I would be lying if I said I didn’t need a friend. I need someone. The loneliness seems to be growing each day. While a lot of the grief of losing my grandma has started to fade, the loneliness seems only to be strengthening.

When we reach the bottom of the stairs and exit the apartment complex, I see a man leaning up against a red, fancy-looking sports car. He looks a little rough around the edges, and I have the urge to step further to my left so we can avoid him. I go to take a step as Harper darts right towards him, practically jumping into his arms.

His dark eyes turn to me, and a chill runs down my spine. Harper attacks his mouth, but as he kisses her back, his eyes are trained on me. I pull my eyes from him, the creepy feeling settling deep inside me. I swear she picks the strangest guys. It’s clear to me from the snake tattoo running up the guy’s arm that he can’t be the kind of guy one would want to tangle with.

Don’t be so judgy, Tessa, I scold myself. Maybe that’s why I don’t have any friends. But in all fairness, he’s what I picture when I think of a gang member, and I hope Harper doesn’t try to bring this one back to our place. Hopefully, he’ll be gone as fast as the other guys who run in and out of her life.

When she finally pulls her mouth from his, she introduces us.

“Tessa, this is Nick, my boyfriend.” Her eyes beam at me like she’s won some grand prize. Nick doesn’t seem to like that Harper just used the word ‘boyfriend,’ because I catch the tic in his jaw when she says it. But he doesn’t correct her, so maybe he doesn’t mind too much.

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He reaches out to shake my hand. The snake covering his arm creeps me out, but the politeness my grandma branded into me has me reaching out to reciprocate.

“It’s nice to finally meet you.” The way he says it makes me think Harper has been talking about me to him. Like he knows more about me than he should. That creepy feeling settles deeper inside me as his hand takes mine. When our hands meet, one of his fingers slides across my wrist, and I jerk out of his hold. He smirks at me, not the least bit fazed by my behavior.

It’s like he knows he’s making me uneasy, and he likes it.

“I’m gonna get going.” I point towards the train station, making my intention clear.

“I’ll take you. Dropping Harper off anyways,” Nick offers. It wasn’t moments ago that I was ticked Harper didn’t offer me a ride, but now the train sounds so much better than being trapped in a car with this creepy guy.

“But I wanted to be alone with you.” Harper pouts up at Nick, rubbing her hand across his chest. It seems to have no effect on him as he actually bats her hand away like she’s a fly getting on his nerves.

“The train is fine,” I insist, and start to make my way in the direction of the station, but Nick grabs me by the arm in a tight hold. He must have realized he grabbed me too hard, because he immediately loosens his grip. The whole thing has my heart beating out of my chest, and I can feel a tension rise within me like someone’s eyes are on me. Not just Nick’s and Harper’s, but like everyone is watching us. I glance around. No one else is on the street.

“I insist. I want to get to know my girl’s roommate. I’m sure we’ll be seeing a lot more of each other.” I look over at Harper, whose face beams at his words. Lovely. So he plans on being around.

“Okay.” I give in, hating myself a little for not having a bit more of a backbone. Why couldn’t I be one of those badass chicks who said and did what she wanted? My grandma always said I didn’t have it in me to be mean. I’m not sure if that’s a good or a bad thing. Today I’m going with bad, and I want to kick my own manners in the ass.

He releases my arm, and I make my way over to the passenger door before slipping into the back seat and pulling my purse close.

When everyone is settled in, Nick pulls away from the curb, heading towards the bank

“So you worked at the bank long?” I hear him ask, and I pull my eyes from my lap. I thought he was talking to Harper, but his dark cold eyes are trained on me in the rearview mirror.

“About three years now.”

“Haven’t you been there five?” He looks over at Harper.

“Yeah. A little over five years now.”

“And she’s your boss,” he says.

Ouch. I am her boss to a certain degree. I’m the teller supervisor, so it’s my job to watch over all the tellers. Harper can be a little slow at work, and she talks a little too much, but I’ve never had to reprimand her. I actually like that she’s chatty with the

customers; they like that. As long as she isn't trying to date them, I'm okay with it.

A lot of our customers seem to like her. She's actually better at being personable than I am. It's one of the ways I wish I could be more like her. I had secretly hoped when she moved in that she could rub off on me a little, make me come out of my shell a little more. It isn't that I don't like talking to people, I just usually find myself at a loss for words. I think I'm not great at the social cues in a conversation. It's hard for me to make the dialogue bounce back and forth.

"Yeah," she mumbles sadly, not in her normal upbeat manner.

I don't care for the tone of Harper's voice when she utters the word. She might be a giant bitch at times—and actually inspires me to use the same tone from time to time like with the breakfast burrito incident this morning—but I know how that feels, and I don't want her to feel that way. I don't want anyone to feel that way.

"Harper is great. You should see her handle the customers. I wish I could handle them like her. She's a real pro." She turns to look at me like she can't believe what I just said.

My eyes flash back to the mirror, and Nick's eyes are on me again. This time I can't read them, but luckily he pulls them away and back on to the road.

We ride the rest of the way in awkward silence, and when we finally pull up to the bank, I realize I've never been so happy to be at work.

"You open this place?" Nick asks, turning to look at me as we start to get out of the car.

"Today I do," I answer as I pull myself from the car, wanting out as quickly as possible. "Thanks for the ride," I throw over my shoulder, making my way towards

the bank, leaving Harper behind with him. She'll probably want to slobber all over his face. Seeing it the first time was more than enough for me.

I open the bank four times a week, and today is one of my days. Sam and I switch it up. I'm opening today, which means I'll get out early, and he'll be closing up. I get a rare Saturday off this weekend, and I plan to spend it lying around in bed. My only plans include going out with Harper tonight.

It's actually something I've never done. Twenty-two and I've never even seen the inside of a club. I have a feeling it won't really be my thing, but I'm excited to do it anyways. Just to see. Stepping out of my normal routine and opening myself up to the possibility of new things.

I slip my key into the lock and enter the bank. I enter the codes to deactivate the alarms and get started on opening. Harper joins me about ten minutes later with a happy smile plastered across her face.

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“Isn’t he hot?” She wiggles her eyebrows before she starts freshening up her lipstick. The first round, I’m guessing, she left behind on Nick.

“He’s cute.” I bite the inside of my cheek. Cute. I can’t imagine anyone in their life called that Nick guy cute.

Harper laughs at my choice of words, and I can’t help but join her.

“He’s coming with us tonight. Maybe he’ll bring a friend for you.”

“I’m not—”

“Come on. Don’t be such a prude,” she shouts back, cutting off my words.

“I can find a guy on my own.” Maybe. I keep the last word to myself.

“I’ve never seen you with a guy, like, ever. Do you even date?” She eyes me up and down before her blue eyes get big. “Are you a fucking virgin?”

“Hush!” I snap, my face turning red once again.

“Calm down! It’s just us right now. No one’s even here yet.”

Still, I feel embarrassed about the fact that I’m still a virgin at my age. Life’s been busy, and dating and men just haven’t been on my radar.

“Don’t worry, I’m sure we can find someone to pop that thing.” She says it like I’m

some kind of charity case.

Great. The prospect of tonight just keeps getting better and better.

Chapter 4

Sean

I wait around the corner, parked in my Chevelle, watching as Nick pulls out of the bank parking lot. He sees me in the shadows and raises his chin in an indication to follow him. I put the car in drive and follow him a few blocks up before he pulls over. As soon as my wheels stop, I'm out of the car and at his door.

He's standing when I reach him, and I shove him against his Eurotrash Audi.

"Mind telling me what the fuck that was about?" I push his shoulder, and he falls back against his car, raising his hands up.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. Easy, Sparrow. I thought we were on the same team. No need to get your panties in a wad." He's got a stupid grin on his face, like he has no clue why I'm mad. He knows I was watching him earlier, and that's why he loosened his grip on Tessa.

It takes everything in me to keep from beating the shit out of this asshole. "I thought Heavy said she was my target." I need to play it cool, but after seeing him put his hands on my sweet angel, I'm holding on by a thin thread. No part of him should ever touch her. I hated that they were even close enough to breathe the same air. Too much darkness is seeping in on her, and I feel like I'm losing control. This isn't how this was supposed to go. "You trying to fuck that up by scaring off the mark? You saw how she reacted to you," I press, wanting him to stay the fuck away from her.

“Calm down. I wasn’t scaring anyone. For your information, I’ve seen her roommate Harper down at Coco’s a few times. She’s been trying to climb my dick for a while, so I let her. Clingy bitch, though. I had to let her suck me off before I left the parking lot.” He reaches down, rubbing his crotch, and I make a mental note to leave some STD brochures where Harper can find them. “When I found out who she was living with, I thought we could kill two birds with one stone.”

He gives me a cocky smile, like he’s somehow coming in to save the day instead of fucking everything up. And I sure as fuck don’t believe in his little coincidence. “You’re close to screwing us all on this deal, not just the blonde. Do us all a fucking favor and stick to your side of the plan, while I stick to mine. Stay clear of Tessa. She’s not your concern.”

He adjusts his shirt and goes to open his car door. “You’re right, Sparrow, I think we should all stick to what we’re good at. You do your thing with the fat chick, and I’ll take care of the roommate. I don’t mind getting some easy pussy while I wait out these last few days.”

He gets into his car, but before I can walk away, he rolls his window down.

“Just remember, Sparrow. You’re not the only one who likes to watch.” With that, he pulls away from the curb, leaving me standing there in the street.

Clenching my fists, I stomp back to my car and get behind the wheel. I punch the steering wheel and try to get out some of my frustrations, attempting to calm my rage at seeing Nick with Tessa.

Putting the Chevelle in gear, I take off. I need to drive and clear my head before I go and see Tessa. I’m getting in too deep with this shit, and I need some space.

Taking a right, I drive a few blocks up to Sal’s. Pulling in at the back of the building,

I park and go in the back alley entrance. The place is dark, and nobody is here yet because it's before noon.

I walk down the hallway and make my way to the bar. Sal is standing there with his back to me, removing the upside down barstools from the bar top and setting them down.

He's a big bastard at almost seven feet with dark black skin and even darker eyes. He doesn't turn around when I approach, but nothing ever takes him by surprise.

"Didn't think my bird would come see me so soon today." His words are thick with his Cajun accent, a remnant of his Louisiana upbringing.

"I needed to clear my head."

He turns around at my voice, opening his big arms and taking me in for a hug. He's like a father to me, and though I don't get to see him like I should, he always welcomes me home.

Letting me go, he moves over to one of the stools, taking a seat and patting the other one for me to join him. "Who is she?"

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His smile is infectious, and it's enough to shake off my dark mood. I smile right along with him and take the seat next to him.

“She's my Tessa.”

“Does she know it yet?” He raises an eyebrow, and I'm always amazed at what he sees. He knows things before I say them, and he makes me feel like he can read minds.

“Not yet. But there are some complications.”

“There always are. You need help?”

I nod my head a little and tell him what's going on. I tell him about the job and what's going to happen afterwards, knowing that I'll need his help when it comes time to leave. After I've finished telling him everything, he gets up and squeezes my shoulder as he walks away.

Saying goodbye won't be easy.

Looking down at my phone, I see the tracker hasn't moved, still showing Tessa at work. I put my car in gear and make my way back to her bank, feeling a little calmer now. My plans may not be what I had wanted them to be, but they will work. They have to. It's far too late to pull back now that Heavy has locked on to the bank, then on to Tessa. There's no going back, and I will do anything to make sure nothing blows back on her.

It's before lunchtime but a little while after they've opened, so it shouldn't be too crowded. I got the tracker in Tessa's phone after the first time I followed her. I got the call about doing the job, and I started checking out the bank right away. When I saw her at the teller line, I stopped in my tracks and got out of there as fast as I could without drawing attention. She captivated me right away, and I didn't know what to do. I'd never had a reaction to anyone like that before. I felt my heart pounding and need ran through me. It was unexplainable, and I didn't even try to fight it. It was like I was looking for something and didn't even know it until it was right in front of me.

Waiting for her after work that first time was pure hell. I counted the seconds until she left, and then I was careful to hang back as she got on the train. I rode it with her all the way to her apartment, getting off at the same time as her. She was completely oblivious the whole time I stalked her back to her home, and I watched as she went up to her apartment.

That first time I waited until the middle of the night and snuck up the fire escape—like I've been doing every night since then—but that night I opened the window in the living room and went inside. I placed the tracker on her phone and made myself leave before I did anything stupid. Like stand over her bed and watch her sleep.

Tessa works at Trust Bank, which is located in the heart of downtown Chicago. It's not very big, but it just so happens to have contracts with the city and takes in close to a million dollars in cash each day from the surrounding municipalities. What makes Monday so special is that it's their monthly reserve shipment, when they empty the vault of their normal shipment, plus any excess funds the branch deems unnecessary. Armored trucks will show up Monday afternoon to take it to the Federal Reserve, leaving them with a limited amount of cash until the next day's deposits are made.

This equates to about fifteen million dollars bagged up and ready for processing bright and early Monday morning. It's nothing to shake a stick at, but by the time

Heavy takes his cut and divides what's left between his people, I'll only be looking at one or two million. That's not worth a life sentence in a Federal prison.

No, what I'm walking out of that bank with will set me up for life. I've already got a nice little nest egg going, but I want to do this last job and get out. And the man who hired me for this job is willing to pay any price for what's inside that box.

After I park my car, I get out and walk inside. I don't have a bank account here, but from what I know about my Tessa, she's a sucker for someone in need. Her big heart can't seem to help itself—one of the things I love about her.

I walk up to the teller line and wait behind a couple of people. Looking around, I see Tessa on the end, smiling shyly at a male customer she's helping.

Suddenly, I find myself angry that she's giving her smiles to someone else. It's insane because she doesn't know who I am, but her smiles are mine. I don't want those precious glances directed at anyone but me.

I clench my fists and try to control myself as I take a step forward, waiting for my turn. Looking down the teller line, I see there are four more people besides my Tessa working up front, all of whom I've researched and know almost everything about.

"I can help you right here, sir." I look over to see Harper smiling brightly at me, raising her eyebrows in invitation. I'm sure to anyone else she looks friendly, but I see the way she's leering at me. I don't want any part of it.

"No, thanks. I'm waiting on her." I point down to Tessa, who's finishing up with a customer.

Harper looks at Tessa, and her eyes bug out like she can't believe who I'm talking about. Turning back to me, she flashes her fake smile and tries again. "Are you sure,

honey? I'd be more than happy to take care of you."

This time she leans down a little, showing me some of her cleavage, and I find it hard not to laugh. Instead I just shake my head and watch Tessa as I wait.

I can see she overheard our conversation as her cheeks turn a beautiful shade of pink. She's embarrassed by my wanting her, but I can't imagine why. Her body is thick and curvy and made to take a man in every way. I'd roll over if she showed me her cleavage.

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The woman behind me in line steps around me to go to Harper. Much to Harper's dismay.

Finally, Tessa's customer is finished and walks away. Taking a step forward, I'm ready to finally talk to my angel.

Chapter 5

Sean

"May I help you, sir?"

In those five words, I'm gone. She's not even looking at me with those liquid gold eyes, and I'm already under her spell. She fidgets with a piece of paper, looking anywhere but at me, her creamy pale cheeks burning with shyness, making the light freckles on her cheeks and nose stand out even more. I never knew freckles could turn a man on but hers do.

My cock is harder than it's ever been in my life, and I haven't even touched her. I want to throw myself across the counter and bury my face in her neck while I rub my body against hers. It's some kind of animal instinct inside me that needs to get inside her body and make her mine.

"Yes, I saw you were the teller supervisor, so I thought maybe I should come directly to you, Tessa." I indicate to her name and title on the nameplate sitting next to her.

Her eyes slide up to mine, and she nods her head slightly. If she doesn't feel this

intense pull between us, I don't know what I'll do. I assume everyone within a ten-mile radius is getting the heat from this sexual tension.

I lick my lips a little, and her eyes go to my mouth, watching my tongue come out and run along the edge of my teeth. I want her to see my tongue and think about it between her thighs, licking her cunt and fucking her with it. I want her pussy to dampen right now because of what she sees me doing, because I want her needy and wet when she's around me. Just like I'm hard as a goddamn steel rod right now.

"I'd like some information about opening a safety deposit box and wanted to know if you could show me what you have to offer."

I feel my teeth biting down on my bottom lip, thinking about just exactly what she could offer me. My eyes trail down her delicate neck, down to her big tits straining against her dress. She's not showing much cleavage—she always dresses appropriately for work. I like that about her. That I'm the only one who will get to see her body. That it's for my eyes only. That she keeps it tucked away just for me. But her body can't be denied, and her sexy curves are still coming through.

"Yes, sir, I can help you with that, Mr....?"

"Sparrow. Sean Sparrow. Please call me Sean."

She smiles shyly at me as she clicks on her computer to pull up some information. I can see her cheeks continue to burn as she tries to sneak glances at me.

"I'm looking for a new bank as well. Perhaps you can give me some information on that, too."

"I'd be happy to." She hands me a pamphlet and goes over the safety deposit box information.

She's very thorough and professional, but I couldn't tell you a single word she said. I'm completely entranced by her mouth and the fact that she's giving me her undivided attention. I'm a selfish asshole who wants her focus to only be on me, and I'm not apologizing for it. Her body moves as she talks and she makes hand gestures to punctuate her speech. It makes me smile as I think about tying her hands to my headboard and making her beg me to fuck her. I'd sink deep inside her sweet cunt, giving her what she wants and taking all her pleasure for myself. Mine alone.

"So what do you think?" Tessa says, blinking up at me.

"Absolutely," I agree, having no idea what she said. But I'll do it. Whatever she asked.

"Great. Let me show you to our vault, so you can pick the size you want and possibly determine the location from what we have available."

I blink a couple of times, completely captivated by her golden eyes as I try to come back to reality.

I watch as Tessa takes her keys for the vault and walks to the end of the teller line. I walk in the same direction she's headed, not wanting to separate us. I want her as close to me as possible at all times.

She comes out from behind the little door and looks down at her feet as she walks past me across the lobby to the vault. I stand close to her as she fiddles with her keys, trying to find the right one to open the gate.

"It's always the one you least suspect," I whisper, leaning in even closer to her. I see a shiver roll down her spine as chill bumps break out across her neck. She's affected by me, and I want to take advantage of it. "The keys, I mean. It's never the one you think it's going to be." My voice is deep and laced with all the dirty fantasies playing

out in my head.

She looks over her shoulder at me, her eyes locking with mine. I can almost hear her heartbeat as she looks at me, the sexual tension between us thick like caramel. So sweet and sticky, and what I'm willing to bet the inside of her panties would taste like right now.

Licking her lips, she leans in a little to me, and I want nothing more than to take her right here, right now.

"Tessa, you need some help?" Harper's shrill voice echoes through the lobby, breaking the spell. Tessa blinks and takes a step back.

I watch as she grabs the right key, opens the door, and walks through. I follow behind her, entering the first part of the vault as she closes and locks the gate behind us.

This vault has a room for customers to walk in and access their safety deposit boxes, then another room beyond this one which holds all the cash. That room is accessed by another key, and then the cash is locked in smaller vaults that require key and combinations. The inner vault isn't my concern. Just getting into this room is.

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She walks over to a drawer and removes another set of keys. These are to help open the safety deposit boxes. Theoretically, if you're an average everyday customer, you have your own personal key to your box, and the bank has another one to help you open it. So when you need to access your box, not only do you need your key, but you need theirs, too.

The reason my client can't access this box is because he isn't allowed back in the country, and the box is registered to a woman. He doesn't trust this job to anyone but me, and I'd have a hard time passing as anything close to a female.

"Okay, here we are." Tessa indicates around the room, showing me the boxes. "What size?"

"Big."

Her cheeks flush again, and I can't help my wicked grin.

She turns, giving me her back as she fiddles with the keys again. I step closer to her until we are only inches apart.

"How big?" she whispers, not looking up and not turning around.

"Very big," I say, my breath against her gorgeous auburn locks. "I'm sure you have something that can hold me, though. Right?"

She nods her head just slightly, and I can hear the hitch in her breath.

“What do you have for me, Tessa?” I press against her, feeling her heat through my clothes. I want to grab her arms and grind my aching cock against her, but people could walk by and see. Her pleasure is for my eyes only, and I won’t have her wanton and willing in public. But I will let her know that I want her, and I’m not taking no for an answer. One way or another, she will be mine; she’ll know how much I want her.

“Umm.” She looks up at the boxes in front of her, the keys jingling in her shaking hand. “I...have several, um, spaces available.”

“I bet you do, beautiful girl. Have dinner with me.” She turns around suddenly, backing up against the boxes. I take a step forward, following her retreat, not wanting that space between us. This is the first time I’ve been this close to her, and I don’t want to break that contact so soon.

“I can’t.” She looks around, her golden eyes searching for an excuse, but I’m not having it. I know she’s shy and I’ll have to push a little.

“And why is that?” I’m within a half an inch of her body, looking down on her as she tries to think of a lie.

“We aren’t allowed to do that with customers.” She says it like it’s the lifeline she’s been seeking. But I can see a little disappointment in her eyes, too.

“Good thing I’m not a customer. Give me your number.” I pull out my phone and wait as she looks up at me with her liquid-gold eyes. They shoot through me and straight down to my cock. I’m having a hard time containing it, being this close to her, but I keep telling it to be patient.

After another minute of hesitation, she takes a breath and rattles off her number. I have it programmed already, but I make a show of entering it in anyway.

“So, dinner?” I lean in, close enough feel her breath against my mouth as her chest rises and falls rapidly. Being this close, I can see the freckles across her nose even better, despite her trying to hide them with make-up. I want to wipe it off her face so that I can see every single one of them.

“Tessa, we need you for a change order!” Harper shouts across the lobby, once again breaking our spell.

“Coming.” The word is breathy as it escapes her mouth, and I wonder how true that is.

“Not yet. But soon,” I whisper, and reluctantly move out of her way.

She walks on shaky legs, putting the box keys back in the drawer and unlocking the gate. I hold it open as I exit, and she follows me, closing and locking the gate behind her.

I can tell she’s frazzled by our encounter, and it makes me smile. I can only imagine what she’s going to be like after I fuck her for the first time.

“Thank you, Tessa.”

She blushes brightly again, looking down at her boots.

“You’re welcome, Sean.”

“I’ll talk to you soon.”

She nods and scurries away from me as if she’s running for her life. Maybe she should, but I won’t let her.

Walking out of the bank, I get behind the wheel of my Chevelle and send her a text. No need to play hard to get. I want her, and I want her now.

Me: So, where am I picking you up?

Chapter 6

Tessa

I can't believe that just happened. I can still feel the burn on my cheeks from the blush I sported the entire time I was talking to him. I'm sure it's still there for everyone to see. My heart's beating so loudly, I'm sure Harper can hear it.

"What was that?" she asks, her eyes on Sean's back as he exits the bank. I can't seem to pull my eyes away either.

"I..." I'm not sure what to tell her. It's against the rules to date someone who banks with us, but he doesn't. Not yet, anyways.

"Total player written all over him." She says it like she's disgusted. At least he doesn't look like he might randomly stab someone like her new guy, Nick, and he also didn't give me the creeps, that's for sure. He gave me a feeling I've never felt before. Something I've only read about in books.

Lust.

It rushed through my body like nothing I'd ever felt before. I could barely speak with all of the heat boiling up inside me.

But sadly, I had the same feelings about him being a player. He came on so strong, but still I relished in it. No one ever hits on me. They always go straight for Harper.

He might be a player, but I still liked the attention, and I'm not sure what that says about me.

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“Why do you say that?” I want to know why she got that vibe, too. He was just so freaking perfect. When I first saw him, I could hardly even look at him. He has this whole mix of sweet guy/bad boy going on, and I’m not sure if those two things can mix together. Either way, he pulled it off.

His tattoos ran up both arms in a mix of dark blues, reds, and black. Some were even poking out of the top of the white T-shirt he was wearing. The material stretched tight across his broad chest, making him look like the epitome of a bad boy, but his face was far from that. When my eyes finally took in his features, he looked kind. His dark beard was just long enough to make me want to feel how soft it was. His brown eyes were swirled with dark green, and the way they looked at me was like nothing I’d ever experienced before. His hair was a little long on top, and he looked like he just rolled out of bed, but in a sexy-as-hell kind of way. There was just something about him, even with his hulk-like size. I felt the need to snuggle into him. It was as if everything I felt was in contrast to what I should be feeling. Instead of his size and forward behavior intimidating me, I felt as if I would be safe with him.

When he pressed into my back, he made me feel feminine against him. His big body engulfed mine, making me feel small—something I didn’t feel very often. It was intoxicating. During the whole experience, I felt like I was under some kind of spell, and I want that feeling again.

“I don’t mean to sound like a bitch...but...” She bites her lip, like she never says bitchy stuff, which is laughable. “He kind of targeted you. Like you were easy pickings.” She looks almost sorry that she had to deliver the news, but I can see the jealousy in her eyes. She’s pissed he didn’t go for her.

I feel my nose burn at her words. Maybe I looked like I was an easy target, but why did I find that I was still happy that he picked me over her? Even if he was just looking for sex.

“Sorry, but it’s the truth.” She squeezes my shoulder, like she is trying to reassure me, before she walks back to her spot at the front counter.

I’m standing back at my computer when I look down and see my phone light up. My heart actually jumps. He wouldn’t be texting me already, would he? I thought you were supposed to wait, like, a day or two. It’s a written dating rule or something, right? When I see it’s from an unknown number, I bite my lip to stop from smiling. Looking over, I make sure Harper isn’t watching at me, because I don’t want her to know what I’m doing. She already gave me her two cents, and I don’t think I could take another two.

I pick up my phone, secretly checking it so no one can see. I don’t know why but I’m so nervous yet excited at the same time.

Sean: So, where am I picking you up?

Me: I’m not sure this is a good idea.

Sean: Am I going to have to come back in there and prove to you otherwise?

Me: I don’t even know you. I can’t just go out with you.

Sean: Isn’t that what dating is for?

He’s right, but I’ve never done this before, and I don’t want him to know that. I probably already seem like a freaking prude. I mull over my response, but he comes back faster.

Sean: Give me one dinner.

Maybe I should just give it to him straight. If it scares him away, then it's for the best.

Me: I've never done this before.

I hold my breath, waiting for his response.

Sean: Had dinner? I find that hard to believe.

I put the phone back down on the counter. I know he probably didn't mean it the way I'm thinking. Had dinner? I find that hard to believe. I'm undoubtedly being sensitive, but it still burns. I'm clearly not up for dating if something so simple can make me feel like shit. This man has barely said three words to me and I'm already feeling heartbreak.

He could shatter me.

Me: I can't do this.

I send the text and just stare at my phone. Minutes tick by, each one seeming heavier than the last, with no response.

I guess that was that. No fight to make me change my mind. I need to get some air.

"I'm going to lunch," I mutter to Harper, who's playing on the computer. The bank has been pretty dead today. Maybe when I get back I can get caught up on some paperwork and get my mind off this Sean guy. How I got so wrapped up so fast, I'll never understand.

I try to tell myself it's better this way. I just dodged a major bullet.

“K. I’ll go when you get back.”

I go into my office, grabbing my purse from the drawer inside my desk before checking in with a few other people. I slip out the door. I don’t make it two blocks in the direction of my favorite bakery, Muffin Tops, before I’m pushed up against the side of a building.

Sean.

His mouth is on mine before I can even take in what’s happening. His hands grip my hips in a firm hold, making me gasp, and he steals the opportunity to push his tongue into my mouth. I thought the kiss would be rough and fast with the way he pressed me against the wall, but it’s sweet and soft.

He’s taking his time, giving me slow lazy strokes of his tongue. It’s as if he’s savoring my taste, and I let him. I don’t feel as if I’m really kissing him back. I’m just enjoying the warmth of his lips on mine as I come alive inside. I’ve never felt such need in my life.

When he nibbles my bottom lip, desire shoots through my whole body, making me want more. I press myself into him, wanting to make the kiss deeper, but just as I do, he pulls away, resting his forehead against mine. His chest rises and falls, and I feel his warm breath against my lips.

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“Tell me what I did that scared you off so I don’t do it again.” His eyes are squeezed shut, like he’s trying to get himself under control. His words catch me off guard because I’m still riding the high of my first kiss, and I can barely make out what he’s asking.

“What?” I gasp breathlessly. His eyes pop open, looking into mine. This time they seem more green than brown.

“Fuck. You look good like this.” He moves his body, shielding me more, like he doesn’t want anyone to see me. I have to strain to look up at him. It’s easy for him to cover me with his broad body. I totally forgot we’re on a busy Chicago street in the middle of the day. “Why’d you back off from me?”

“I didn’t. I’m against a wall. I can’t move.” Wait. Did he say I looked good?

“I mean when I was texting you. My little fox is already trying to give me the slip? You’ll have to be quicker than that.” He smirks at me, showing me his perfectly white teeth. How does he do that? Look all badass with his tattooed arms and big freaking body caging me in, but then his eyes go all soft and he flashes that smile, making him look so...I don’t even have a word for it.

“You going to answer me, babe, or you going to keep staring at my mouth? Because if it’s the mouth, we’ve got to get out of here. I’m not having everyone look at you when I get my hands back on you.”

Jesus. I don’t know what to say to that. I’m in way over my head, and I know it. I’m not sure how I’ve not melted into a pile of goo at this point, but I know my face is

cherry red.

“I’m not little.” He looks at me like he doesn’t get what I’m saying. “You called me a little fox. I’m not little, and of course I’ve had dinner before.” I indicate to my body, letting him get my meaning.

One of his hands comes up to my cheek, his thumb brushing along my skin. “You look little to me.”

“Everything is probably little to you,” I snap, something I don’t normally do. I don’t lash out at people, and I immediately feel like a jerkface for saying it.

“Even when you’re feisty, you’re still cute as a fucking button.” He lets out a chuckle. “You’ve even got me saying shit like ‘cute as a button.’” He seems to like that, because he’s full-on smiling now, and I can’t help but return one.

“Tell me you’ll go to dinner with me, or I’ll drop down to my knees right here on the busy street and beg. You’ve already got me wrapped around your finger. No need to rub it in my face.”

“You wouldn’t!” No way he would. I can’t see a man like him on his knees.

“You fail to see what I wouldn’t do for you, little fox. Might as well show you.” He goes to drop to his knees, but I grab him to stop his movements. My face is already flushed, and I would probably burst with embarrassment if he really did it.

“Okay. I’ll go.”

Chapter 7

Sean

I ended up walking with Tessa to the place she was headed to for lunch. She could hardly look at me the whole way, but I did make her hold my hand. I could feel her nervous twitches as we walked, but I didn't let go. I wanted anyone watching to know she was mine. I'm sure we looked a little odd together. Me with my tattoos and rough facial hair and her looking like a prim and proper angel. I didn't want anyone thinking she isn't taken. Because she is.

When we went to order at the counter I could see her blush again but I didn't understand why. I ordered four times what she did. I even made sure she got a chocolate chip cookie when she said she didn't want it. Who doesn't want a chocolate chip cookie?

After we got our orders, I walked her back to work. She said she needed to get some work done and would just eat there. I made sure to tell her that our quick lunch didn't count as a date, and that got me a genuine smile from her, which went all the way to her eyes.

Standing just inches from her, I touched her bottom lip with my thumb, thinking about how sweet her kiss was and what it did to me.

I've never been so consumed by someone before. I don't even know the last time I looked at a woman. That's how I knew she was different. She called to me from the very beginning. She was meant to be mine. I'd been waiting for her. Like a little gift for the hell I had to work my way through growing up. Now I got this angel and she and I will make a family together, like I've always desired. We just have to make it through one last hell.

She's so ingrained inside my mind that she's my only memory of anything good and perfect. My need is so far beyond comprehension, I don't think I could describe to her exactly why it is I crave her, even if she asked me to. I just need to make her crave me, too. Dig myself deep into her, so when all the truths come to light, I'll be in

too deep for her to try and push me away.

I kiss her lips lightly, and her blush returns to her cheeks. I'm ripped in two as I watch her walk back inside the bank. Not having her within reach is starting to become a problem. Now that I know what she tastes like, feels like. The reality was tenfold what my fantasies were.

When I get back in my Chevelle, I try to take a few deep breaths to keep from rushing back into the bank and carrying her out. I'm inches away from calling this whole thing off, but I keep cool, knowing that if I stick to the plan, everything will work out.

It's too late now. She would probably go run to the police, and I could never have her. She wouldn't believe a word of what I would tell her. And I can't just walk away, because Heavy would send in someone else.

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The plan is in motion, and it will be perfect. It has to be or I'll lose everything.

Leaving the bank, I head over to Heavy's strip club. It shouldn't be too bad on a Friday during the day, but with the way he runs his shit, I'm sure it will be just as gross.

Heavy texted me this morning after my incident with Nick. No doubt he wants to talk about it. He says this meeting is for everyone to finalize plans for Monday morning, but it's directed at me. He wants to make sure I've secured Tessa, while making sure I'm not a threat.

Heavy isn't dumb; he knows something is going on, but I don't think he's figured out what my real goal is for this job.

I send a text to Tessa as I pull up to the front of the club.

Me: My cookie wasn't half as sweet as your lips.

Tessa: Thank you for getting me one, but I'll have to take your word for it.

Me: Trust me, little fox.

Tessa: Stop making me blush!

Me: Never. Get back to work, and think about where I'm taking you tonight.

I slip my phone into my jeans and try to wipe the smile off my face as I get out of the

car and head into the club.

I walk through the double doors and make my way past the front bar and beyond the stage. There are a few girls dancing for a couple of guys. The loud music thumping through the room makes a knot form in my stomach, and I just keep reminding myself, only a few more days.

As I open the door to the private room, I see Heavy sitting in one of the armchairs, getting sucked off by one of the strippers. Jesus, can I walk in here once without someone's dick out?

Two of his men are tag-teaming another dancer in the back corner, while two more play cards off to the side like nothing is happening.

I stand there and cross my arms, waiting for this to end so we can get to business. At least this made the hard-on I'd had in my jeans since being with Tessa finally go away.

As I scan the room, I see the bathroom door is open. Nick walks out, rubbing his nose, trying to wipe away the white powder. He looks at me and leers. He's jealous of me and the fact that I don't have to do any of this shit to do what I do. I may be a criminal, but I don't have to be a piece of shit. Somehow the concept of breaking the law and still being somewhat a decent human being is incomprehensible to him.

I raise my chin, letting him know I'm here and I'm waiting. Just then, Heavy grunts and holds the stripper's head back while he cums on her face. The sight of his tiny dick getting off is embarrassing, but for some reason, he thinks this makes him look powerful.

Needing to look away, I turn my body around and pull out my phone. A text from Tessa makes me warm inside and washes away some of the dirty filth surrounding

me. When I read her text, though, my heart drops a little.

Tessa: I can't tonight. I'm sorry. I have plans already and can't break them. Tomorrow?

Me: You know how to keep a guy begging. You working tomorrow?

Tessa: Nope. Off all day.

Me: Then I want you for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

“That fat chick playing hard to get?”

I turn around to see Nick leaning against the table as everybody finishes up with the strippers and sends them out of the room. He didn't see my messages, so he must just assume she turned me down like she turned him down. I think it burns him that Tessa would never give him the time of day. He'll take any hit at her to make himself feel better.

I don't respond; I just stare him down. It's the fool in the room who speaks most often, and I'm going to let Nick prove to the group just what a fucking idiot he is. I take a seat at the table next to the guys playing cards and wait for Heavy to join us.

“It's okay if she turned you down, Sparrow. Girl like that doesn't know how to act when someone talks to her. Bet that pussy hasn't even had a good fucking yet.”

My hands are resting on my legs, and I lean back in my chair, as cool as I could possibly be. Inside is another story, though. Inside, I'm ripping his flesh from his bones, and his screams are a beautiful melody to my ears. But on the outside, I don't so much as flinch as he talks about my girl. He knows my warning earlier was good, but I'm not stupid enough to make a move with five of his guys in the room willing to

take his back. Even if they know he's wrong, they wouldn't take my side.

“Makes my dick hard just thinking about it. Hey, maybe I'll offer to fuck her tonight when we're out for drinks. Break her in a little bit for you.”

He rubs his hand over his crotch and gives me a disgusting smirk.

Placing my hand on the table in front of me, I lean forward on my forearms and let out a little laugh. It's bitter and clipped, but he's pissed I'm mocking him.

“Really, Nick? Because from what I heard from her friend, she said all that shit you're putting up your nose is causing a few problems in the bedroom.” I have no idea if I'm right, but by the look on his face, and the laughter through the room, I've hit my target.

Nick is embarrassed in front of his crew, and I can see how angry that makes him. His pride is his weakness, and it's going to be his downfall. He reaches into his jacket—for a weapon, I assume— but I just lean back in my chair, smiling, as Heavy approaches us and takes the head of the table.

“Sit down, Nick. We've got business.”

Heavy looks me over and then looks at Nick, and I see that he decides to go ahead and not bring up the situation earlier today, no doubt thinking that his side of the story was probably less than truthful.

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I just keep still and sit back, letting the rage boil inside me. Before this is all over, I'm going to take care of Nick. That little motherfucker doesn't get to talk about my girl like that and live.

Heavy rolls out the blueprint I provided him of the bank, and we go over the plan for Monday once more. There are a couple of last-minute changes, but nothing on my end to worry about.

We spend the next few hours checking and rechecking the plan.

What most petty criminals don't understand is that a plan to break the law is the easy part. Anybody can walk into a bank and hold it up. It's what happens after that, that's where the work begins. These fuckers have no clue. This is how you get caught, worrying about the details on how to get in but never thinking about getting away and what comes after. They have every second of every minute of this job planned out until the money is in hand. Then they've sort of got an exit strategy. It goes beyond that. We have to study this further and map out all possibilities of things going wrong.

I'm sitting back and listening to all of it, knowing that once I've secured my package, step two commences.

After hours have gone by, I check my watch and see that Tessa should home by now. I pull out my phone and look at her tracker movements, and I see it's moving away from her house.

My heart starts to beat faster, but I can't just get up and bolt out of the room.

“Sparrow.” Heavy says my name like he’s said it a few times, and I turn my eyes to him. “We keeping you from something?”

Slipping my phone back into my jeans, I lean back in my seat and wait for him to continue. I’m going to kill all these cocksuckers by the time this job is done.

Chapter 8

Tessa

I run my fingers across my lips for the twentieth time since lunch. With every touch I can’t help but smile. I keep licking them like there still might be a trace of him left to taste. Who knew a kiss could be so—

“Earth to Tessa.” Harper snaps her fingers in front of my face, bringing me back to work. I feel like I’ve gotten nothing done today because all I’ve done is think about the kiss over and over again. Not to mention how I keep picking up my phone to read the text messages, waiting for another to arrive.

“What?” I bite out, agitated that she ripped me from my daydreaming. She eyes me for a second, probably a little taken aback by my tone, but I can’t seem to care this time. Nope. I’m on a kiss high, and that’s where I want to stay.

“It’s time to go.”

I glance over at the clock on the wall and see it’s already a little after four. “Oh, let me grab my stuff.” I hop off the high-top chair and smooth my dress before grabbing what I was working on. “Train?” I ask, wondering if she has a ride with her new guy. I’m hoping I don’t get offered another ride. I’d rather take the train alone, even if it takes me a lot longer to get home.

“Yep. Nick is just going to meet us there tonight.” She says it in a dreamy voice, making me wonder if I’d talk about Sean in the same manner.

“Just let me drop this off and grab my stuff.” I pick up my cookie and phone to take with me, but Harper grabs the cookie from my hand, almost making me drop the pile of paper I have stacked in my arms.

“Can I have this?” She starts unwrapping it from the plastic before she even finishes the question. “I didn’t get to go to lunch, and besides you don’t really need it.” The way she says it really makes my gut clench, breaking some of the kiss spell I’d been under.

I want to smack it out of her hand just for the comment, but I also know she didn’t get a chance to take a lunch break. By the time I’d gotten back, we had a rush come through. By then it was already three, so Harper said she’d just skip it. I’m not sure if it was because she was being nice or the fact that a suit comes in every Friday mid-afternoon who she likes to flirt with. Either way, I know she didn’t get to eat.

“Whatever,” I mumble, before turning to head to my office, wrapping up what I need to before grabbing my stuff.

Checking my phone again, I debate a response.

Sean: Then I want you for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to respond. He wants to hang out with me all day, and that makes more butterflies take flight in my stomach. They’ve been flying around since Sean walked into the bank today. Aren’t dates supposed to happen at night, and then you wait a day or two before you do it again?

It seems like our date was set, but he didn’t say anything after that. I don’t want to

give a simple Okay. I want to engage him in conversation. I want to keep texting him.

Me: Sounds perfect. I can always cook if you like, or we can go out.

I send the text and slide the phone into my purse before making my way back to the front of the bank where Harper is waiting for me.

“Let’s do this.” Harper does a little shuffle of her hips. “Let’s stop and get a bottle of wine or something on the way home to drink while we get ready.”

When we finally make it home with a bottle of wine in hand, Harper grabs some glasses and pours each of us a drink.

I pull my phone out again and check the messages, but nothing new has come in.

“Why do you keep checking your phone? That’s like the tenth time now.” She sounds a little annoyed but I don’t know why. She keeps doing the same thing with her phone. Maybe it’s because I don’t normally even bother with my phone, but today I can barely let it out of my hands. This feeling is exciting, but also freaking scary. I don’t like how gone I already am. It’s as if at any moment a rug could be pulled out from under me.

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I just shrug, not wanting to tell her about Sean. She already gave me a serving of advice, and I don't want another helping of it. Or maybe I don't want to hear the truth. I want to stay in this dreamy little bubble of the sweet hot guy chasing after me for as long as I can, whether it's real or not.

Me: I'm really okay with whichever you want to do.

I try again, willing him to text me back.

"You jump in the shower first."

I grab my wine from off the counter and take a sip. I don't like the taste. I've never been a fan of alcohol of any kind. It all tastes gross to me, but Harper seems to enjoy it, chugging her glass and pouring another.

"Hop to it if you want me to style you up. I want to get there earlier to get a table."

"Okay, Okay." Taking my wine with me, I head to the shower, making quick work so Harper can dress me up.

When I get out, I check my phone again. Nothing.

Me: Do you need my address?

Jesus. I sent three messages in a row. Is that like pathetic or something? Needy? I have no idea what I'm doing here. Grr. I drop my phone and concentrate on brushing and blow-drying my hair. I don't want to think about it anymore.

But I have no self-control, and I pick up my phone again just as Harper is coming out of the bathroom. Is this what girlfriends do? They talk about boys. Well, men, I guess. Sean is so far from a boy it's almost laughable.

"He's not texting me back."

"Who?" Harper drops her towel so she's standing naked in front of me while she pulls her hair down from her ponytail and starts brushing it out. I feel awkward standing here with her naked, but if I had a body like hers, I'd probably walk around naked, too.

"The guy from the bank," I confess a little sheepishly, like she's my mom and I'm going to get in trouble.

"I thought we talked about that. Player. You can't handle someone like him."

"But," I try to protest, but she cuts me off.

"He's probably got his dick deep in some other snatch, and he'll come a-calling when he's done with her and ready for the next."

I cringe at her words. Dick deep. Jesus. Even worse, jealousy shoots through me, making me tense. That's not good.

She actually looks at me like she feels a little bad. "Trust me, I know the type."

Sadly, her words do nothing to make me feel better because I believe her. She does know the type. She's had them coming in and out of here since she moved in.

"Unless that's what you're looking for? Just a little fun." She wiggles her eyebrows.

Could I just do this for fun? No. I definitely couldn't. Sean seems like that kind of man who would leave me devastated. A man no one else could ever live up to.

"He was so sweet." I can't stop myself from trying again. Standing up for him. There was just something there. I felt it. The way he touched me, pulled me close, like he couldn't get enough of me. I felt wanted for the first time in a long time. Someone had chosen me. No one ever chooses me. My parents didn't want me, so I was dropped on my grandma. She had no choice but to take me.

"They all are. That's how they get into your pants. You think he can be an asshole and then you'll suck his cock? No. The worst ones are the sweet ones. They make you think they're different, but they're gone just as quick as the rest of them."

With that, she walks out of my room, only to return a few minutes later with a make-up bag and a robe on. I'm still looking at my phone pathetically when Harper grabs it from my hands.

"Stop. Don't be a Debbie downer. I want to go out and have fun. Dance, get drunk, and then get laid. That's the plan."

I don't try to snatch the phone back. I need to stop obsessing.

"Don't respond to any of his texts if he texts you back tonight. You'll seem easy. Text him back tomorrow. If he even texts back. Hell, I'd wait till Monday. Make it seem like you were super busy all weekend having fun."

Her reasoning doesn't seem half bad. Not like I have anything to compare this to. I just had my first kiss today, and I'm falling all over the guy. She knows more about dating than I do, but I wonder if she ever even follows her own advice. She goes through men faster than I thought possible, but maybe that's what she wants.

“Now. Let’s get you dressed up and make you forget all about Sean.”

I pick up my glass of wine and shoot it back. It burns going down, but the act makes a wicked smile spread across Harper’s lips.

“Do me up,” I tell her, already feeling a smidge better. I’m going to go out and try to have a good time. Whether I want to or not. One thing is for sure, though, I’m not going to check my phone again.

Chapter 9

Sean

The second we are finally finished at the club, I’m out of my chair and out the door. I don’t wait around to hear what gets said about me. I’ve got somewhere to be, and that’s with my girl, making sure she is okay. I hate when I don’t have eyes on her. It makes me feel uneasy.

Nick gets up the same time I do, exiting the club and going to his car. I wait for just a second for him to leave, not wanting him following me.

I kept feeling my phone vibrate with incoming text messages throughout the meeting, but I couldn’t check them. Too many eyes were on me, and I’d already had enough attention brought to me today thanks to Nick. I needed to keep my head down and stick to the plan, and that meant paying attention and staying cool.

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After Nick is long gone, I walk over to my car. When I get in, I crank it up and throw it in gear. I need to be a good distance away from eyes before I check where Tessa is.

Once I'm a few blocks from the club and see I don't have a tail, I pull over and check her messages. I see I missed a few and then they stopped. I text back immediately, not wanting her to think I was ignoring her.

Me: Hey, little fox. Sorry. I had a meeting that ran late. What are you up to?

I wait to see if she reads the text message, but it just sits there, delivered, and I think I should try again.

Me: I want to spend all day together, so send me your address. If you'd cook for me, that would be great, but I would also like to take you out as well since we have the time.

I wait a few more seconds after it's sent before checking her tracker. But I'm losing my patience.

I grit my teeth, my jaw nearly cracking when I see Tessa's at Coco's. It's the club Nick goes to a lot and where he said he met Harper a few times before. That place is crawling with trashy guys looking to get sucked off at the tables and fucked on the dance floor. I'm sure it looks nice with all the leather seats and chandeliers, but it's as seedy as they come.

I can't figure out what in the fuck my girl is doing there.

Me: Tessa, where are you?

Me: Are you okay?

Me: Tell me you're alright. I'm worried.

Finally, the messages all pop up as 'read', and I wait while the little bubbles tell me she's typing.

Tessa: Fuck off, asshole. She's busy.

Me: Who is this? I want to talk to Tessa.

Tessa: Sorry, Sean. Her mouth is occupied ;)

My foot is on the gas and my tires are screeching before I've read the last word. I don't know who's got her phone or what kind of trouble she's in, but I'm on my way to her. I don't like that my one way to track her is in someone else's hand. I wanted to wait and give her a chance to ask me to meet her out, or for her to tell me where she is. That had been my plan when I found out she already had stuff going on tonight. I don't know how I'll explain the fact that I knew exactly where she was, but I'll figure it out. What's most important is making sure my girl is okay. It's all that matters at this moment. Everything else can go fuck itself.

I won't have her separated from me like this again. The pain and panic running through my chest right now has my adrenaline pumping and my anger on edge. I'm ready to rip someone's throat out, but I'm worried something is wrong with my girl.

The drive should take about twenty minutes, but it's Friday night in downtown Chicago, and I'm having a hard time getting around the traffic. I'm constantly checking my phone for more texts and switching between that and her tracker to see

if she's moved.

I finally find a break in traffic and pull up outside the front of the club. The valet comes around to take my keys, but I don't hand them over. I just give the kid a hard stare and he steps away. The head bouncer comes over as I step up on the curb, and he holds his hand up to the kid.

"Sparrow."

"Oak." I nod to him as he lets me pass, leaving my car exactly where I parked it. He and I go way back, and if I'm pulling up outside this club, it's for a good goddamn reason. I don't hang at places like this unless I have to, usually if I'm working a job or con.

Just as I reach the door, it's pulled open for me and I walk straight into the club. Oak is by my side now, and I tell him what I need.

"I'm looking for my girl. Redhead, curvy, name's Tessa. She's here with a regular, her name's Harper." He looks around for a second and then points across the dance floor. I spot her in half a second, something pulling me to her. Moving towards Tessa, I toss a thanks over my shoulder to Oak and make my way around to her table on the other side of the club.

There's a sea of people here, and it's loud as fuck, but I don't take my eyes off my girl.

She's leaning back in the booth, the small table in front of her littered with empty glasses. Her head is resting on the back of the bench, her dark auburn hair piled up, revealing her neck. Even from across the room, I can see she's got a ton of make-up on. Jesus, has she been crying? It looks like the dark black around her eyes has run down her cheeks a little. As I get closer, I can see she's wearing something strapless,

but her lower half is covered by the table. I grit my jaw tighter when I see the amount of cleavage she's showing. No one should get to see that but me. I'm ready to stab out every eye that so much as looks her way. That is only for me to see, and I know who came up with the outfit.

As I get even closer, I look around her table and see Nick is there. Clenching my fists, I continue to push through the crowd, trying to get to them, pushing off anyone who tries to grab for me. It looks like just the two of them are at the table, and I see him leering at her. Just as I approach, I see hands come up around his waist from under the table and realize that must be Harper under there.

I don't want to scare Tessa, but I need her out of here, and I won't negotiate. She turns her fuzzy eyes to mine, and I see the moment she realizes it's me. The shock is clear on her face.

I pull off my leather jacket and lean down to help her put it on. I don't say a word to her, and she doesn't fight me.

I help her up out of the booth just as Harper comes up from under the table. Nick looks at me, and if I didn't have Tessa in my arms, I'd fucking shoot him dead.

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“Hey, where are you going with her? We were having fun!” Harper’s words are slurred, and I can tell she’s just as drunk as Tessa.

“Yeah, stay awhile. We could all share.” Nick wraps his arms around Harper as his eyes roam over my Tessa, showing that all the offhanded comments he’s been making about her are bullshit. He wants her. I can’t blame him, but it doesn’t mean I won’t stab him in the throat if he tries to have any part of her. And I do mean any.

If I have to choose between killing him in the middle of a club and getting Tessa out of here, I’m taking care of my girl first. I can kill him later. And as much as I don’t like Harper, I don’t want to leave her here with him. I know if something happened to her, it would rip up my girl’s soft heart.

I can see his words about getting at Tessa hit Harper harder than she expected, and I see her grabbing her purse and moving away from him.

“Do you need a ride?” She doesn’t meet my eyes as she stands up and nods her head. I’ve got Tessa wrapped up in my jacket, and I want to carry her from here, but even as long as my jacket is, her bare legs are showing. I can’t even think about how short that dress is and who saw her in it.

I hold her to me, still not speaking a word as I help her from the club and to my car at the curb. I open up the passenger door and let Harper climb in the back, putting Tessa in the front.

As I lean over her and buckle Tessa’s seatbelt, I feel her lips whisper against my ear.

“I’m sorry.”

“Not now,” is all I can say in response as I walk around my car and get in the driver seat. I see Nick come out of the club just as I pull away. Both of us know this isn’t finished.

“Take Plymouth up to Trent. We’re two blocks up,” Harper says from the back. Her voice is tired, and if I’m not mistaken, it sounds like she’s more than angry.

I look over at Tessa and see her leaning her head against the door, and her eyes are closed. She passed out within seconds, and I’m relieved I got to her just in time.

We ride in silence to their apartment, and when I pull up out front, I get out of the driver’s seat and let Harper out from behind me.

She gets out, but before she walks away, I stop her with my words.

“I’m taking Tessa with me tonight. I want her safe.” Harper looks at me for a second and then just shrugs, like she’s giving up on Tessa, too. “For what it’s worth, Nick’s a piece of shit, but he’s a smooth talker. He can get pretty much talk anyone to do what he wants. You didn’t do anything wrong. He’s an asshole.”

She doesn’t meet my eyes, just nods her head and looks away. She takes a step but stops. “Hang on here a second, I’ll be right back.”

I watch as Harper goes into the building, and I lean into the car to check on Tessa. I push back some of the hair that’s fallen over her face, and I see her face is indeed streaked with make-up and tears. I need to know what made her cry and fix the problem. I can’t stand the thought of her being hurt by anything.

Tessa turns into my hand and blinks her sleepy drunken eyes at me. Suddenly, she

has the biggest goofiest grin on her face, and it's as if she's just noticed I'm here.

"Hey, hot lips," she slurs. The nickname brings a smile to my face.

"Hot lips, huh?"

"Oh yeah. Yous got like the best lips. I've never had lips before you. But yours the best. I'm sure."

I let out a little laugh as she hiccups. "Is that right?"

"Yup. Big thick ones. Makes me wanna nibble." She closes her eyes and slowly opens them. "Best first kiss ever."

Her words knock me in the chest. I was her first kiss? Jesus, why does that make my cock hard? If I'm her first kiss, then I'm going to be her first...

"Here."

I look up to see Harper holding out a bag, and I reach out to take it from her. "What's this?"

"It's some of her stuff. Girl shit." She rubs her arms like the cold is getting to her. "Just, you know, take care of her."

"I will." With that, I put Tessa's bag in the back seat and get behind the wheel. I watch as Harper goes inside the building, and then I put the car in gear.

"She's a real bitch," Tessa slurs, and again I laugh. I get the feeling she's never said that out loud before.

She's utterly adorable when she drinks, though I'm still not inclined to let her get this far gone again. It's easy to forget about the danger she put herself in when she's being cute and trying to sing the song from The Little Mermaid.

“What's a fire, and why does it...what's the word...”

Her silly hiccups keep interrupting her singing, and I reach over, holding her hand the whole way to my place.

Pulling up to the warehouse, I hit the button on my visor and the garage door opens. When I park, I shut the garage door, locking us in. I grab her bag and go around to the passenger side, opening up the door to help her out. Tessa shivers at the chill in the garage and proceeds to sing a song from the movie Frozen. I try to bite my lip so I don't laugh, and I reach down, scooping her up in my arms.

I carry her through the door and into the main warehouse. It opens up into a living space and kitchen, but I don't stop there. I carry her down a long hall that leads to my bedroom, and I take her to my bed.

After I lay her down on my bed, I turn on the bedside lamp. She lets out a deep breath as she snuggles into the covers, trying to escape the soft glow. She makes no protest at the fact that I've just taken her home with me. She just snuggles into my bed like she's been doing it forever.

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I get a washcloth from the bathroom and wet it with warm water. When I go back to the bed, I sit on the edge and start to wipe away the make-up on her eyes. She's got so much on, she doesn't look like my Tessa.

After a few swipes, it's mostly gone, and I can see the fresh-faced beauty I've been craving. She looks so perfect here in my bed.

Leaning down, I place one soft kiss on her cheek, wanting more, but not able to let myself take advantage of her. No, when I take her for the first time, I want her looking into my eyes and begging me for more.

As I lean back and look down at her, she whispers my name as she falls asleep.

Now all I've got to do is take her clothes off like a gentleman and keep my hands to myself. Shouldn't be too difficult, right?

Chapter 10

Sean

I give the dress a little tug and it does nothing at all. Trying a little harder, I yank with a little more force, making her big honey eyes pop open at me. I expect her to maybe jump or wonder where she is, but she just smiles at me. Trusting. A trust I'm going to shatter, but I'm going to enjoy it while I still have it. Soak up as much of it as I can. Hold on to each sweet moment.

"Harder." Her voice is husky, and I growl at the simple word. I know she means yank

on the dress harder, but all I can picture is her below me as I thrust my cock into her virgin-tight pussy while she begs me to fuck her harder. To give her something only I can. Telling me I'm the only man she'll ever let have her. That she'll be mine forever.

She licks her lips and a sweet little giggle pops out of her mouth as she catches what she said. Her little giggle alone makes my cock ache with need. Fuck having blue balls, I'm going to have a fucking blue body. I don't just want to fuck her. I want to rub every part of me all over her.

"Come on, handsome. I'm sure you rip clothes off women all the time." She reaches up and her finger traces the hair along my jaw before she grabs a handful off it. Yeah, I'm never shaving again; I like her grabbing onto me like that.

"I don't recall ever ripping clothing off of a woman before," I admit. Fuck, I can't even remember the last time I'd been with a woman, let alone who it was. When I was younger and just started getting my hands dirty, I played, but as time went on I quit that shit fast.

I don't think I'm cocky when it comes to my looks, but I know I attract a lot of female attention. Add that to the fact that I don't treat women like shit like a lot of the men do in the places I hang out. Women would get attached to me, and then I'd still end up hurting them. That was something I took no pleasure in. I've been keeping to myself since, focusing instead on stacking my bank account. My hand did the job just fine when I needed the release, and that approach came with fewer problems.

I'd always wanted to settle down one day, but I knew I had to get my hands clean. That was something I planned to do after this score, but sweet little Tessa stumbled into my life a few weeks before I was ready. She fell right into my path, and there's no turning around now. The goal is still the same, there are just a few added parts to it now. And the end goal is bigger and better than I could have ever dreamed of. No, I didn't think perfection and sweet innocence like her even existed.

“Oh, I can be your first.” She wiggles her eyebrows. “You can be my first, too.” She parts her legs, and I can’t stop myself from looking as she shows her simple white underwear. I thought maybe having too many meetings in the back of strip clubs had jaded me. I’ve seen women in what’s supposed to be the sexiest lingerie, but the sight of her in simple white panties has me wanting to cum in my pants.

I know the truth, though. It’s not about what she’s wearing. It’s her. Everything about her seems to do this to me. This little curvy slip of a girl can turn me inside out without even trying. No games or batting her eyelashes coyly at me. It’s simply her. Everything about her just does it for me. She’s utterly perfect. Like she’s made for me. Made to drive me utterly crazy.

“I’d be your first what?” I bait her, wanting to hear her say it. She parts her legs a little more, showing me her panty-covered pussy.

“Everything. Go ahead. Ruin me.” She giggles again, and I’m not sure what to make of her comment.

Ruin her. I like and hate the idea all at once.

“I’d never ruin you.” Make her want only me? Fuck yes. But ruin her? Never. It already kills me that I might jade her a little. She’s so trusting and sweet. I’d hate for her to lose that. I hate that I might be the one to make her lose that.

If only I’d met her another way. She could have kept all the innocent trust she has because she’d have me to protect her and to shield her from everything that could shatter it. Make sure nothing touched her so she could keep it.

Her hand drops from my face and runs down my chest. I lean into her hand, liking her touch.

“Oh, I’m sure you’d ruin me. I think I could cum just looking at you.” She keeps running her hand over my chest and brings her other hand up to join in. Fucking hell, she’s so cute when she’s drunk. Gone is the shy girl, and in her place is someone who doesn’t think before she speaks, and I love it. I love the shy blush that hits her cheeks, but I enjoy this just as much.

“What if I told you that you’d already ruined me?”

“Liar. Take off your shirt. I want to see how far those tattoos go.” She’s changing the subject, even when she doesn’t realize she’s doing it. My girl seems to have a problem with thinking she isn’t hot or some shit, but we’ll work on that over time. She’ll soon see how fucking serious I am about us. She won’t have a doubt her in mind about the lengths I’ll go to to have her.

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Actions speak louder than words, and she'll be seeing that very soon.

Reaching over my head, I grab the collar of my shirt and pull it up and off, giving her what she asked for.

Her sharp inhalation makes me want to puff out my chest. She wiggles around, still rubbing her hands all over me. I need to get her under the covers and asleep before I have her legs over my shoulders, with me in between them.

I won't risk her not remembering our first time together. I want her to remember every detail of it. I want to hook her into me and show her all the ways I can please her. I want to give her what she needs.

I reach down and tug at her dress again. "I hate this fucking thing."

"You don't like it? I thought I looked sexy for once." She pouts up at me, her bottom lip sticking out, making me want to bite it.

"You're always sexy." I grab the top of the dress and do as she suggested. I rip it. "But I don't like other people seeing you with so few clothes on."

She gasps as the material easily comes apart in my hands, leaving her in just her panties. I throw the dress behind me, not caring where it lands.

"Holy shit, that was hot. Can we do it again?" Her wide eyes are filled with excitement.

“You got another dress around here I don’t know about?” I tease her.

She just shakes her head, that happy excited look still pasted across her face. “I’ll buy you more and rip them off you if you really want me to, but you only wear them in the house.” No way is she ever going out dressed like that again. I’d end up doing life in prison.

“I’ll wear whatever I want.” She thrusts her chin up smugly, but it’s too adorable to be threatening. I have no idea how someone can be smug and adorable all at once, but she’s doing it, and I just smile at her as I try not to laugh.

“You want me to walk around in public without a shirt on?” Her fingers, which were busily trailing my chest, following the lines of my tattoos, stop and dig into me in a possessive manner. It makes my cock jerk, and I fucking love the feeling.

She glares at me.

“No need for that, little fox. It’s all yours. I’m just showing you how it makes me feel.” I grab the blanket and pull it over her. Hiding her body from me. It takes everything in me not to look at it, but I know my control would probably shatter if I did.

“I’m going to get you some water and something to stop your headache before it starts.” I pull myself from the bed and make my way towards the kitchen to grab a bottle of water and a few pills for her. When I turn around, I nearly trip over her.

She’s standing in the middle of my kitchen with just her panties on.

“I thought you were going to ruin me.” She says it so matter-of-factly, no shyness at all.

She pushes her body up against me, her naked chest hitting mine. Her curves melt into me. Reaching up, she locks her arms around my neck, and I have to bend a little for her to reach, even though she's on her tiptoes.

All control snaps.

My hands go to her face, dropping the water bottle and pills, letting them hit the floor as I take her mouth. Her sweetness hits my lips, and the taste of her reminds me how desperate I am for her. It's like being trapped in the desert for weeks and finally having water. I can't stop myself from wanting to drink her down. One sip will never be enough. Thrusting my tongue into her mouth, I try to devour her. I never knew lips could be so soft. They yield to me just like all of her curves.

Her body wiggles against mine, her moan filling my mouth.

Fuck.

I let go of her face and grab her hips, easily lifting her to me. Her legs wrap around my waist. Before I know what I'm doing, I have her back in my bed without having broken the kiss. I've somehow got my pants and underwear off, and my naked cock is pressed against her sheathed pussy. When I realize what I've done, that I've taken it too far, I pull back and rest my forehead against hers.

Get it under control, Sparrow. You can have her in the morning.

"Please." She moves her hips against me. Her warm pussy rubs my cock, testing every bit of control I have. I feel cum leak out the tip, and I have to bite the inside of my mouth to stop myself from cumming. No way would I cum before her.

"I'll give you what you need, little fox. Then you'll go to sleep like a good girl."

“Just do it. Take me. I’ve been thinking about it all day. Come morning I’ll be too shy to ask.” She moves against me more. I know she’s right. In the morning she will be too shy to ask, but I won’t let her pull away. I’ll bulldoze right through all those walls she might try to erect. Any self-doubt she might have, I’ll shatter.

“You won’t have to ask. I’ll always give you what you need.”

I pull back from her a little so I have room to slide one of my hands between us. I dip one finger into her underwear, going straight for her clit, not wanting to draw it out. I know what she needs, and I’m going to give her that. I won’t leave her in need, but I’m only willing to give her this tonight. Tomorrow she’ll get it all.

Her hips rise and moans pour from her lips when I touch her there.

She’s fucking soaked. Dropping my head down to one of her big tits, I take her nipple into my mouth and suck. I stroke my finger where she needs it the most, and she instantly cums. Her whole body jerks, and when my name leaves her lips, I find myself cumming on her. Fuck. I can’t believe she went off for me like that. I didn’t think anything could be hotter than that. A simple touch from me sent her over the edge. It gives me hope. I continue to suck her nipple and work my finger on her clit, milking her orgasm for her.

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When she goes limp under me, I look up to see a peaceful smile on her face, her eyes closed. She's out.

Pulling my finger out from her panties I bring it to my mouth, tasting her innocent pussy for the first time. It hardens my cock. I swear to Christ, it's the taste of pure heaven. I can't wait to have my mouth on her. I'll probably eat her pussy for days. Until she begs me to stop, and I'll beg her not to take it from me.

I have two days to make her fall in love with me. Ingrain myself into her as deep as possible, because come Monday, she's going to hate me.

Rubbing my hands over her stomach, I think of another way to keep her attached to me. I'm going to put my baby there. Then she can never leave me. I'll be spending the next few days trying to plant my seed.

Chapter 11

Tessa

I wake to a warm body pressed firmly against mine. One hand is inside my panties, cupping my core, and another hand grasps one of my boobs. Warm breath tickles my neck. A face is buried there. The night before starts flashing through my mind.

Getting dressed up with Harper, going to the club, shots, then I seemed to slip into some kind of Sean pity party. A few guys had hit on me, and I hated every second of it. All I could do was keep thinking about Sean. I was comparing them all to him. Most of the men there had that whole bad boy thing that he does, but they didn't have

his soft eyes.

Then people started going at it. I wasn't sure if I was at a club or an orgy. Or maybe that's what clubs are like. Every time I went to check my phone, Harper would make me take a shot. Needless to say, I took way too many. Then I started to cry. I think I might be one of those depressed drunks. I'm not sure how my head isn't pounding right now.

The club only made me feel like I didn't belong, and Harper didn't seem to help. As much as she would give me shit about Sean, she crawled all over Nick as soon as he walked in the door.

Did I call Sean? Just from his smell, I know it's him wrapped so tightly around me. I'll never forget that smell: earthy and warm. It will forever be branded in my mind. I don't think I could move an inch if I tried. His big body is locked around mine. Even his legs are tangled with mine, like we made crazy love all night and finally passed out like this.

That's when I feel a hard cock pressed firmly against my ass. It's clear Sean is big all over. Part of me wants to jump from the bed, but a bigger part wants to stay still and enjoy this. To soak in every second of it.

I try to remember more. Sean's face flashes in my mind again. Him pulling me from the table at the bar, wrapping his jacket around me, a look of jealousy and concern on his face, then taking me home with him, where I pretty much begged him to have sex with me. He didn't. I'm positive I'd still feel the effects of that if he did. I do remember him making me cum.

Sucking my nipple into his mouth as he slipped his hands into my panties, taking me to a place I'd never been before. I want that again. Over and over again. Even more, I want to do it to him.

All the things I said to him flash through my mind, making me cringe. Jesus, how am I going to face him when he wakes? I'd asked him to rip my dress from my body...and he did. His big hands grabbed hold and tore it like it was nothing. Maybe I could sneak out. I have no idea what I'll wear, though, because I'm pretty sure that dress is destroyed.

I wiggle a little to see if I can slip free, but he only latches on tighter, and I swear I hear him mumble "mine."

Holy shit.

I feel my vagina clench at the word. That's completely ridiculous and barbaric, and I want him to say it again. I wiggle again, but this time he just lets out a cute little manly growl. I have to hold my laughter in.

Then all the sweet stuff he said to me comes flooding back, making me smile. God, this man is too good to be true. It's like I've won the man lottery or something. I curse the blanket that is laid over us; I want to see myself wrapped in his arms. I want to see those tattoos latched around me so possessively.

I remember following him into the kitchen and the look on his face when he turned around and saw me standing there. I should be embarrassed; I can't remember the last time someone saw me in my panties. Harper walks around naked like it's no big deal, but I find myself to be self-conscious. I have wide hips and a few stretch marks from when my boobs came in a little too quickly one summer.

But that look on his face when he saw me like that was one of pure hunger. Like he was starving for me. Me. I have no doubt this man could have his pick of women, but the way he keeps acting makes me feel like I'm all he wants. It's me in his bed, not someone else. He came looking for me last night. I have no clue how he found me. I'm just happy he did. Who knew where I could have woken up if I hadn't run into

him last night?

I know I'm new at this, but I find myself pushing all the things Harper has been chirping in my ear right out of my head. Sean has been nothing but pure sweetness to me, and I'm not going to mess that up. I want to see where this could go. And besides, it's far too late.

I'm already falling for him, and I'm in way over my head. Either way, I'm going to drown in him, and I want to enjoy every second of it. I'll pick up the pieces later. But maybe if I'm lucky, he won't break me.

Chapter 12

Sean

Mine.

I wake and feel Tessa stir under me, and I tighten my grip on her. She's spooned against me, and I've got one hand down her panties cupping her pussy and one hand on her lush tit, letting it spill over my fingers.

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My aching cock is nestled against her ass, small drops of pre-cum dripping onto her lower back. I kept waking up and nearly cumming all over her, only to hold it back and fall asleep again.

Pressing against her again, I feel her push her ass up against my rock-hard cock. I don't know how the damn thing hasn't broken off from the need I'm feeling.

“Good morning, little fox.” I nuzzle her neck, kissing the warm skin there. I should feel guilty for what I want from her and what I'm going to take from her. I should feel some kind of remorse for the things I'm going to do, but I can't seem to find an ounce of it inside me. She's mine, and she will always be mine. I'll make damn sure of it.

“Is there a hole around here I can crawl into and die?”

I can feel the burn of her cheeks as I kiss her neck. She must be remembering what happened last night.

“There's no place on earth you could hide from me, Tessa.” I feel her shiver against me as my fingers find her wet clit. “Slide your panties down. I promised I wouldn't take you until morning, and the sun is almost up.”

I keep my grip on her as she wiggles her panties down to her feet and kicks them off. I start to kiss and bite her shoulder as her naked ass makes contact with my bare cock.

“Now lift your leg up and drape it over mine. Open your body up for me, baby.”

“Sean, I—”

“Shh. I know, baby. We’ll go slow.”

Tessa takes a little breath and relaxes back against me before raising her leg and draping it over mine. We lie spooned on our sides, with one of my arms under her, my hand cupping her tit, and the other hand still on her cunt, strumming her soaked clit.

I move my hips so my cock pulls away from her ass and moves down into position to penetrate her. The head rests against her wet heat, ready to take her hymen.

Feeling thick drops of cum coat her virgin hole, I hold myself back from releasing my seed. I have to cum inside her. I need to bind her to me, and this is the only way I can make damn sure of it.

“Breathe, Tessa.” I rub little circles on her clit as I press inside her. Her opening nearly squeezes shut, refusing entry. “Let me in, little fox. I’m going to get inside you and make you feel so good, but you’ve got to let me in.”

I pinch her nipple and rub her clit. I feel her take a few more breaths, and her opening relaxes a little. It’s enough for me to push just inside, bumping against her innocence.

I give her just a few shallow thrusts so she feels me pushing against it. “That’s it, Tessa. Just one thrust and you’re mine in every way.” She shivers again at my words and presses her body down on my cock a little. “Tell me you want it.”

“I want you, Sean. Please, make me yours.”

“Say forever, Tessa. Tell me you want me forever.”

“Forever.”

With that one word, she’s signed her life over to me. She’s mine now, and I’m never letting her go.

Holding her close, I thrust up into her tight channel and start to cum the second my shaft is encased in her heat.

Tessa lets out a little squeak as I continue to rub her clit and pinch her nipple. I feel her clench around my cock as she draws more of my cum out of me. I press my forehead to her shoulder, grunting out my orgasm as I feel hers flow through her.

Her cunt grips me tighter than I’ve ever felt as I splash my seed into her unprotected pussy.

“Sean,” she whispers as her orgasm starts to fade, and I start to move from behind her.

I thrust inside her lazily, both of us having cum from the first connection. Neither of us is in any hurry now. I feel every squeeze of her pussy as I try to leave her body, and she wants to hold me inside her. I feel the pulse of her cunt as I thrust back in, her body welcoming me every time.

There’s no barrier to stop me from entering her. I’ve taken her hymen, and her innocence belongs to me. Only me. She’ll never have another, no matter what happens between us. I’ll make her need me like I need her.

And if she doesn’t want me, I’ll want her enough for the both of us. If she doesn’t love me, I’ll just love her twice as hard. For her and for our unborn baby growing inside her.

“Talk to me, Tessa. Tell me you need me.” My words are a plea. I need them. I can’t lose this.

She reaches up, grabbing a handful of my hair as I glide in and out of her. Some of my cum leaks out, but I’ll put more inside her.

“I need you, Sean. So much. Harder.”

I thrust harder, giving her the pressure she needs. I move my fingers from her clit to rest on her lower belly, feeling where our baby is going to grow. She’ll have no choice but to be bound to me and I to her.

As I thrust inside her, I feel her clenches start again, and I know she’s getting close to another orgasm. I want her so far gone that she’s willing to give me anything I ask for.

I put my lips to her ear, whispering to her. “Say you want my cum inside you. Tell me you love my cum in you.”

I feel her shiver, but she doesn’t speak. I stop thrusting, and I just hold my cock inside her.

“Say it, Tessa. Give me the words. I know you want to say them, baby. Don’t be scared.”

She closes her eyes and swallows, before whispering the words I want to hear. “I want your cum inside me.”

Her breathy hesitation makes cum leak out of my cock, but I’m as deep inside her as I can go. I’m pressed against her cervix. I’m not going to stop the flow of cum now.

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“Say you love it inside you, Tessa. Say you love me inside you.” I pull out some, then thrust just a little, giving her barely an inch.

Her breath catches, and then she confesses. “I love you inside me.”

I lick the shell of her ear, our quiet whispers lost in the sound of our breaths. I give her what I promised and thrust inside her hard. Her words of love echo in my mind as I bring my fingers back to her clit.

“Good girl.”

She’s back at the edge after just a few strokes of my cock and light touches to her clit. But I don’t want some of Tessa. I want all of her.

“How does it feel to have my big cock inside you?”

“Sean.” My name is a plea for help. She wants me to send her over the edge into a blissful orgasm, but I want more.

“Say it, little fox. Tell me this is the only cock you’ll ever let inside you,” I growl against her soft skin, needing the confirmation.

“Only you,” she pants. Her breaths are heavy, and our bodies are becoming sticky and slippery against each other. “Only your cock, Sean.”

I throb at her promise, letting a little more cum leak out.

“And you’ll always do what I ask, little fox?”

“Always.” Her moans are loud as she begs for release. “Please, Sean. Please. I’ll do anything.”

“I know you will, Tessa. You’re mine.”

Just as I thrust hard inside her one last time, I pinch her clit, sending her over the edge. Her body tenses against mine, and she lets out a scream as she cums.

I move my hand from her cunt, gripping her hip tightly. I hold her steady as I line the tip of my cock with her cervix again and empty inside her. I squirt into it, trying to get all of my seed into her fertile womb. I want my baby in her as soon as possible.

Her breaths are ragged as she comes down from her high, going limp against my body. I smile against her shoulder, holding our sweaty bodies together as we stay connected. Neither of want to break this moment.

“Damn.”

Her one word makes me laugh, and I kiss her shoulder and her neck. “Feel good?”

“There isn’t a word for how that felt. But good is a start,” Tessa giggles, and it’s music to my ears.

“I guess I’ll have to try harder next time if that’s all you can say.”

She playfully hits my arm and laughs as I pull her closer to me.

We lie there quietly, and I can feel the stupid grin on my face. I close my eyes, placing kisses all over her, enjoying this perfect moment.

“Thank you,” Tessa whispers.

Her words take me by surprise, and it’s then I feel a little guilty. Pulling back a little, I turn her face so she can look into my eyes. “Don’t ever thank me for what I do to you, Tessa. You deserve to be worshiped.” I pause and look deeply into her eyes. “Forever.”

Chapter 13

Tessa

Soft kisses rain over my face, Sean’s beard tickles me, making me giggle. “I’m sleepy.” I playfully try to push him away, but there’s no real effort behind it. I don’t want him to stop.

“Come on, little fox. I’ve got to get you clean and feed you. It’s already almost noon.”

I open my eyes to see the room flooded with light now. Sean stares down at me. His eyes look more green than normal, the afternoon sun making them glow. Thick eyelashes frame them. I’m sure a lot of women would kill for those lashes.

“You passed out on me again. You’re good for a man’s ego.” A soft smile plays at his lips, and his hair is a wild mess. God, a girl could get used to waking up to the sight of him. I’ve done it twice already in just a few hours, and I already want it forever. I don’t care how crazy that sounds. I still want it.

I can’t help but raise my hand and run my fingers through his hair. I love how every time I touch him, he leans into me. Like he craves my touch.

“You could make a girl get used to being treated like this.” I feel myself blush at my

own words. How can something be so easy and hard at the same time? I feel like I can say or do anything in front of him, but my underlying shyness still lurks just below the surface. It's all swirling around inside, and I'm not sure what to do with it, but for the first time I don't feel awkward. He makes me feel like I fit here with him. I'm not the odd person out like I always seem to be. Not with him.

"Oh, I'll have you used to it before the weekend is over. Which you're spending with me, by the way." With that, he jumps off the bed, flinging the blanket onto the floor, leaving me laid out naked in his bed. Every inch of me is exposed by the afternoon light.

I go to cover myself, but he hauls me up and over his shoulder, making me squeal.

"I'm too big! You're going to hurt yourself!"

"You're a tiny little fox. Besides, it will be a cold day in hell when I can't carry my woman around whenever I want."

I want to say something about the little comment, but I opt not to. Everything is little compared to him.

"Your woman?" I ask, as I stare at a very nice firm bare ass, the urge to bite it strong within me.

"Come on, baby. For a smart girl, you're a little slow on the uptake. I'll keep reminding you just how mine you are until you finally believe it. And I'll enjoy every second of it."

God, I hope he does, and I will soak up every second of it like a lost little kitten just wanting attention. I don't even care. At this point I don't care if it's only for this weekend. I'll cherish this weekend for the rest of my life. It will totally be worth any

heartbreak it might bring.

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He pulls me off his shoulder, and I slowly slide down the front of his naked body, his chest hair making my nipples harden as my feet touch the cold tile floor of the bathroom.

The action sends arousal coursing through my body as I stare up at him.

“None of that. I’ve got to get you clean, and I’m not putting my cock back inside you until you’re well fed and we give your pussy some time to rest.” Leaning down, he softly kisses me on the lips. “You sore?” His tone turns from playful to concerned. “I tried to be gentle, but with you...” His hand comes up to stroke the side of my face, his thumb grazing my cheek. “I find I get carried away. My control isn’t so great with you, but I’ll try to be gentler.”

“It was perfect.” I turn my head to the side and kiss his palm, wanting him to know I mean it. “Just a little sore, but it was worth it.”

I’m not sure how the man could be gentler with me. In fact, I liked it when he went a little rough with me in bed. The things he said, the things he’d made me say...it made me feel freaking sexy. A feeling I’m not used to. But he makes me feel that way.

“I’ll make sure all of it’s worth it.” He places another soft kiss on my lips. His words seem to be about more than this moment, but he pulls away to turn on the shower and drags me in with him. Sean lets the water hit him first until he gets it to the temperature he likes. Then he pulls me under with him.

He takes his time washing every inch of me. I cringe a little when he drops to his knees and starts washing my stomach and hips, the places on my body I’m most self-

conscious of. Washing the soap away, he starts trailing open-mouthed kisses all over my belly and my hips before going lower.

He slowly pushes me back until I'm against the shower wall. My breathing picks up as he stares right at my pussy.

"I'm going to show you how good I'll make you feel every day." He licks his lips, his intent clear.

"Every day?" I moan, just thinking about what he's going to do. Put his mouth there. Holy shit. I close my eyes, dropping my head back, nervous and excited.

"Every fucking day," he confirms. His face goes right between my legs as one hand locks onto my hip. His other hand grabs my leg, throwing it over his shoulder as his mouth attacks me.

He doesn't tease; he goes straight for my clit, sucking it into his mouth. My hips jerk, but he keeps a firm hold on me.

"Oh God, oh God," I chant between moans, not able to put a thought together. His beard rubs along my inner thighs, and I'm sure there are going to be marks left behind.

"Cum on my face, little fox. Show me how good I make you feel." He sucks my clit back into his mouth again, and his words send me over the edge. My orgasm races through me, making me feel weightless. It's not until a few moments later do I realize it's because I'm back in his arms once again, cuddling into him.

We stand there, letting the water run over us as we hold each other close. I have no idea how long we're there, but I have no desire to leave, until I realize the water starts to run cold.

“Come on, little fox. I need to feed you. Don’t want my curves going anywhere.” He kisses me right under my ear, where he just whispered the words.

“You like my curves?” I know he keeps implying it, but I want to hear him say it.

“Like is putting it mildly.”

I smile against his neck as he carries me out of the shower and places me on the bathroom counter. He grabs a towel and dries both of us off before wrapping the towel around his waist, hiding his very obvious erection from me. It’s then I remember he didn’t get off in the shower, too. I want to make him feel as good as he did me.

“Let me take care of you.” I can’t look at him when I say the words, but I reach for the towel. He stops me, grabbing my wrist with one hand and putting his finger under my chin to make me look up at him.

“You already did. But my cock just can’t seem to go down when you’re naked. Hell, when you’re breathing.”

“But…” I don’t understand what he means.

Releasing my wrist, he takes a step towards me, crowding me on the counter. He makes no move to touch me, but he places his hands on either side of me, caging me in. His smell invades my senses, making it hard to think.

“Oh, I came eating your sweet cunt.” He leans in a little more, his mouth just a breath from mine. “My woman is so fucking sexy and tastes so fucking good, I came just from eating her pussy.”

His words send a rush of desire through me, making my vagina clench.

“Oh, Jesus.”

“I’m never going to get enough of you. Never going to let you go.” His eyes are so intense, I believe him. I should be running because of how fast this is happening, but all I can do is close the sliver of distance between our mouths, my fingers latching behind his neck, never wanting to let go.

The kiss goes on and on before Sean finally pulls away.

“Got to stop, baby. I want you again, and I want to get you fed and give your pussy a little rest.”

“Mmkay,” is all I can say, still in the kiss fog.

He grabs my hips, pulling me off the counter before leading me back towards his room and over to a closet. He pulls out some clothes and hands me a dress.

I pause. He has a dress in his closet? What the heck? I want to say something, but I stay motionless as he grabs himself something. When he turns around and sees my expression, he rushes to explain.

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“That’s for you, little fox. Only you. Never even had another person in the apartment. Only you,” he says earnestly.

“But we just met...” Shit. Yesterday.

“I’m always three steps ahead. It’s how I’m so good at my job, and I find with you I try to be even further ahead.”

I don’t know what to say to that, so I just look down at the dress. It’s a simple navy-blue halter dress. I own a few like it. Checking the tag, I see that not only is it my size but it’s from my favorite store. I find I’m inclined to believe him.

“Thank you.”

“Again, don’t thank me for taking care of you.”

“It’s a habit. And it’s the polite thing to do,” I counter.

“Alright. How about when you want to thank me, you do it by telling me you’re mine or how much you want me.”

I start laughing because that’s ridiculous, but the look on his face says he’s not joking. It makes me laugh even harder, and his brow furrows.

He cracks a smile at me and lunges at me, scattering the clothes to the floor. I try to dodge him, but he’s quicker and he throws me onto the bed. I go to scramble away, still laughing, but again he’s much faster than me.

His starts tickling me, making me laugh even harder, my whole body shaking.

“Please, I can’t take anymore!”

He keeps tickling me as both of us roll around and I try to get away from him. A clearly impossible task. I can’t remember the last time I laughed so hard. Maybe never. Definitely not since I lost my grandma.

“I’m yours! Totally yours! I swear it!” I finally scream, and he stops instantly. His big arms wrap around my body. It’s then I notice how we’re both naked again, his towel having been lost in his tickle attack.

“Kiss me,” I say breathlessly. And he does, his mouth coming down on mine. After just a second, he pulls away too quickly, jumping off the bed and placing a good amount of distance between us.

“Stop trying to seduce me, little fox.” He leans down, picking up the clothes he dropped. I take the chance to roll to my side, propping my head in my hand to enjoy the view. His tattoos cover not only his arms but most of his chest, too.

“Like the view?”

“I think anyone would.”

“I’m not asking anyone. Don’t care what anyone thinks but you.”

“Like is putting it mildly.” I use the same words he used for me earlier, making him smile.

“That’s really good, baby, because this is the only naked man you’ll have for the rest of your life.”

Once again I'm struck speechless. The man can't go five minutes without reminding me I'm his and I'm going nowhere. He's definitely making sure I know by the end of the weekend I'm his. Hell, I might already be there. There's no reason for him to put on some show. I'm here and not going anywhere until he asks, and I'm starting to think he won't.

"Now I'm going to get dressed in the other room and start your breakfast, because I'm about to pounce on your sweet ass and I'll never get you fed."

He walks out the room, giving me his ass to watch as he exits.

I roll onto my back, looking up at the ceiling of the warehouse that has been turned into an apartment. Maybe it's a condo. I'm not really sure what it is.

I almost feel like I'm dreaming.

Not wanting to lie here and start second-guessing stuff, I pull myself from the bed and slip on the dress. I look around and spot my bag in the corner of the room.

Thank you, Harper. That might be the first time I actually mean it when it comes to her. I pull my stuff out and use the bathroom to get ready for the day. I put on some light make-up, brush my teeth, and pull my hair into a ponytail.

I stop and study myself in the mirror. Even after getting ready, I still look well loved. My lips are a little swollen, and I swear I'm almost glowing. I can still feel the marks Sean's beard left on the insides of my thighs.

No wonder Harper was always doing the sex, because this is amazing!

Following the smell of bacon, I make my way through the warehouse slowly, taking it in as I go, wanting to learn more about Sean because I don't really know much.

Except that he's crazy good with his mouth. In all ways.

There isn't much to the place. Everything is really bare and furnished with just the essentials. The walls are brick and stark. There are no decorations of any kind—no paintings, no photos, no ornaments. Simple black furniture and nothing more.

“How many pancakes, baby?” I pull my eyes over to the kitchen where Sean is watching me. He's got on a pair of jeans but has yet to put on a shirt. His body is really a piece of art. He's broadly built, but it looks natural. It doesn't seem like he spends hours in the gym.

“A few should be good.” He goes to pouring the batter into the skillet before flipping the bacon. I move towards him, taking a seat at the breakfast bar. It looks like the area that should be the dining room is also empty. No table or anything. Just the breakfast bar to eat at.

“Kind of bare around here.”

“I'm a simple man.” He turns to look at me from the stove. “The new place you can do up however you like. I seem to want a home now. This is just a place I sleep. I didn't need or want more from it.”

“New place? You're moving?” I don't ask about him wanting me to decorate his place. I'll leave that one for now. Or why he suddenly wants a home and not just a place to lay his head. The way he says it made it pretty clear I was the reason for that. It makes my insides warm, but I don't want to read too much into it.

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“Yeah. I think you’ll like it.” Sean makes his way over to the fridge, grabbing some orange juice and pouring me a glass, setting it in front of me.

“Where is it?” I hope it’s close to the train and not too far from my place. I’d hate for him to move somewhere that would be hard for me to get to if we’re going to keep seeing each other. And all signs point to a solid yes that we are.

“Don’t want to ruin the surprise. You’ll see soon enough.” He grabs a plate, puts some bacon on it, and places it in front of me. I grab a piece and take a bite.

“Is it closer to your work?”

“You could say that. I plan on retiring soon.”

“But you’re only, like...” Shit, I don’t even know how old he is. Wow. How is that even possible? This man is imprinted into my skin, and I don’t know anything about it. He must read the look on my face.

“Thirty-five.” He places the cooked pancakes onto a plate and brings them over to where I’m sitting. He takes the seat next to me. He swirls the chair so I’m facing him.

“We have all the time in the world for us to get to know each other, and we will. One question at a time, but I think we know the important stuff. More than what we do for a living or in our spare time. We know we fit. All the other shit will come.”

He reaches for my ponytail and pulls out the elastic, letting my hair fall all around my face. “For instance, I love when you wear your hair down.” He grabs a lock of it and

brings it to his nose like he's smelling it, and maybe he is. "Makes me want to bury my face in it. I can't tell you how much I loved sleeping with my face buried in it last night."

"You say the sweetest stuff to me. I swear you're too good to be true." Something flashes across his face—it looks almost like guilt—but it's gone so quickly I'm not even sure it was ever there.

"Told you. By the end of the weekend."

"I might already be there," I whisper, dropping my eyes to my hands in my lap.

He growls at my words, making my eyes pop back to his.

"Keep talking like that and I'm going to drag you back to bed."

"I kind of like that idea."

"Eat. Then we're getting out of here for a few hours before I fuck you on every available surface in this place, making it impossible for you to walk for a few days."

He swirls my chair so I'm facing my plate.

"Where are we going?"

"I thought we could go down to Navy Pier and spend the day there."

"I've always wanted to do that!"

"I know. And I'll always give you everything you want."

Chapter 14

Sean

As soon as we walk in the door, I'm on her.

I grab Tessa by the waist and kick the front door closed with my boot before carrying her over to the couch. I don't have patience to take her all the way back to the bed, so this will have to do. I set her on the couch and kneel in front of her, pulling at our clothes.

"I need to be inside you," I say, quickly putting my lips back on her.

Her hands go to my shirt, and it's clear both of us are beyond needing one another. As she pulls my shirt from my body, I tug her dress down, exposing her tits. Her hard nipples point at me for half a second before my mouth is on her.

Reaching between us, I unbuckle my belt and hurriedly take out my cock. I move my mouth to hers. I don't break our kiss as I push up her dress and pull her panties to the side. I thrust deep inside her, hard and fast, as I swallow her moans.

She's soaking wet as I easily slide in and out of her. Her ass is perched on the edge of the couch, a perfect height for me as I kneel in front of her. I grip her hips tightly, holding her in place, giving her every thick inch of me.

Breaking the kiss, I lean back a little to watch her tits bounce as I fuck her. "Pull your dress up, Tessa. I want you to watch."

Her hands move down to where we are connected, pulling the material up and out of the way. Her eyes lock on where I'm penetrating her, my cock slick with her juices. It's not like this morning when I was covered in her sweet virgin blood. It's even

better now because she can take me anytime I want without my having to break her barrier.

Her fingers slowly make their way to where we are joined, touching my cock as it slides in and out of her. Every time I pull out, her hand slides down to cup my balls. They're sticky from her horny juices running down between us, and they make a smacking sound with every stroke.

She groans with desire as she watches us fuck. My cock is being squeezed tightly by her clenches. I need to cum inside her, now.

“Play with your clit, little fox. I want to see you get off. Your pussy's milking my cum from me. Planting it deep inside you.”

Her delicate fingers start to rub her button as I hold her hips tightly, moving in and out of her.

All day she's had me on edge. Her little playful giggles and touches drove me insane as I held her to me and secretly rubbed my palm across her ass. Sometimes I pulled her chest to mine so I could feel her big tits pressed against me, feel her soft body molding to mine as she sat in my lap as we looked out on the water. It was enough to have my cock painful with need all fucking day. And now I need relief. I never had a need for sex; I did not understand a lot of men's drive for it but now I am getting it. I gave that shit up easy years and years ago. I didn't want the hassle of it, but I could never give this up. Her up.

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“Tell me, Tessa. Say the words.”

She moans, looking up to me, locking her eyes with mine. “I need you, Sean. I want you. Only you.”

I lean down and suck her nipple into my mouth, loving the sound of my name on her lips. She’s wound tight with need, and when I graze my teeth across her nipple, it’s enough to send her over the edge.

Her cunt pulses around me, and I feel her womb opening up for me. I hold her still as I sit up and thrust deeply, adjusting my angle. I want to be right against her cervix. I’ll breed her before this weekend is over. I have to.

I won’t take any chances of her trying to get away from me, and binding her to me is the only way to ensure it. I want her bred to make her mine.

Feeling my orgasm draw up from my balls and out of my shaft, I pump her full of my seed, her fertile body welcoming me.

We are both gasping for air as we come down from our high, my jeans still around my ass and her dress bunched around her waist.

I kiss her lips softly as I cup her face with gentle hands. I brush her cheeks with my thumbs as she smiles at me.

“I had a wonderful day, Sean. Thank you.”

“What did I say about that?” I warn, raising an eyebrow.

She kisses my lips and whispers against them. “I’m yours.”

My cock throbs inside her, and I reach around her body, scooping her up and carrying her down the hall. Each step causes my cock to drive deeper inside her, and our combined cum leaks between us.

When I get to the edge of the bed, I grab a pillow and position it in the middle of the mattress. I keep us connected as I lay her back, placing the pillow behind her hips so they’re tilted up. I want my cum to stay inside her, and this way it won’t run out.

I can take her like this, or turn her over and take her from behind, her hips still in the perfect position to be bred.

I pull her dress up and over her head. I want her completely naked under me and looking into my eyes as I fuck her.

I don’t pull out of her as I kick off my boots and jeans. My motions only make her clench around me, loving our connection.

“I need you again,” I growl, thrusting fully into her now. I cage her small body under mine, her hips raised exactly right for breeding. I feel animalistic as I fight into her tight channel, her cunt squeezing me deliciously.

She’s slippery from some of my cum leaking out, and my cock glides smoothly into her. I grab her ankles and put them on my shoulders, holding her calves while I thrust in and out of her.

Tessa’s arms go up behind her, grabbing the headboard as I drive into her. “Sean,” she moans, raising her hips off the pillow, trying to take me deeper.

“That’s it, little fox. Say my name loud. I want to hear the only name you’ll ever moan. You belong to me, Tessa.”

“Yes, Sean. Please.” Her words beg me as she tries to squeeze her legs together to find some relief. But I keep her ankles on my shoulders and pound into her, keeping her on edge.

“More, Tessa. Tell me just how much you love me inside you. Tell me you’ll never leave me. Say that you’ll always want me.”

“Always.” She’s panting. She’s only a breath away from cumming.

“Promise me, Tessa. Promise me you’ll always want me.”

Looking into my eyes, she nods her head and gives me what I want. “Forever.”

I reach down and rub her hard clit, giving her the pressure she wants and sending her over the edge. I thrust in hard one last time, wanting to cum at the same time, emptying into her once again. I don’t pull out as I cum, knowing full well that this could be the time I get her pregnant.

Thinking about it, and knowing what she promised me, makes more cum leak from my cock. I may use it against her in the very near future, but I’ll do what I have to in order to keep her. I’ll play dirty if it means never losing her.

Letting her limp legs down off my shoulders, I lean over her body and kiss her lips tenderly. “I had the best day with you, baby.”

Her lips smile against mine as she sleepily wraps her arms around me. “I did, too. It was absolutely perfect.”

Tessa yawns, and her eyes start to blink slowly with sleep. I kiss her forehead as I pull out of her, but I don't move her hips off the pillow.

“Stay here, baby. I'll clean you up.” I rise from the bed and get a warm washcloth and return to where she's lying. She's already half asleep, her hips still raised, not having moved an inch.

Her legs are still slightly open, and I can see that not much of my cum has slipped out. Perfect. I wipe away some stickiness on her thighs and lips but mostly leave my cum alone.

I go back to the bathroom and toss the cloth in the hamper. By the time I get back to the bed, she's completely out. I retrieve the sheet and place it over her, still not moving her off the pillow.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, I watch her for a while, just looking at her and stroking her lightly as she sleeps.

I feel a little guilt at what I'm going to do, but I know it's for the best. There's no other way to get what I want from her, and I know that I can make it work. It has to.

After a while, I find that I'm tired, too, so I slip under the covers with her and pull her to me. I hold her naked body against mine as I kiss her forehead, and I fall asleep dreaming of Tessa and our future.

Chapter 15

Tessa

I sit between Sean's legs, his back against the headboard and my back to his bare chest. We've lain in bed all day, and the sun is finally starting to set. I know I need to

go home and get stuff ready for work tomorrow, but I dread leaving. I want to wake up in his arms every morning like I've done for the past two days.

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His arms are wrapped around me. His tattoos seem brighter than normal against my pale skin. I run my fingers up and down his thick legs, loving the feel of his hair against my fingertips.

One hand slowly strokes my stomach while he places lazy kisses on my neck. We've been sitting like this since our last bout of lovemaking.

"I don't want to go to work tomorrow. I have some sick days. Maybe I can call out and we can do this day all over again." I hardly take any time off, and it would so be worth it. I don't want to move from this spot. I'm nestled into his body, and I've never felt more cherished.

"I wish I could, but I gotta work tomorrow." He nibbles a little at my shoulder before kissing the spot. Disappointment hits me. It's the first time he's actually refused me something. "But maybe the next day."

"What do you even do? You mentioned retiring." He hasn't brought up what he does, but the few times he was messing with his phone, he just said it had to do with 'work' and changed the subject. It made me feel a little bit like he didn't want to talk about it, and I didn't want to push.

"I have my hands in all kinds of things. I guess you could say I'm an entrepreneur."

"Is that why you came into the bank the other day?" He stills against me for a second before he answers.

"Yeah, for work."

“But you’re retiring? You’re so young.” It’s clear he does okay for himself, between his car and this warehouse. This place can’t be cheap.

“Yeah. Just a few loose ends to tie up and I’m out.” He stops stroking my stomach and wraps both arms around me again, locking his hands together and pulling me a little closer. “I’ve been saving and investing. I want to focus on other things now.”

“Other things?” I hedge. I know he keeps telling me over and over again how he’s never letting me go, but I want to know where this is going. How I’m a part of his plans.

“A family,” he whispers in my ear, and his hand goes back to rubbing my stomach again.

My whole body freezes and air leaves my lungs in a gasp. Not once have we talked about protection, or even used it. Jesus. It never even crossed my mind, which is crazy and ridiculous. Or maybe subconsciously I let myself forget about it.

A little voice in the back of my head seems to agree with that. Did I think if he knocked me up I’d always have him? Wow. That sounds pathetic. Am I that girl? Am I trying to trap a man? Oh, my God. What is wrong with me? I can’t—

“I did it on purpose,” he whispers, cutting off my train of thought “I couldn’t control myself, little fox. When I had my cock in you, and I thought about you swollen with my kid, I couldn’t have stopped myself from cumming even if I tried.” He takes my earlobe between his teeth, pulling a little and making a chill run down my spine. “Not that I tried.”

He did this, too?

“We’re crazy,” I blurt out. Because we are. This relationship seems to be moving at

warp speed and shows no signs of slowing.

“Went way past crazy the moment I saw you. No turning back now.” I can hear the smile in his voice.

No, it seems we’ve made sure we can’t. We’re both trying to bind ourselves to each other.

“You’ve always wanted a family? I’ve been dreaming about one for as long as I can remember,” I admit. It was just my grandma and me growing up. I loved her, and I know she did the best for us, but I want more. I want a home filled with family. It’s something I hope to have some day. To be married and have children filling the house.

“Never really had one myself. I always thought ‘one day,’ but I never put much thought into it. I think I was waiting for you, because when I saw you the idea started to come to life, and it’s all I’ve been able to see since.”

“We both kind of missed out on that growing up. We can have it together.” I turn a little to look at him. He’d told me all about growing up on the streets. That he’s always been kind of a loner, never getting too attached to anything.

At first I was worried that he could move on from me like he seems to do to most things. Even his apartment shows that in him. He doesn’t look planted. He could leave at the drop of a hat.

“Not can, will,” he confirms, before molding his lips to mine.

“I gotta take you home. Some stuff I need to take care of tonight and first thing tomorrow.”

I take deep breath, letting my shoulders drop.

“Okay.” I know I’m pouting, but I can’t seem to stop myself. He lets his arms drop from around me, and I pull myself from the bed, hating to have to leave it.

I wonder if the stuff he has to take care of is the same stuff he had to take care of in the middle of the night last night. I woke up around two in the morning in need of the bathroom and found the bed empty. After a search of the place, I knew he was gone. When I woke again this morning with his mouth between my legs, I’d forgotten about it. And by the time I did remember, I didn’t want to ask.

I didn’t know if it was out of place to ask him where he’d been or what he’d been up to, so I just let it go. But it’s been sitting in the back of my mind ever since.

I slowly get my stuff together, trying to put off leaving, but all too soon I’m all packed and we’re at the front door of my apartment.

“You want to come in for a little bit?” I bite my lip and look up at him. The look on his face is one I can’t make out.

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“I can’t, baby.” He cups my face and stares down at me. “Take the train to work tomorrow, and keep your phone on you at all times.”

“Okay.” My voice breaks a little bit. I’m being a baby, not wanting him to leave. How could I have become so attached to someone so quickly?

“Promise me.” The words hold an edge of desperation to them.

“Promise.”

He leans down, placing his forehead against mine. “Dream about me, because all I’ll be thinking about is you until I see you again.”

His words make some of my unease slip away. “And when will that be?”

“I’ll pick you up from work tomorrow. Take you home with me.”

“Then we can have that sick day?”

“We can have anything you want.” His lips meet mine, and the kiss seems desperate, just like his words moments ago. I wrap my arms around his neck and deepen the kiss. We seem to get lost in the kiss, almost making love with our lips.

When he finally pulls away, we’re both breathless. He presses his forehead to mine again, squeezing his eyes shut.

“Know that I’d never hurt you.”

“Of course you wouldn’t.” I let my hands drop from his neck and run my fingers through his beard. He leans back a little to look into my eyes.

“I love that about you. How trusting you are. God, I don’t want you to lose that. You just let me right in, and I want to protect that innocence.”

“Love?” It’s the only word he said that I heard, and it makes him smile.

“Yeah, little fox. Love.”

“I—” My words are cut off by the sound of the door to my apartment opening. I don’t have to turn around to know it’s Harper. I can smell her overpowering perfume already.

“Just remember I’d never hurt you.” He kisses me again, this time hard and fast. His lips are gone before they were even there. Then he’s gone, too, leaving me to think about what he said.

Chapter 16

Sean

“You got the key?”

“Yeah.”

Nick looks over at me and gives me a creepy smile. “I wasn’t sure after Friday night. The way you walked in and took her out of Coco’s, I thought for sure you’d pussy out.”

I look over at him, not answering, and turn my attention back to the road. We’re in

my car, driving across town to Tessa's bank. It's Sunday night, and I've just dropped her off at her place, leaving to pick Nick up.

Heavy texted me last night wanting a meeting. I didn't know what the fuck was going on, but he'd been sending me messages all day about needing to check in on some details. I think more than likely he was just wanting to check on me. The motherfucker loves to micromanage.

I was in bed with Tessa sleeping soundly in my arms when I got the last text. I needed to be there for another fucking meeting. One of his guys had gotten himself shot in some kind of bar fight and wouldn't be able to pull the job on Monday.

Slipping of bed quietly, I left for a few hours to meet up with Heavy and rework the positions. It was a fucking pain in the ass to lose a man this close to the date. But we think we have it worked out.

As much as it killed me to have to drop Tessa off at her apartment, I didn't have a choice. While I was out last night, I got a copy made of the bank keys I stole from her purse. I felt like an asshole doing it, but I keep telling myself it's for the best. When this is over, everything I've done will have been to give us a better life. I'll make her see that. Then I will never be pulled from her side again. Every night I'll go to bed with her in my arms.

Once I had her keys printed and Nick lifted the combinations from Harper, we had our way in.

It's Sunday night, so we aren't getting in the vault yet. There are too many vaults to crack, and we won't have the time. I can shut off the notification of the alarms to the police but only for so long. There's a back-up system in place for something like this, but even that has a time limit for a shut off. Tonight, we are setting everything up for tomorrow. Our window is small, but we know what we've got to do.

Nick is only coming with because Heavy insisted I needed backup tonight. And since Nick came through with the combinations, he's the one who gets the job.

I'm making as little conversation as possible and just getting this shit done. I'm already on edge being in the same car as this dumbass, and I'm trying my best not to put a bullet in his fucking head.

"We all took bets on if you'd be able to fuck that fat chick and still be able to do the job. Me? I thought you'd fall in love the way you were looking at her. Guess I was wrong."

I pull up a block away, gripping the wheel, my knuckles turning white. "Let's finish this and get out of here."

Getting out of my car, I go around and make my way towards the bank. I feel Nick close behind me, and I take long strides, wanting to get this done as fast as possible.

The bank is situated between two buildings downtown and has a back service entrance for bank vendors and armored vehicles. This is where most of everything will go down tomorrow. There's a door with a keypad and a lock for access. There's also an alarm on the other side of the door that requires a ten-digit combination.

Beside the door is a big bay that opens up for deliveries. That door requires two scanned passes, two keypad codes, and disarming two separate alarms. Every code to get into the bay door has to be input simultaneously. One of the reasons we're waiting until Monday is because by the time we arrive, the armored car will already be here and waiting on the early employees to let them in before the bank opens. We want the back door and the bay open when we go inside. We need the easiest access in and out, and this is it.

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When Nick and I reach the back of the building, I count and wait for the camera to move. I've been watching the security footage, and I know exactly when the camera will point in this direction before moving to the next position, giving us a thirty second window to move.

"You ready?" I look to Nick, and he nods his head.

When the time is up and I hear the camera move, we slip to the back door and I scan my pass. I was able to steal a pass from someone on the cleaning crew, duplicate it, and place it in the bathroom for an employee to locate, making it seem as if the cleaning crew member misplaced it for only a short time. The hassle to replace the keypad coding for all employees on their passes is a huge pain in the ass and not something they would have done for just a minor slip up.

As I scan the pass, the light turns green, and I use the key I copied from Tessa to unlock the back door.

Nick and I slip inside silently, closing the door behind us before the camera can turn back to us. Once we're inside, the motion sensor goes off, and slow beeps build up to louder, faster beeps. We have fifteen seconds to enter in the ten-digit code. Otherwise, the alarms will go off and the authorities will be notified.

I watch Nick as he goes over to the keypad and punches in the code. Afterwards, we wait with our breaths held until two small beeps and a flash of green light indicate the motion sensor alarm is off.

"I'll be five minutes, tops. Wait here."

Nick nods and stands by the back door. He's a piece of shit, but he doesn't want to go to jail either, so I'm not worried about him making a scene and possibly fucking up his pay day.

I walk through the back hall and make my way to the lobby of the bank. Once there, I start with the surrounding offices and any desks that customer service employees sit at.

At each location, there's a camera and a button they can push to alert the authorities of a situation. There's also one inside the vault, but we aren't getting in there tonight.

Each button is individually monitored, so I'd have no way of controlling all of them on the day of the job. Manually coming in and cutting them is the best option right now.

I take out my wire snips and count off as I make my way around the room, locating every alarm button and clipping the connecting wire. At least if shit goes south tomorrow, someone can't run to their station or their desk and hit the button in panic.

Once I'm finished doing the offices, I make my way down the teller line, clipping each one. When I get to Tessa's area, I hold the snips there, hesitating, but I don't know why. It's as if I'm afraid she won't be safe if I do it, but I don't have a choice.

I clip the wire. I move out from behind the desks and make my way back down the hall. This is as much as we can do tonight without pushing our luck.

When I reach Nick, he's in the same spot as before and ready to go.

"We all good?"

"Yeah. Everything's in place for tomorrow." Nick goes to turn, but I grab his arm,

pulling him back. “The code?”

“Oh, yeah.” He gives me a wicked smile, like he was just going to bust out of here, set off the alarm and leave me to clean up. This fucker is looking to get shot, and I’ll be all too glad to handle it when the job is done.

He goes over to the keypad and enters the code, and we wait for the beep. Once the red light flashes, we’ve got ten seconds to exit before the motion alarm is back in place.

I scan my pass on the inside panel and use the key to unlock the door. I count before opening it, making sure the camera is facing away.

Once we’re in the clear, we exit, and I seal the door behind me before making a run to get around the corner in time.

When we reach the other side of the wall, we walk away like nothing happened. We’re both cool and collected as we make it to my car and get in.

Pulling away from the curb, I look over to see Nick looking at me.

“Easy peasy, Sparrow. Now let’s see how well you do tomorrow.”

I don’t like the darkness I see in his eyes. Not one bit.

Chapter 17

Tessa

“You look...” Harper pauses as she runs her eyes over me, and I’m pretty sure I don’t want to know how she thinks I look. She never fails to take a jab at me. Besides, she

looks like hell herself. I don't think I've ever seen her this out of sorts. It looks like she went on an all-night bender and has yet to wash off her make-up from the day before.

Her shirt is covered in what I can only guess is food. She can get a little sloppy sometimes, but this is past that for her.

"This place is a mess." I cut her off. One weekend away and the whole apartment looks to have fallen apart. The coffee table is littered with soda cans and a variety of junk food. There are even chips smashed into the rug. I have to clench my jaw to stop me from saying something.

"I'll get to it later." Harper waves her hand at the mess like it's no big deal, but for some reason that just pisses me off more. Maybe because I don't want to be here. I want to be back in Sean's apartment, lying in his bed.

"Where have you been?" I can tell she's prying for information about Sean. She had her eyes all over him when she opened the door, but he paid her no mind, his eyes never leaving me. I'd noticed that a lot about him.

Even when we'd gone out on Saturday, women always seemed to be looking at him. Not that I can blame them. He stands out in a room. Hell, I think a waitress even tried to hit on him when we were having lunch, but he didn't seem to notice. His full attention was always on me, like no one else was around, and I found myself not caring that they looked at him, because it didn't matter.

“With Sean.”

“All weekend?” Her tone carries a sneer of disbelief. She did just see him in our doorway dropping me off, it can’t be that hard to believe. I mean, really.

“Yeah, he kinda didn’t want me to leave.” I can’t help but take a little jab myself. I want her to know to keep her eyes off him because Sean is mine, and he’s made it clear I’m his. I won’t have him coming over and her pulling some shit or trying to put me down in front of him. I’ve put up with a lot from Harper but now I seem to give a shit.

“Well, you’re here now,” she smirks, and her words burn. Point Harper.

“Some people do have to work, Harper.” I push past her, not wanting to have this verbal jab fest. I may be over her shit right now, but I also don’t want to hurt her with the things that are suddenly on the tip of my tongue. I want to let all the hateful comments fly and give her a nice dose of her own medicine.

Not right now, though. Right now, all I want is a hot shower and to go to bed. Tomorrow can’t come fast enough. I’ll be back with Sean and out of this apartment that I suddenly hate.

“Are you cooking dinner?” I hear her call out behind me, making me roll my eyes.

“No,” I say, before shutting my bedroom door and dropping my bag on the floor. I pull my phone out and scan for any messages. It’s been maybe three minutes since he left and I’m already checking them. This is going to be a long night.

It is. I toss and turn all night until my alarm finally goes off. I drag myself from the bed and slowly get ready, taking a little extra time to do my hair and apply some light make-up.

I pull out my favorite work dress, hoping it'll give me some confidence. It's violet and hugs my body, but it looks professional and comes down to my knees. I pair it with some caramel kitten heels. I smile as I look at myself in the mirror. I wonder if Sean will like it.

I check my phone again and see no messages. Maybe he's just crazy busy.

Me: Miss you <3

I put the phone back in my purse, making sure the sound is on so I can hear it when he does respond.

When I finally leave my room, I see Harper sitting at the breakfast bar eating a bowl of cereal.

"We're going to be late," she warns, shoving a spoonful into her mouth.

"We're fine. I'm just going to grab a muffin." I go to the pantry, grab two, and toss them into my purse. I'll eat them when I get to my desk. I reach for the coffee pot but see none has been made. I bite my tongue.

I make it every morning. She couldn't do it this once.

When I hear my phone beep, I hurriedly grab it, but the message is just from the bank manager.

Steve: I need you to close today.

“Guessing lover boy isn’t texting you.”

“What?” I look over at her as she gets up to put her bowl in the sink.

“The look on your face when you got that text. Guessing it wasn’t him.”

She’s right, but I play it off. “No, just Steve telling me I need to close today.” I hate opening and closing, plus it’s going to cut into when Sean is picking me up. I should probably let him know.

Me: I have to work late. Pick me up at 7?

I stare down at the phone, willing him to text me back. Just a simple ‘okay’ would work.

“We gotta go.”

Giving up, I drop the phone back into my purse again.

“Let me grab something and I’ll be ready.” I dart to my room, snatch a bag and put a few items in it. I might need to stay at Sean’s tonight and tomorrow. I dig through my drawer but can’t find any sexy underwear.

Maybe I could run out at lunch and get something. I wonder what Sean’s face would look like if I walked out of his bathroom in nothing but lingerie. Yeah, definitely going at lunch to find something.

It still blows my mind how last week I couldn’t even think about walking around naked in front of anyone, and now here I am, openly baiting Sean with my body.

It’s him. How he treated me all weekend. I feel sexy and needed. He kissed every

inch of my body like he couldn't get enough of every part of me.

I close the drawer, grab my bag, and meet an inpatient Harper at the door.

We walk to the train in silence, and it isn't until we board does she start in.

"Are you going to be checking your phone all day? It looks a little sad." Her tone is mocking. Like I'm a poor little puppy that she wants to pat on the head.

"Why do you care?" Looking over at her, I raise my eyebrow. I don't get what her problem is.

"I'm just saying. You had a weekend fling. Don't count on it being more."

"You know nothing about what Sean and I did this weekend. Or what it means."

She looks at me like she feels sad for me, and it pisses me off. "Tessa, this is how men work. They fuck you all weekend, tell you how wonderful you are, how much they want you. Then bam, they're gone. Weekend of fun over, and they're on to the next."

I'm guessing that's what Nick did to her, because she seems bitter. I don't get why. If I were her, I'd be happy if Nick never called me again. Especially after how he treated her at the bar. No way.

"It's not like that," I say defensively, hating that anyone would think Sean would be like that. He may look tough and a little scary, but he's sweet. He'd never do anything to hurt me. He did what he told me he would do. Made me fall for him before the weekend was over.

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“Yeah, he’s blowing up your phone, isn’t he?”

“He’s working.”

“Takes two seconds to send a text.”

She’s right. It only takes a second to respond. Maybe he’s in a meeting. That doesn’t count for last night, though. I kept thinking I’d get a good night text or something, but all I got was radio silence. Until this morning when I had to send him one.

“I’m not trying to be a bitch,” she adds, and I almost want to laugh. No, she doesn’t have to try to be a bitch, it’s always there. “Just enjoy it for what it was, a weekend of fun, and let it go. I bet he gave you some great orgasms. You could have one just looking at him.”

I glare at her, thankful that the train has stopped and it’s our turn to get off. I don’t wait for her as I make my way off the train and towards the bank.

When I get there, I quickly open the doors to the bank and turn off the alarms. “Get the front ready. I’m dropping stuff in my office, and then we need to get the quarterly shipment ready. The armored truck will be here soon.”

I don’t wait for her to respond.

When I get to my desk, I pull my phone out. There’s still nothing from Sean, and I’ve had enough. I’ve got nothing to lose, so fuck it.

Me: I love you.

Chapter 18

Sean

Our van pulls up to the back of the bank, and we park. We've got about ten minutes before the truck pulls up to go into the bank and take the shipment.

"I want everybody calm. We've got this all planned out. We stick exactly to the plan, no matter what happens. If the cops show up, you guys know the exit strategy. We all clear?"

I'm in the back of the van with seven guys. One of them is the driver, and another is staying with him to guard the van. Five of us are going into the bank, and it's going to be tight as we're down one person. The guy who got himself shot in the club was supposed to be another lookout, we'll just have to be extra careful.

"Everybody check your weapons and make sure they're good to go. Remember, nobody shoots. I don't want any gunfire inside. Clear?"

I pass out the guns, making sure everyone is armed. I don't like going in guns blazing, and the quieter we keep this, the easier our getaway. But we'll need them inside to get everyone's attention.

"Masks," I say, checking my watch. It's almost showtime.

The crew pull down their ski masks and do as they're told. I reach up to pull mine down, but as I do, I catch Nick's eyes. He's giving me a cold stare as he pulls his down, and seeing him with only his eyes showing is menacing. Something is coming, I can feel it. Instinct has kept me alive all these years, and I need to watch my back

today.

As I finish pulling my mask down, I see the armored car pull up. Just a few more moments and we're in.

The guards are the same ones that come each quarter, and I know their routine. The staff inside is at a minimum, and this is the best time to do this to limit casualties.

Tessa.

I stop that thought before it starts. I can't go there yet. Not yet. I have to get through this and then make her forgive me. I can do it. I can be strong enough to get us through this.

"Everybody on my mark. Silent, and follow the plan."

I wait just a beat, watching from a few yards away as the guards exit the truck and put in the dual codes. Once the bay is all the way open, it begins.

I take a deep breath. "Now."

The five of us exit the back of the van, guns held up and trained on the guards.

"Drop your weapons. Step away from the door." The codes have been entered, and the alarms have been turned off. So far, so good.

The two guards do as we say. Two of my men approach them, take their weapons, and secure them.

One of my men goes to the armored truck and takes the driver out from behind the wheel. He secures him, taking his weapon and zip-tying him up.

When we have the three guards bound and gagged, we pull them into the bay door and off to the side. One of my men stays with them to keep guard while four of us proceed inside.

We make our way silently down the hallway to the front of the bank. It's still just under an hour before the first customer arrives, but the vault has been opened, and the money inside is ready for shipment.

As we continue to the end of the hall, Paul, one of Heavy's men, moves up to lead the group.

We reach the end of the hall, and he looks back to give us the signal. He holds up three fingers counting down to one, and we all rush forward.

"Hands up where we can see them. Everybody out here on the ground."

My eyes immediately look for Tessa, and I see her in the doorway of her office. Harper lets out a scream, but other than that, it's silent.

Tessa stands there, frozen, but after blinking a few times, she holds up her hands and lies on the ground. Harper sees her and starts crying, then follows suit. Another teller stands in shock, and one of my men goes over, pulling her out from behind the teller line and making her lie face down with the others.

Paul turns and points to me, Nick, and the other guy, Brian. He nods towards the vault, keeping his weapon trained on the three women as we carry out the rest of the plan.

So far, so good.

I take the keys to the vault door out of my pocket and let the three of us in. Brian and

Nick go to the inner vault to take the cash while I stand guard and cut the lines for the alarms inside the main vault.

Or so they think.

I wait until I hear them in the back, bagging up the cash and loading it onto the dolly in the vault. We're planning on taking this out the same way the guards were, keeping it as easy as possible.

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Once I know they're in the back, I reach over to the desk where Tessa pulled out the safety deposit box keys. I pull key number 425 out of my pocket and use it and the deposit keys to open the dual lock.

Opening the box, I don't take a second to look at the contents. I take out the single small yellow envelope and silently close the box again.

It takes me thirty seconds, tops, and I've got the keys back inside the drawer, with no one the wiser. Just as the drawer rolls shut, I turn to see Nick standing there with Brian.

For a second, I see something flash in Nick's eyes, and I think I'm busted.

"We good?" I ask, nodding at the bags of money on the dolly behind them.

"Yeah. Piece of cake," Brian says, pushing the dolly out of the vault.

Nick grips his gun tighter, and my fingers start to tingle.

"Less than two minutes," I say, reminding him we're running out of time. Nick nods in acknowledgement and makes his way out of the vault behind Brian.

Just as I exit the vault, I lean over and hit the button for the police. Remember when I said criminals always play up to the job, never after? This is where my plan begins.

Brian wheels the cash out of the lobby and down the small hallway. Nick and I walk over to Paul, letting him know it's done, so we can get the fuck out of here.

Just as I walk over, I can feel the shift in Nick. He's just fucked up both of our plans.

Before I can blink, he's over by Tessa and pulling her up by her hair off the floor.

"Put her down!" I shout through the room, my voice echoing off the marble. I raise my gun pointing it at his head, but he pulls Tessa closer, putting his own gun to her head.

"What do you say you tell me what was in that box, Sparrow."

I finally make myself look at Tessa, her gold eyes terrified. I see the look on her face as she realizes who we are.

"Nick, what the fuck are you doing! Let's go, man!" Paul shouts, clearly wanting to get the fuck out of here like Nick should, too.

"Not until pretty boy gives up what he's really after. Because it wasn't this piece of ass. Was it?"

He's got his gun pressed against her head, and tears are streaming down her face. She's terrified, and she hasn't spoken a word. My heart is nearly beating out of my chest, but my gun is straight and my aim unwavering.

"Don't make me do it, Nick. Let her go. Now." I don't want to have to kill him like this, but I will.

"Nick?" Harper says from the floor, but he doesn't turn to acknowledge her. He shoves his gun harder against Tessa's temple.

"You tell me what was in that box, or she's dead. I don't give two shits about killing this bitch."

Rage boils inside me, but I take a breath and calm myself.

“Close your eyes, little fox.” She looks at me for a half second before doing as I ask. In that quick look, I see that the trust is still there. She may not know what’s going on, but she trusts me.

“Maybe you should close yours,” Nick says, pulling his trigger.

There’s a moment of complete silence after the sound rings out, before all the women start screaming.

The sound of a second bullet reverberates around us as I pull my trigger and land a shot right between Nick’s eyes.

Before a heartbeat has passed, I’m there in front of him, catching Tessa and holding her face to get her to look at me.

“Look at me, baby. Tessa! Open your eyes.”

She opens them, looking at me and blinking rapidly. Her ears are probably ringing from the blank going off, and I’m sure she can’t hear what I’m saying. I replaced everyone’s gun but mine with blanks, knowing some stupid shit might happen.

I pick her up and throw her over my shoulder. I turn back to look at Paul.

“Stick to the plan!” I shout at him, and he bolts out the door.

Running behind him with Tessa over my shoulder, I make my way out of the bay door in time to see three of my guys loading up the cash as the other two wait with the van.

I slip off to the right and out the side door of the bay before they spot me. Once I'm outside, I see an unmarked car waiting for me. The guys have their money, so they won't wait around, and I hear the sirens already on their way.

I open the driver side door and help Tessa in and over to the passenger seat. When she's there and finally looks at me, I take off my mask and reach for her.

Smack.

I feel the sting of her hand across my face, and though I know I deserve it, it doesn't make it any easier.

Reaching into the console, I pull out the insurance I had Sal drop in here for me.

"Just relax, little fox. I'll explain everything soon enough."

I see the shock hit her eyes when she realizes what I've just done, and she looks down to see the needle in her arm.

"It will be easier this way, Tessa. I promise. I love you, baby. Just sleep."

Chapter 19

Sean

"You have no idea how happy I am to see you," I say, looking up at Dimitri, who's standing in the doorway to his private plane. "I didn't think you'd make the trip. I was sure I'd be having a layover somewhere to meet you."

Dimitri just shoots me a cocky grin. "It's my little 'fuck you' to the FBI, even if they never even know it. Also, I'm a little anxious to get my hands on the package."

He steps back from the doorway, revealing a tall thin man behind him. “Get their bags. We need to get out of here.” The thin man, who looks to be in his late forties and is dressed in a relaxed suit, darts down the stairs, going straight for my vehicle.

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“Bring her up already.” Dimitri waves at me and disappears into the plane.

I look down at Tessa in my arms, her head against my shoulder, her auburn hair partially covering her face, and I feel my heart clench. What if she never forgives me? I was taken aback by the smack. Not that I didn’t have it coming, but it just didn’t feel like her. Tessa doesn’t have a mean bone in her body, and I drove her to that kind of anger.

Not only that. God knows the fucking nightmares she might have because of that piece of shit Nick. Maybe his death will help ease that for her. Or maybe it will just make me more of a monster in her eyes.

There was no choice in ending his life. Nick was like a dog with a fucking bone, and once he knew I’d taken something from the safety deposit box, he would have stopped at nothing until he got his hands on whatever it was.

I didn’t want him coming after us, not that he would’ve been able to find us, but it’s better this way. I hope that Heavy thinks I got scared after popping Nick and that’s why I took off. Not coming in for my share of the take. I don’t see him searching me out to give me my cut, so I’m certain our business is finished.

I take the stairs two at a time, entering the extravagant plane. I’ve been on nice planes before, even a few private ones, but none as big as this. I knew Dimitri had money, but for fuck’s sake, this is beyond that.

“There’s a bedroom.” He points to the back of the plane. “First door on your left.”

I nod, thanking him. “I’m going to lie with her until we take off so I don’t have to buckle her in.”

Dimitri just nods in response and takes a seat in one of the comfortable-looking chairs. I make my way to the back of the plane and open the bedroom door. It’s a pretty good size, and there’s a bed right in the middle of the room

I lay her down in the center of the bed, taking off her shoes, then joining her as I start to feel the plane move.

I pull her to me, burying my face in her hair, something that I find myself always doing with her now. Just the smell of her seems to calm me. I breathe her in, telling myself she’s okay. Seeing that gun to her head, even knowing it wasn’t loaded, ripped me apart inside. I’d never felt such blind rage before in my life.

Kissing the spot under her ear, I try to enjoy this moment for a little while. I know when she finally comes to, things won’t be like this anymore. I’m going to have to fight to make her want to stay with me. I can only pray that one day she will want to stay.

“Choose me,” I whisper, knowing she can’t hear me.

And I will fight to keep her until I take my last breath. I wish I could say I was unselfish enough to let her go, but I just can’t. I don’t think I could breathe without her.

I spent so many years just drifting through life, one job after another, thinking I had things figured out. Then there she was, sitting right in the middle of my exit strategy. Plans had already been made. I’d already gotten Heavy’s attention on the bank, and before I could even try to pull out, he already had his sights set on her. My little fox.

If I'd known she was out there, maybe I could've built a better life. Done things a little differently. Not gotten mixed up in the things I did when I was living on the streets as a kid. But back then it was mostly just about eating. I might not have been as dirty as some of the other criminals, but I still broke the law. Played by my own rules.

I hold her for a little longer before I pull myself from the bed, knowing Dimitri is probably waiting for me. I lean down and press a kiss to her lips.

"Love you, baby," I tell her, as she rolls to her side and reaches out for something. A little furrow appears between her brows when she comes up with nothing. It makes my breath catch. That's gotta be something. In her sleep she's still looking for me, reaching out to grab a hold of me.

I take one last look at her before heading out of the room to find Dimitri, who's still sitting in the same chair I left him in. I take the one across from him as he takes a sip of some brown liquor from his glass.

A tall blonde flight attendant appears. "Can I get you something to drink?" She bends over a little, trying to give me a shot of her cleavage, but I just turn my head and shaking it, dismissing her.

She tries again, making her voice drop a little, like I didn't understand what she was offering me. I want her to step back. I can smell her perfume, and it's eating away at the sweet smell of my little fox that I still have in my nose. "Are you sure I can't get you—"

"He's not interested," Dimitri pauses for a second, "Cindy." He'd clearly forgotten her name.

She huffs a little as she walks away.

“I don’t know where the agency gets some of these women, but next time I’m requesting a man. My Laura would be raising hell right now if she was here.” He says it with a smile on his face. Yeah, I think I’d get off on the idea of my woman being jealous over me, too, because right now I think she probably just wants to smack me again.

“You got it?” he finally asks.

I reach into my back pocket, retrieving the small package and my phone, and toss them on the table.

Curiosity gets the best of me. “What comes in such a small package that a man will willing to pay over a hundred million for?”

Dimitri opens the envelope and pulls out a small box. He opens it gingerly.

A simple ring sits inside. I raise my eyebrows. The ring is nothing to write home about, just a gold band with an emerald. Only a carat by the looks of it, if that—nowhere near the price he paid for it.

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I look at Dimitri with a question in my eyes.

“It was my mother’s. I want to ask Laura to marry me.” He pulls the ring out of the box, admiring it, the smile stretching across his face as he looks at it with such love.

“The first time I asked Laura to marry me, I gave her a giant ring. The thing almost cost more than this plane. She told me to drop dead.”

A burst of laughter escapes my mouth.

“She said I was trying to buy her. Maybe I was in a way. I wanted to impress her.” His eyes lock on mine. “I just wanted her to be mine.”

“You think that will do it?” I ask, leaning back in my chair.

“God, I hope so, or I’ll have to take a page from your book and do a little kidnapping.”

I shake my head at the reminder. “Wasn’t there an easier way to get into that safety deposit box? Or a cheaper one?”

“Maybe. But I didn’t want to risk falling into one of the FBI’s traps, and I wanted to make sure I got it safely to me. If someone knew how much it meant to me, they could use it against me. I’ve got more money than I’ll ever need, and I would have paid ten times what I paid you for it.”

His hand locks around the ring, gripping it in a fierce hold.

“I hope she says yes,” I tell him. Meaning it.

“Me, too.” He puts the ring back in the box, then stores it inside his suit jacket. He picks up a folder sitting on the seat next to him and tosses it on the table between us. I look down at it.

“You are now Mr. and Mrs. Cardinal. I thought an ornithological last name still seemed appropriate.”

I flip open the folder and thumb through the new passports. “And I didn’t even have to ask her,” I joke, thinking about our now-married status.

“Everything you need is in there. All your documents and bank codes. I also moved your old bank accounts to your new name and a new bank.”

I raise my eyebrows at that because I never asked him to do that.

“You’re welcome,” he says cockily, before shooting back the rest of his drink. No wonder the FBI wants their hands on him.

“It’s a long flight to the South Pacific. Get some sleep and kill that phone.” He nods to the cellphone sitting in front of me.

“I hope you win your girl over, too. It hurts when they push away.”

“We’re criminals,” I remind him. No wonder our women are pushing us away.

“Then do what you do best, Sparrow. You’re a thief, after all. Steal her heart.” With that little bit of wisdom, he stands and leaves.

I pick up the phone, ready to smash it, when I see all the missed text messages. They

must have come before we got in the air. I skip all of them and go straight to Tessa's.

Tessa: I love you.

Maybe there's more hope than I thought.

Chapter 20

Tessa

It's all in pieces.

I remember everything from the bank robbery. The panic at first seeing the men with guns, then my training kicked in, and I did what they asked. I remember lying on the floor, my heartbeat in my throat as the men walked around like they knew exactly what was where. This was planned. That was the only thought that kept running through my mind.

Harper's crying was making me nervous, and I wanted her to be quiet. I just closed my eyes tightly and prayed for it to be over soon.

I remember my hair being pulled so hard I thought it had been ripped out. The gun pressed to my temple, and then thoughts of dying flashed through my mind.

Words were exchanged, but all I could do was wish I could see Sean one last time. One final time to say goodbye and tell him I love him.

Right before the gun went off, my wish came true. He was there. Only betrayal was the only thing I could see.

Once the gun went off, I thought I was dead. My ears were ringing so loud, I couldn't

think. I may have blacked out, but I remember Sean's eyes. I remember him coming to catch me.

Even with his treachery, I felt safe in his arms.

But seeing the dead body of Nick beside me would be burned into my brain for the rest of my life. And after that sight, things went fuzzy.

I was in the car with Sean, and my hand was stinging. I hit him with more anger than I'd ever felt before. Then there was a pinch on my arm, and it all went black.

There was a glimpse of a plane, and the feeling of Sean picking me up. There was a flash of someone else—a man named Dimitri? I don't know if that's real or a dream.

There was a bed that moved, and Sean was holding me.

But then he was gone.

I remember crying and kicking my legs, then another pinch on my arm. Sean was holding me down while I screamed, and then it all went black again.

My body aches. I feel like I've been in the same position too long, and I roll over to stretch. I can't remember what day it is, but it's warm all around me, so I must be with Sean.

I reach for him, but there's nothing beside me.

Sitting up, I see that I'm in a big, white fluffy bed surrounded by tons of pillows. There's a canopy over the top of it with pretty gauzy material hanging from it, which rustles in the breeze.

I look down and see I'm completely naked, but I smell Sean all over me. I don't feel like I had sex, so he must have just slept on top of me.

Looking beyond the bed, I see the room is white and bathed in light, courtesy of giant windows and two huge glass doors that lead out onto a balcony.

I wrap the bedsheet around myself and get out of bed.

The cool tile feels nice against my feet, and my legs wobble a little as I take a few steps.

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When I'm at the balcony, I can finally see everything clearly. There's sand and palm trees and an ocean that stretches out as far as the eye can see. It's utterly beautiful and looks like something out of one of my fantasies.

Standing there looking at paradise, everything comes crashing back to me. This isn't the place of my dreams, it's a lie from a thief.

Chapter 21

Sean

"She refuses to eat. She won't talk to me. Hell, she won't even fucking look at me. But I don't want to push her. Not yet."

"She'll get there. It won't happen overnight, Sean. You'll have to earn it from her."

Sal's words offer me comfort and remind me that I'll have to fight for what I want. I reach out and hug him, needing his support.

When Dimitri first offered me the job, I set my plan into place. I knew that I would need a location that was isolated, and I knew Sal would have to come with me. Until Tessa, I'd never had any family besides him.

I bought the island in the South Pacific through a private sale.

Laura's father, a reclusive billionaire, had owned it. When he died, she didn't want the place, but she knew it could be of use. I'd never met her, but if Dimitri said she could

be trusted, then I knew she could. Now that I know just how much he cares for her, I understand that she's probably the most trustworthy person in the world. Especially after all he's done.

The name of the island is Veilig. It means 'safe' in Dutch.

The island is only accessible by boat, but luckily it's only a short ride to the mainland. Sal hired a couple of people willing to work and live here full time—a few who keep the grounds and a couple who maintain the inside of the home.

Two of the women he hired are certified midwives, so when the time comes, they can monitor Tessa while she's pregnant. Seems you can get anything set up if you have the money.

When I told Sal my plan to live on Veilig and cut all ties, he was more than willing to agree. He'd spent his whole life digging snow in Chicago and trying to keep safe from street thugs. An isolated paradise was just what he was looking for.

My original plan didn't include Tessa, but as soon as I saw her, things changed. My idea of a home changed. My modified plan didn't include drugging her and bringing her here, but after what happened with Nick, I couldn't risk it.

There won't be any blowback from Nick—he's not someone Heavy will miss—but I knew after Tessa recognized me she wouldn't come with me here willingly, and I couldn't risk it. I had Sal go by her place the morning of the robbery and pack up a few things, leaving a note and some cash for Harper. The note just said she was safe and wouldn't be coming back. I think the money I left for Harper will keep her quiet. At least for a little while.

Sal hopped on a plane to South America right after and took care of business, meeting us here later. We needed to travel separately, just in case. Neither of us is worried

about the police. I'm not sure they're working too hard on tracking down the killer of a local criminal with a rap sheet a mile long. And my hitting the alarm in the vault on the way out was my ace in the hole.

The cops arrived just in time to catch some of Heavy's men, but the money still got away. So while Heavy has his money right now, I don't think it will be for long. The two guys they picked up will sing like birds once they know what kind of sentence awaits them, and they'll be the ones to blame when the cops come knocking on Heavy's door.

The bank gets its money back, Heavy and his team go to jail, and I'm long gone. Not necessarily a free man, but I plan on spending the rest of my life living here with Tessa, so I'm not worried about what I am in the eyes of the law.

It's been three days since she woke up, and it's not getting any better. I thought maybe once she got some distance, she would start to change her mind. Start to see what happened and realize that it was for the best. That all that mattered was that we were together.

I tried explaining it to her while she sat on the balcony and looked out at the ocean, but she wouldn't acknowledge anything I said. I've tried to give her space. Not having her touch is eating me up inside.

Feeling the ache deep in my soul, I long to hold her to me and make it all okay. I don't want to force her, but I just can't see any other way. She has to snap out of this fog she's in, or I'm afraid she'll be lost to me forever.

"I'm going to do some fishing today. Good luck, Sean." With that, Sal is gone, leaving me alone.

I walk to the lower patio that looks over the sandy beach. It's so beautiful here, but I

feel like a part of me is dead inside. I need Tessa to come back to me. I need her light to make my darkness go away.

I didn't think it was possible for someone to get inside you, and imprint themselves into your skin so quickly, but it happened.

There is no me without her, and I know that there is no her without me. These feelings I have aren't one sided, and as much as she's upset with me, I know it's still in there.

I know that even if she never forgives me, I can love enough for the both of us. And while I'm strong, I'm still weak without her. I'm not even half a man without her in my arms.

Making up my mind, I turn from the patio and walk towards our bedroom. She may fight me, and she may even hate me after, but I'll make her see. I'll make her remember what we had and that I only did what I did because I love her.

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I'm going to remind her of our connection and how truly special it is. I'm going to remind her that my touch is the only touch she craves and that forgiving me is her only option. I'm sick to my stomach at not having her touch, and even if all she does is slap me, I'll take it.

I'll take even the smallest scrap of her attention. I'm just that desperate.

Chapter 22

Tessa

"Oh, God." This has to be the best dream ever. I'm back in Sean's bed, his head between my legs, his tongue stretching my tight opening, his beard scratching the inside of my thighs. His mouth makes love to me as his fingers force me to climax.

Everything else seems to just wash away. It's just him and me, still in our perfect weekend.

"Cum for me, little fox. I need you," he murmurs against my body before licking into my pussy with deep wet strokes. He goes back to my clit, dragging it into his mouth and sucking. Slipping two fingers inside me, he searches for my G-spot and sends me over the edge. My body coils and then succumbs as I call out his name, and the orgasm takes me.

I try to clamp my legs closed, but Sean buries his face deeper into the folds of my sex, making sure to get every drop of my orgasm. In my dream he's soaking it all up and loving me with every inch of his mouth.

Too quickly the heat is gone and it makes my eyes open lazily. That's when I remember.

Betrayal.

Death.

He used me to get into the bank, then he killed a man right in front of me.

It all comes crashing down on me. I stare at him as he sits in a chair in the corner of the room. He gazes back at me, licking his lips from the orgasm he just gave me. That was no dream. It was him. I roll over to face the other way. I don't want to have my eyes on him.

I hate the way I feel about it. I feel like it's ripping me in two. Part of me loves him, and part of me is so angry at him I can't speak. I hate the part of me that loves him, but it's still there.

Love isn't just a switch you can flip on and off. I've learned that over the past few days. I loved him before I understood what was really happening, and that love doesn't seem to be fading with this new knowledge. I'm not sure who I'm madder at, myself or him.

"You have to eat, baby." I ignore him. It's what I've been doing since I got here. I don't want to talk to him because my ability to resist him isn't so great. The only wall I can seem to keep up is silence. It wouldn't take much to crack, even knowing the things I know. Does that make me pathetic? Knowing he used me for all of this, yet I still want him? He has blood on the very hands that have held me close at night. The hands that captured my face as he rained kisses all over me.

"You can't go on not eating," he tries again. He's been on this eating thing since

yesterday. To be honest I hadn't even realized I hadn't eaten. I think with all the crying, I just didn't feel up to it. Nor was I hungry.

Now I am, but seeing how much it bothers him that I'm not eating, I'm doing it on purpose. It's spiteful and immature, but I can't find the energy to care. It might be childish, but I like seeing the misery on his face. I want him to be as miserable as I am. He did this to us. He ripped us apart and shattered everything. I should've known he was too good to be true.

He has taken everything from me: my life, my job, what few friends I had, and the man I thought I loved. He made me fall in love with him so he could use me. Then took me from the only home I've ever known.

I hear him move, coming to the other side of the bed so I'm once again looking at him. He drops to his knees next to the bed.

"If you don't eat, you're going to get sick." He pauses for a second, running his hands through his messy hair. I have the urge to reach out and fix it, but I clench my hand into a fist so that I don't. "This is killing me, baby. I love you. Just..."

I don't want to hear what he has to say. The walls I have up are already shaking just looking at him. The miserable look on his face is killing me. I hate it, but I can't seem to bring myself to swipe it away for him.

"If you stop talking, I'll eat." His jaw clenches, but he nods his head as he stands and leaves the room.

He comes back moments later with a tray in hand. It must have been sitting right outside the door. The sight of the pancakes and bacon makes my stomach growl loudly. Sean scowls at the sound, like my being hungry is making him angry.

“It’s your fault I haven’t eaten. If I was home, I bet I would have eaten by now,” I say defensively. That’s probably not true. I’d most likely be in bed, curled up and crying about Sean not being who I thought he was.

What’s just as scary is when I think about what would have happened if he’d left me behind. I’d never see him again. That thought seems more painful than this.

I sit up and let him place the tray over my lap. He goes back to his chair in the corner to sit in silence like I asked. I want to snap at him to leave, but then he probably would. I like when he’s close, even if I want to smack him.

When the first bite of fluffy pancake and sweet syrup hits my lips, I moan. I look up in time to see Sean adjusting himself in his chair. His erection is clear as day, even from across the room. He licks his lips, and I wonder if he’s thinking about my food, or still tasting me on his lips from earlier.

I get halfway through my food when the silence becomes too much.

“Why am I here?” I finally ask. Maybe if I ask the questions, I can control the conversation.

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“Because I can’t live without you.” His tone is so matter-of-fact that I just stare at him. My heartbeat picks up at his words. I can’t live without you. God, I want to run and jump into his lap. Those words seem so much deeper than an ‘I love you.’

I can’t live without you

“You’re a liar. I can’t trust anything you say,” I tell him, wanting the words to be true. I want him to make me believe him.

“I’ve never once lied to you.”

“You said you were looking at my bank to set up an account,” I throw back at him. He never intended to open an account with us; he just used that lie to talk to me.

“No, I said I was looking at your bank for work. You took it as I wanted to set up an account. I never said that.”

I drop my fork down onto the plate. “It was a lie. Spin it how you like.” My appetite is gone once again, but I ate more than half of what he gave me.

He takes a deep breath and leans back in his chair.

The silence starts again.

“Why did you do this?” My words come out in a whisper. Wasn’t there another way to have gone about this if he wanted me? Was the bank robbery more important than me?

“The wheels were in motion before I ever even saw you. I couldn’t stop it by then. It was all too late. I could only do what I did.”

“I don’t know what that means, Sean. If that’s even your real name!” I scream out the last part. I don’t even know if the man I’ve fallen in love with is real.

Leaning forward, he places his elbows on his knees. I can see the dark circles under his eyes. He looks like he hasn’t slept in days. I know he crawls into bed with me each night and leaves before I wake up, leaving only his smell behind.

“I’m still the man you fell in love with, Tessa,” he shoots back, understanding what I was trying to get out. “The person I’ve been when I’m with you is who I am. The things I whispered in your ear when we made love. When I held you tight and told you I wanted a family. When I stroked your belly, dreaming of our baby growing in there. It was all true. Every. Single. Thing.”

“You used me,” I retort. I think I’m trying to remind myself of this more than remind him.

“I had no choice. The people I got mixed up with were already planning to use you, and I couldn’t let that happen. I tried, baby. I swear I did. I went back to call it all off and to wipe my hands clean. I wanted to be able to try to get you myself. Normal boy-meets-girl shit. But like I said, they already had you in their sights, and I wasn’t letting them touch you. No one touches what’s mine, and you are mine. It was too late, and the only thing I could do was make sure you were protected in all of it. Make sure that no matter what, you and I made it.” The look he gives me dares me to challenge that, but I say nothing “You might be fighting it, but you know it’s true. Just like I’m yours. I always have been. You’ve been mine before you ever knew I existed.”

A lump forms in my throat. I don’t want to cry anymore. I’ve already cried so much.

He must see it in my eyes, the tears trying to break free.

“Tessa.”

The way he says my name is pained as need coats the word. I pull my eyes to his, feeling his stare all the way to my toes.

“You took me from the only home I’ve ever known.”

“No, I brought you to your home. Your place is with me, and this is our home. It’s made just for us. You belong here, not there. I’ve never really had a real home, Tessa, but when I saw you that first time I knew you were it. From that very first moment. You are my only home, and I want to be yours.”

“I don’t—”

“Don’t you dare say you don’t belong here with me. I don’t think I can bear it. I’ll show you. Please just let me prove it to you. If I didn’t love you and want to be with you, would I have brought you here? No, I would’ve left you behind and been long gone. But there was no leaving without you. Because without you I might as well be dead.”

Chapter 23

Sean

Tessa looks at me with big eyes. There’s hope in them, and she’s close to the edge, I just need to help her get there.

“I never wanted my world to touch you. I never wanted anything dark around me to dim your light. My biggest fear is that something would take away your innocence

and the purity of your trust in me. I never meant to deceive you, baby. Never.”

She hasn’t told me to stop talking yet, so I keep going, needing to make her understand.

“When Nick pulled you off the ground and I saw him put that gun to your head, my whole world fell apart in a split second. I knew the bullets were blanks, and I knew no harm would come to you, but knowing that in that split second you knew everything, I was crushed. I’m so sorry that it happened the way it did. That wasn’t the plan, and when everything went to shit, I had to improvise. That included getting you out of there and onto the island a lot sooner than I had anticipated.”

“I don’t understand what you mean.” Her fingers twist in the blankets as she struggles to believe me.

“The job was supposed to be simple, Tessa. In and out and no one the wiser. I had to go through with it to make sure you were safe and that no one touched you. I had to finish this one last job to give us the life I’ve been telling you about. The life where it’s just you and me and our babies.”

I take a chance, getting up from the chair again and making my way over to the bed. She doesn’t stop me as I slowly walk over, letting her know my intentions.

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“There is no me without you. And if I have to spend the rest of my life making it up to you, then I’ll do it. I will never stop trying to prove to you that what I did was never meant to hurt you and was only meant to save you. To save me.”

I walk over to the closet and pull out a small bag. I had Sal specifically pick up a few things that I knew Tessa would need if things went south. I didn’t go about doing this the right way, but I’ll die knowing the end justified the means.

“The plan was to complete the robbery and then come back to you. I was going to get you after work and tell you to pack your things and run with me. I would have told you all of it and brought you here of your own free will. But that’s not what happened, and I have to deal with the aftermath. This may not make up for taking you from that bank, but I hope it helps.”

I remove the tray and place the small bag in her lap, watching her fingers untangle from the sheet and slowly reach for it.

I kneel beside the bed, and she looks at me skeptically as she unzips the bag.

She pulls out the small brooch shaped like a fox. It was her grandmother’s. As recognition hits her, she looks up at me with watery eyes.

“The first time I ever saw you, you were wearing that. I knew it meant a lot to you, and when you showed me the picture of your grandmother wearing it, I knew it had to come with us. You’ve been my little fox since the second I laid eyes on you, Tessa. I may have not done this the right way, but if you let me, I’ll love you enough to make up for this until the end of time.”

She rubs her finger over the fox, tears running down her face. “I’m scared,” she whispers.

I cup her hands in mine as she cradles the fox. “I’m scared, too, baby. I’m scared I fucked up everything and that you won’t forgive me. I’m scared that you won’t ever look at me and feel what you once felt. But mostly I’m scared because I don’t deserve you, and one day you’ll realize it.”

“Sean.” She looks up to me with her big golden eyes, so hopeful and so soft.

No sooner is the word out of her lips than I’m on them. She’s hesitant at first, but it only takes a half a second before she melts against me, opening her lips and letting me in.

Her warm mouth tastes of syrup and sweetness, and she moans as I sweep my tongue in, claiming her. I get off the floor and sit on the bed, never breaking our kiss. I pull her to me, onto my lap, as I wrap my arms around her and hold her against my body.

She moans as I suck her tongue and then nibble her lips, the last of her resistance slipping away. It feels as if she’s letting go of all the anger, and she’s as light as a feather. She’s delicate and fragile in my arms, and I’ll never break that gentle trust again. I’ll never do anything again to make her question me or my motives. Ever.

I move my lips down her chin to her neck, needing to inhale her scent and taste every inch of her.

“I love you, Sean. Don’t ever do that to me again.”

I pull back and cup her face, looking into her liquid-gold eyes. “Never, baby. That life is in the past. It’s just us now. I love you so fucking much.”

My lips are back on hers again, needing to know that this is real. That the worst is over and it's all going to be okay.

"Please," Tessa begs, clinging to me. She pulls my body tighter to hers as she adjusts her position in my lap. She slings one leg around my waist so our cores are aligned, and her heat is against my solid cock.

"Please what, little fox? Say the words and make them dirty." I kiss down her neck, grazing the delicate skin there with my teeth.

"I want you inside me. I need you cumming in me, Sean."

Her words send a shiver down my spine, and a little cum leaks inside my jeans. Breaking away from her neck, I look into her golden eyes and see need there.

We both want to make up and bind ourselves to one another. "It's been too long since I've been inside you, baby." I hold her face with both hands before running my fingers down her chest to cup her breasts. "I won't last long. I'm too desperate."

She nods a little at me, biting her lip. I see a blush creep across her cheeks, the little freckles there making her look so innocent and pure. Her gorgeous auburn hair flows around her as she grinds down on my erection, torturing me.

"I think my little fox likes the idea of me cumming quick."

She's got on pale pink panties and one of my oversized white T-shirts. I push the shirt up, exposing her underwear and watching as she moves her hips against me.

"Is that what you want, Tessa? Do you want me to cum fast so we can do it over and over?" I look up, and she bites her lip again, nodding at me. "Say the words, little fox."

“Yes. I want you, and I want us. Make me remember why this is so perfect between us.”

Grabbing her by the waist, I flip us over so she’s flat on her back. Her legs fall open as I move between them.

“Take the shirt off. I wanna suck on your tits.”

I reach down and unbuckle my jeans, pushing them down to my thighs. I’m too wound up to take them all the way off. I will after this first time, but right now I just need our important parts to connect. Just the essentials, and then we can take it slow.

As soon as my cock is out, she falls back on the bed, the T-shirt gone. Immediately, I pull her panties to the side and press my cock to her opening.

I look up into her eyes, and as her nails slightly scratch down my chest, I thrust inside her.

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“Fuck,” I groan, nearly collapsing on top of her as I bury my face in her neck. I start to pump into her hard, needing her and needing to bind us together. It’s as if I can somehow fuse her to me with every thrust.

My breathing is labored as I try to hold on long enough so that Tessa cums, too, but I fear it’s hopeless. Her legs come up around my hips, one hand on my back, clinging to me, and one in my hair, pulling it.

“Oh, God, baby. I can’t—”

“I’m yours,” she whispers, as she licks my ear, and I’m done for.

Her words send me over the edge, cumming inside her with a loud moan. I grip her body tightly to me as I hold myself inside her, releasing my orgasm, emptying my thick load into her. I try to catch my breath. Holding her to me, I start to move again, needing to get her off as well.

I sit up a little and reach between us. I feel her clit slick with her need and my cum. “Now you owe me two orgasms, little fox. And I’m going to get them.”

I lean down and take a nipple in my mouth, and again her hand goes to my hair, holding me in place. I lightly bite it and then move to the other, making sure to give equal treatment. I feel her tight channel clench me, and her wet nectar slips down between us.

I thumb her clit harder, and with just the slight pressure on her tits, she tenses under me and shouts out her orgasm. Her body ripples, and she moans my name as she pulls

me tighter to her. It makes me feel needed and forgiven, and I want it all over again.

“Another,” I mumble against her nipple, moving down and biting the thick flesh around it. “Another orgasm, and this time I cum with you.”

“Oh, God,” she moans, and moves her hips under me.

Her first orgasm is still there, just barely dissipated as I rub her sensitive clit again and move back and forth between her nipples. I steadily thrust into her, and her body winds tighter and tighter.

“I love you, Tessa. You’re mine, and I’ll never let you go.”

“Sean,” she moans, and then her orgasm begins again.

I feel the tingle run up my cock and out the head as I thrust into her one final time, cumming into her womb. Her tight pulses pull my own orgasm from me as I give her body what it begs for.

Before she can come down from her orgasm, I flip us over so she’s on top of me, straddling my cock and lying on my chest.

“More, Tessa,” I whisper against her neck. I gently thrust into her, slowly this time and less rushed. “I need much, much more.”

She smiles down at me, then starts to move in time with my slow thrusts. “I guess we have a couple of days to make up for.”

“We’ve got an entire island to make up on.”

I feel my own smile match hers as our lips connect.

Chapter 24

Tessa

“I think you reached your goal three days ago.” I look over my shoulder teasingly at Sean who has been kissing my back for the last twenty minutes, his beard tickling me.

It’s late afternoon, and we’ve been lying on the beach most of the day. The warm breeze rolls in off the ocean, leaving a sweet smell in the air. I could lie here forever.

“Just making sure,” he says against my skin, still pressing kisses all over me, stopping every now and then for a little nibble. I’ve noticed he likes to leave little love bites in random places on my body. I keep finding them when I turn in the mirror. Discovering a new one every time I look in the mirror makes me smile.

He said he wanted to taste every part of me, and he’s been trying to reach that goal since. I’m pretty sure he got it the first day. I give him a soft smile before turning myself back to the ocean, letting him do as he pleases with me.

Since I opened myself back up to him, he hasn’t wanted to be more than a foot from me. It was adorable, until he tried to follow me into the bathroom to pee. Hell, what am I thinking? That was pretty adorable, too.

It didn’t take much for me to cave to Sean, but it’s hard to tell someone you don’t want something when you really want it. He’s offering a life that seems too good to be true, but like he said, he’s been showing me every day that he means it. I haven’t wanted for anything, and the main thing I crave is him, and he’s always at my side.

My life changed the day he entered it. From the very first moment I saw him, I came alive. It was like I was just moving through the motions, one thing after another,

doing what I thought I should be doing. Existing but not really living.

He woke me up. It might have been crazy how we got here, but I can't bring myself to be mad or upset about it anymore. I want to be here with him, and I'm done denying us both happiness.

The island is almost like a dream. It's like we're in our own little world here and nothing can touch us. Sean says the main island isn't that far away, but I don't want to go anywhere right now. I like being alone and getting to know Sean more, learning about his experiences growing up on the streets and how it slowly led him to a life of crime.

It made me ache for him and made me love him more than I thought was possible. I can't imagine being so young and feeling so alone. I was little when I found out my parents weren't coming back, but I had my grandmother to watch over me and love me the best she could. I can't judge him for the choices he had to make. It started out as just surviving and then turned into all he knew.

Now he wants a fresh start with me, and I want to give that to him. I want to be part of it because like him, I can't see myself living without him. Once my anger started to cool, I could see more clearly. This man loves me, and he would do anything to keep me. Why would I turn my back on that? He doesn't have to worry about that anymore because I'm not going anywhere. I'm not leaving this island. I'm his until I take my last breath.

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I've met the people who live here and help maintain the island, and I also met Sal.

I could tell from the very first moment that I met him how much he cared for Sean, and that made me love him instantly. I also see where Sean gets some of his charm. Sal kept hitting on one of the women who helps keep the house up. I wanted to tell the woman she didn't have a chance, but learning is half the fun when it comes to men like them.

Sean rolls over and lays his head on my stomach while I run my fingers through his hair.

"How many do you want?" he asks, and I don't even have to ask to know what he is talking about.

"I say we start with one and see how it goes." I hadn't really given much thought to having kids before Sean. Sure, I knew I wanted them one day...

"I want two," he says lazily, like he's picturing it in his head. In my mind I can see a little girl with her father's eyes. The thought makes my heart squeeze. A little child—a perfect mix of both of us. I couldn't think of anything more beautiful: both of us getting the family we always wanted, a family that would be filled with so much love I'm not sure this island could hold it all.

"Two sounds nice." I agree. I wonder how we'll handle things on the island with children, but I'm sure Sean already has everything mapped out. If there's one thing I know about him, he's always three steps ahead.

It's a comforting thought, to know he's already making plans to keep us safe and happy.

"I don't care if it's boy or girl, or what order they come in. I know I just always wanted a sibling." The words don't sound regretful. Maybe they would have at one time for him, but now we have a family. No need to long for one because it's already here. For all we know, one might be growing in my belly right now.

"Me too. But that could've made it hard to be swept away to your private little love island." That's probably the easiest part of this whole thing. We aren't leaving anything behind. There are no wishes for our lives before, or what could have been. We both had nothing to stay for. I had asked Sean to make sure Harper was taken care of. She might not have been a good friend, but she had moments, and I didn't like the idea of her hurt. He'd just smiled at me and said he was happy I still had that sweetness inside me. He was happy he hadn't washed it away from me.

"Ours," he says, talking about the island. He closes his eyes, enjoying my fingers running through his hair.

"Oh, yes, I forgot that I'm married," I say dryly. I had only found out I was married yesterday, along with finding out my new identity. His eyes pop open and narrow on me.

"You don't want to be married to me?" His eyebrows furrow, and I have to bite the inside of my cheek to stop myself from smiling at the half-scowl, half-pout on his face. I can already see our children pulling that look, too.

"Guess you'll never know. What's done is done." I push a little more, intentionally trying to get him worked up. I like to get him going. It always turns out so delicious when I do.

Before I know it he's flipping me, and I land right on his lap, so I'm straddling him, almost nose to nose.

"Say you want to be married to me." He grip my hips, his fingers digging in. I give him a half-smirk.

"I want to be married to you."

"Damn right, you do," he growls, before taking my mouth in a deep hungry kiss. He flips me over onto my back as he rubs his hard cock against the thin material of my swimsuit.

"You like your ring, little fox?" he asks after he pulls back.

"Ring?" Then I feel it on my finger. A smile spreads across my face as I realize he just slipped a wedding ring on my finger out of nowhere. This guy is some kind of crazy magician, but he's utterly adorable about it.

"I love it," I whisper against his lips, still smiling from ear to ear.

"You didn't even look."

"Don't have to. You put it there. It's perfect."

Flipping me again so I'm on top of him, he grabs a hold of my hips, and my hands land on his chest to keep me upright. My eyes land on the ring. The sparkle is nearly blinding in the sunlight. Just like I thought: perfect.

It's a round diamond on a gold band, but the rock is enormous—big enough to scare birds away. My man is always making a statement.

“You can’t flip me around like this when I finally get knocked up.” I’m not sure how he does it now. I’m not a tiny girl, but he’s pretty big himself. He carries me around like I weigh absolutely nothing, and it makes me feel so small and delicate. He also bought me only bikinis to wear, so even if I am shy about my curves, he gave me no choice but to show them off.

“I just want you on your throne” He emphasizes what he means by dragging me across his cock and staring up at me.

I never thought I’d be this girl. In a two-piece on top of her man, laid out on a beach, and not one insecurity eating at me. My man loves every part of me.

“I’ll proudly sit upon this throne.”

“That a good thing, little fox, because your sweet married ass is going to be on it a lot until I plant my baby in you.”

“What are you waiting for?” I ask, before leaning down and taking his lips with mine.

Chapter 25

Sean

I walk into our master bathroom, looking for Tessa. We were lying out on the beach earlier, and I’d had enough of looking at her in that tiny bikini. I needed to get it off her and bury my face between her legs.

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As I walk in, I see she's bent over, looking for some more sunscreen under the sink.

"I found it, Sean," she says, still bent over, not turning around to look at me.

"I found it, too." I don't take my eyes off her ass as I approach her, stalking over to her silently and kneeling behind her

When my hands go to her hips, she jumps a little and then laughs.

"What are you doing back there?"

"Whatever I want, little fox." I pull the strings on either side of her waist, letting the bikini bottom drop to the floor. "Spread your legs."

I can hear the rough sound of my own voice. It's thick with need, just like my cock. But my mouth is watering, and I need her on my tongue when I take her.

She does as I ask, stepping wider and letting me see all of her. Licking my lips, I look at her tight pink pussy already glistening for me. I reach up and spread her ass cheeks and look at her back hole, wanting all of her exposed to me.

I lean in and nibble on her fat ass cheeks, biting slightly as I move closer to where I want to be.

"Sean," she moans, leaning over further and giving me everything I want. She's all mine, and she knows it.

Dragging my tongue to her center, I lick her damp pussy lips, tasting her sugary sweetness. She's warm and wet, with just a hint of salt from our swim in the ocean.

Moving up, I dip my tongue inside her pussy, feeling little clenches around the tip of my tongue. She wants me inside her, but I need more from her first.

I grip her ass cheeks tighter and bring my tongue to her little asshole, making her shiver. She tenses up a little, and I pull back, kissing her cheeks again. "You won't deny me, will you, little fox?"

"No." Her whisper is so quiet, I almost don't hear it, but she gives in to me like I knew she would. The trust between us is strong, and she knows I would never do anything to hurt her. Even after everything we've been through, she would allow me to have her body any way I wanted. Because I always make sure whatever I'm doing will only give her pleasure.

I move back to her asshole and give it a few licks, tasting her sweetness there and helping her to relax. I press my finger against her tightest opening, applying a little pressure and letting her know what I want.

I kiss my way back down to her clit, licking her there and then finally sucking her into my mouth. Her loud moan echoes off the bathroom marble, and her tight ring relaxes, letting my finger penetrate her.

As I suck on her clit, I move my other hand to her pussy, rubbing two fingers in and out of her wet channel as the finger in her ass slowly starts to move at the same rhythm.

Tessa grips the counter and pushes back against me, seeking to meet my strokes. I can feel both her holes clenching, wanting more of me and loving the feeling.

After I take my mouth away from her pussy, she lets out a long whine. “Patience, little fox. I need to put my cum in you again. It’s been over an hour, and I can’t get you pregnant if you keep walking around and letting it slip out.”

Moving to stand up behind her, I pull my sticky hand free from her pussy, licking my fingers clean, and then use them to untie my swim trunks. Pressing the tip of my cock to her opening, I keep working the finger in her ass, wanting her to have as much pleasure as possible.

When I thrust inside her tight cunt, she clamps down on me, letting me feel every ripple of her need. My thick cock barely squeezes into her tightness, and I start to work it in and out of her.

“Oh, God. That feels so good. I think I’m going to cum.”

Her pulses get faster, and I let out a little laugh. “I’m usually the one who can’t hold on to my cum when we make love. Hang on, baby. I want to enjoy it for a bit.”

“I can’t.” Her breaths are coming quickly, and she’s pushing against my cock and finger. It’s as if she’s fucking me and trying to steal her orgasm.

Smack.

My free hand comes down on her ass, leaving a little sting behind. It does nothing to stop her orgasm, the low moan from her throat letting me know she’s even closer to the edge.

I press another finger into her ass, and there’s a quick intake of breath. But her hesitation lasts only a second before she’s back to pushing against me, begging for release.

I'll never deny her what she wants, so I adjust the angle of my hips and give her the pressure she needs to cum.

"Fuck!" she shouts, and it's music to my ears. I know if she's saying that word, then she's too far beyond her boundaries of pleasure. She's not thinking about what she's saying; she's just enjoying the feeling running through her body.

She clenches around my fingers and around my fat cock as her orgasm takes over and she peaks. Her screams of pleasure ring through the bathroom, and it all brings me to my own orgasm.

I thrust into her one last time, emptying myself into her tight cunt, hoping that she's opening for me and letting my seed take root. She'll be bred, and I don't care how many times I have to do it.

After the last of my cum has been pulled from me by her clenching pussy, I pull out and move my slick cock to her back entrance.

I remove my fingers and press the head of my cock to her ass, pushing against her hole and seeking entrance.

"Just a few strokes, baby. I won't waste cum in your ass, but I want to feel it. Let me in, little fox."

I hear her gasp and push back against me. The head of my cock pokes through her tight ring, and the lube from our orgasms makes my entrance easy.

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I slide in slowly, letting her adjust as I go. It only takes a few moments before she's totally relaxed and taking me all the way to the base of my cock. My balls press against her sticky pussy, and I feel her warm sugary syrup coating them.

I hold my cock in her ass for a few seconds. I want to enjoy the feeling of being in her ass. "I won't cum, but I need to know that I've claimed it as mine. Every part of you."

I push into her before pulling out slowly, then push in one final time. I will always prefer the warm welcome of her wet cunt, but I just needed to have this hole, too.

Pulling out slowly again for the final time, I leave the tightness of her ass and rub my palm over her asshole and pussy, gently petting the soreness away.

"Let's take a shower, baby." I kiss her back and pull her with me into the shower, letting the hot water and bubbly soap wash us clean.

Once we're clean, I carry Tessa out of the shower and dry her off. I grab a simple cover-up for her and some loose shorts for me. We dress and walk down to the part of the island that's shaded.

There's a big cabana on this side of the island, which gives us privacy, but also a perfect view of the sunset. It's got a cover over the top and long silky panels that allow us to remain unseen, yet it still feels like we're outside.

I hold her to me as we lie in the cabana and watch the sun set. The peaceful calm between us is all we need. I steal little kisses and touches as we silently hold one

another, just enjoying our perfect little paradise.

It's then time for dinner, so I scoop Tessa up and carry her on the path back to the house. When we get to the dining room, I place her in the seat beside me and sit down next to her.

"Are you always going to carry me like that?" She looks at me with her big golden eyes filled with love and happiness.

"Yes, Tessa. I will carry you, love you, spoil you, adore you, and worship you for the rest of my life."

A blush hits her sun-kissed cheeks, and I lean down to place my lips on them.

It's amazing what we've been through and how far we've come in such a short time. People would probably consider us crazy, but if they felt even a tenth of what I feel for her, they would understand. I can't put into words exactly what she means to me, so I just have to keep showing her, over and over. If that's what it takes to show her what I feel inside, then I'll gladly do it.

Pushing a stray hair out of her eyes, I look at her and think how impossibly insane it is that I found her. That all my hopes, dreams, wishes, and love can be wrapped up in one person. I never intended for my life to end up this way, but it's more perfect than I could have imagined.

I started out as the thief, but Tessa stole my heart.

Epilogue

Tessa

3 months later ...

“I’m going to have to start running an extra two miles a day if Marie keeps this up.”

Sean stands up from the little table in the kitchen. He raises his shirt to rub his belly as he smirks at me.

I have to agree. If we keep eating like this, I might have to join him. And I don’t run. Ever. Unless something is chasing me, and that only happens when Sean and I are playing around. Though once I did suggest going with him. He said no, then made me ride him while he gripped my hips in a firm hold to remind me how much he liked them and how he didn’t want them going anywhere. Needless to say, he didn’t run that day either.

Reaching over, I grab a few of the hairs on his stomach and pull, making him yelp and jump back from me. I giggle. “See how she treats me, Marie?” He leans down, placing one hand on the table and the other on the back of my chair, caging me in. He kisses me softly on the lips.

“Missed a little,” he whispers against my lips, licking any syrup that might be remaining.

“I see how she treats you alright.” Marie’s tone makes me blush.

Marie started working on the island about six weeks ago. She used to come each day on a boat until Sal finally talked her into staying with him permanently. Watching them together is utterly adorable, and I wonder if people look at Sean and me like that.

Giving me another quick kiss, Sean picks up my plate and his own to take to the sink, but Marie stops him and pulls them from his hands.

“That’s my job,” she scolds him. I can’t see Sean’s face, but I’m sure he’s scowling at her. This has no effect on her, though he’s probably a whole foot and a half taller than her. She’s the definition of a spitfire if you get her going. I love that about her and have even picked up a few of her tricks. Sean and Sal both tried to get her to quit working here, saying she didn’t need to work. She’s Sal’s woman, but she says she loves doing it. She needs something to do or she’ll go stir crazy. They still ended up hiring another woman to help out, and the battle of wills is still going strong.

He makes his way back to me and crouches so we’re at eye level. “You sure you don’t want to come with me? I’ll be quick. It won’t take me long at all to make sure everything is in line.”

“No, it’s fine. I’m just going to lie down for a little. I bet by the time I wake up, you’ll be back.” Sean likes to go to town once a month to pick up a few things, check his mail, and look in on his accounts. I went with him the last time and enjoyed myself, but today I have something I need to take care of.

“How about I put it off, and we’ll go tomorrow when you’re feeling better?” I can see the concern written all over his face. I lied this morning and told him I had a headache to get out of going today. Sometimes this man handles me like glass. I wonder how he’ll be once he gets me knocked up. “I could nap with you.”

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“I know what your kind of nap means,” I laugh, knowing that it wouldn’t be a nap at all. It would start with a little cuddling, which would turn to kissing, and then that would lead to kissing me everywhere, then him on top of me, making me scream his name.

His face turns serious, lines appearing in his forehead. “Stay inside. I don’t want you near the water.”

“Sean, I know how to swim.”

“Baby, please. Give me peace of mind while I’m gone.”

Grabbing his face with both hands, I dig my fingers into his beard. “I’ll stay inside and dream of you.”

“Thank you, little fox.” He moves in for another kiss, this one deep but slow. His mouth moves against mine like we’re making love.

When he finally pulls back, I keep a strong hold on his face, pulling a little at his beard.

“I’m not cutting it,” he says for the sixth time this morning, his eyes going a little big. I caught him in the bathroom about to shave it this morning. He said it was just a summer cut. I might have lost it a little. I even threatened to go on a shaving strike of my own if he did, but he said I could turn into werewolf and he was still getting inside me. In the end I won. Facial hair was staying, and I was still keeping myself well groomed.

“Better not.”

He kisses me on the forehead and heads out the door. I sit at the table, sipping my orange juice while Marie does the dishes for a few moments.

“Okay. I can’t wait! Give it to me.” I jump up from my chair and rush over to Marie as she pulls a pregnancy test out of her apron.

The last two tests I’d done with Sean, and both times they came out negative. He acted like it was no big deal, but I could see the disappointment on his face. I want to make sure that the next time the subject comes up, I’ll know for sure if I’m pregnant or not.

“I thought he’d never leave.” Marie shakes her head, wiping her hands off on her apron.

“I know. I thought for sure he knew I was faking about the headache. I’m the world’s worst liar,” I grimace. God, I hate lying to him.

“Come on now. Let’s see if we’re going to have a baby around here soon,” Marie says as we both rush to my bathroom. Quickly, I ready the test and do it, placing the stick on the sink when I’m done. I open the door for Marie to come into the bathroom, and we both just stare down at the test and wait.

“What are you doing?”

I scream out in surprise, jumping around to face Sean is standing in the bathroom doorway.

“I...oh...” I look to Marie for help, but she just stands there. “I thought you left,” I finally finish, stumbling over my words.

“I tried.” He runs his hands through his hair. “Just felt like something was off.” He takes a step into the bathroom, and I try to move further back, wanting to block the test, but my ass is already against the sink.

“Baby, you’re kind of freaking me out here.” He takes a few more steps until he’s right in front of me, and I have to lean my head back to look at him. He must see the test on the sink behind me, because a smile breaks out across his face.

Suddenly, he’s dropping to his knees in front of me.

I feel Marie move beside me, then her words hit me. “Two lines.”

Sean places his face against my stomach, echoing her words “Two lines.”

“We’re having a baby,” I whisper, and run my fingers through his hair.

“I love you,” Sean says to my stomach, and I feel a tear slip free.

Then he’s picking me up and carrying me to our bed. Marie is long gone. Probably off to tell Sal they’re going to be grandparents.

“We should leave the island. It’s not safe here. Then maybe—”

I cut him off. “Calm down. You planned for this. Think about it, Sean. We have Marie and the two midwives. It doesn’t take long to get to the main island, and we can stay on the main island when the due date gets closer. We aren’t leaving. This is our home. The home we’ve made for the family we’re going to have. We’ll make this work.”

“You’re right, little fox. We can do anything.”

Epilogue

Sean

Nine months later...

“Wake up, baby. I think my water broke.”

I shoot out of bed, nearly knocking Tessa to the floor. Luckily, my reflexes are good when it comes to her, and I grab her by both arms, picking her up in my arms before she can tumble back.

“The baby? It’s here?”

She giggles at me and nods. This isn’t a time for giggling. We have to move. Now.

“When did your water break?” I ask, striding around the room, not really having any kind of direction. I’m just walking around, holding her in my arms while she has our baby in the middle of the room.

“Sean. Calm down.”

Tessa agreed we would go off the island tomorrow and spend the last week of her pregnancy in town. It’s our first baby, and we thought for sure she would go over her due date.

I begged her to go before, but she wouldn’t. Finally, after dinner last night, I had to get on my knees and beg her to take the boat over in the morning. I couldn’t handle the stress of being so far from the hospital with the baby so close to being born.

“Tessa.” There’s a warning in my tone that wants to tell her ‘I told you so’. But I’ll

do that later. Goddamn it, I knew this would happen!

“I’ve already paged Sal. He and Marie are by the docks, ready to go. Our bags are packed, and it won’t take us fifteen minutes to get there. I’ve got time. Just breathe.”

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Those are supposed to be my words to her, not the other way around.

Carrying her out of the room, I try to think ahead and concentrate. I take her carefully down the dock and slip on my shoes. Marie must have left them there for me, predicting this would happen. Thank God, someone is thinking.

“It’s time,” I say in a panic as I see Sal and Marie waiting.

“We know, son. Just calm down. Everything is going to be okay.”

Sal puts his big hands on my shoulders, helping me into the boat as I clutch Tessa to my chest. I haven’t put her down since she said her water broke, and I’m a little terrified that if she stands on her own two feet, the baby will fall out.

I realize this isn’t possible, but I’m not exactly thinking rationally right now.

Marie comes to sit down beside me and pushes the hair out of Tessa’s face. “You’re doing great. We radioed the hospital. They’ll be waiting at the docks for us.”

“It’s not me and the baby I’m worried about. It’s Twitchy McGee over here.”

Tessa nods at me, and I immediately stop bouncing my feet up and down under her. I’m nervous as fuck, but I need to hold it together. Our baby is coming, and I need to be her rock.

“It’s fine. It’s going to be totally fine.”

“A little less panic in your voice next time and you may convince yourself,” Sal laughs as he gets behind the wheel of the boat and pulls out into the water.

The ride is only fifteen minutes. I can do this.

“You still think it’s a boy?” Tessa is trying to distract me, and I really need it right now.

Taking a deep breath, I decide to focus on this. The sex of the baby is going to be a surprise. Both of us wanted that special moment when the baby comes.

I kiss her forehead and breathe in her scent. It calms me a little. She always calms me, and right now I’m thankful that I’ve still got her in my arms.

“And you’re convinced it’s a girl?” I say, looking into her big golden eyes. There’s not an ounce of fear there, and it warms my heart to know how brave my girl is. She’s always ready for whatever rolls her way. It’s how I know she’s going to be a phenomenal mother.

“Oh, I’m totally right. I’m the mom. I know it all.” She laughs when she says it, not even believing that herself. She reaches up, running her hand through my messy hair. I love it when she does that. Just as much as she loves doing it. “Tell me something sweet.”

She’s trying to keep me focused on her, and it’s the easiest thing in the world for me to do. “If it’s a girl, I’d like to name her Alma, after your grandmother.”

She gets a little teary-eyed but just smiles and nods. After a moment, she clears her throat and smiles at me. “If it’s a boy, I’d like to name him Marcus. After Sal.”

We’d thrown around a few names when we first found out she was pregnant, and I

remember her asking me what Sal's middle name was.

Now it's my turn to get a little misty-eyed. I think all the stress and emotions are catching up to me, and all I can do is nod my head. It would be a beautiful way to honor the man who made me what I am today. Bad or good, it's who brought me to Tessa. And that's the legacy I want to leave behind in a hundred years when we've both passed on. That if people only remember that I loved Tessa, it will be a life worth living.

"There they are," Marie says, pointing to the people from the hospital waiting on the dock just ahead.

Letting out a breath of relief I didn't know I was holding, I pull Tessa a little closer to me as we approach.

Everything is going to be okay.

The hospital is what you'd call pretty basic. It's totally clean, and they have everything we need, but there aren't a lot of frills like you'd have in the States. Instead, what we do have are three nurses and a doctor all for us, and everyone is standing by to deliver a healthy baby.

Some of my stress is relieved when they get Tessa hooked up to the monitors and see that she's okay and so is the baby.

Once we're there and the doctors check her over, they all start speaking softly to one another, and my stress skyrockets again.

Finally, right before I'm about to scream the room down, the doctor comes over and lets us know that Tessa is nearly fully dilated and we need to begin pushing.

“What?!” Tessa and I yell at the same time. Both of us are in shock. She’s barely made a peep and hasn’t said the first thing about contractions.

Suddenly, I feel her gripping my hand, and the nurses get in place.

“It’s not uncommon to only feel pressure when you walk and still be this far dilated.” Tessa looks up at me and glares, because most of her pregnancy I didn’t let her feet touch the ground. “I think it’s time to push.”

I hold her hand and encourage her through everything, and dear God, is my woman a champ. She does everything they say, and when the labor starts to really hit her, she doesn’t crumple under the pressure.

After an hour of solid labor and hard contractions, our son, Marcus Sean Cardinal, is born. Though he’s technically a Cardinal, he’ll always be my little Sparrow.

When the labor is finished and everything has calmed down, the three of us cuddle on Tessa’s hospital bed while she nurses and I alternate between kissing her and our son.

“He’s beautiful,” Tessa whispers, rubbing his full head of dark auburn hair.

“Just like his mommy.”

Sal and Marie are bursting with joy when they’re finally allowed back to see us. I think Sal even shed a few tears when we told him the name, the big guy melting into a pile of mush.

Our little family might be far from traditional, but it’s damn near bursting with love.

Epilogue

Tessa

Six months later...

“You’re not wearing that.” Sean’s sitting in the corner chair, his legs outstretched in his jeans, and his plain white T-shirt makes the tattoos on his arms stand out. When I lie in bed at night, I always find myself tracing his newest one. It’s my name, and he plans on getting Marcus’s name, too.

“This is the third one I’ve tried on. Everything else I have is more beach-dress and not a night-out-dress.” I give him my best pout.

I really don’t think it’s that showy. The bottom part is flowy, stopping mid-thigh, but the top hugs my breasts. It gives me a perfect, curvy, hourglass shape. I’d ordered multiple dresses a few months back and called them my ‘goal dresses’ for after I had the baby. They’re now fitting perfectly, which only makes me more excited about our first date night on the main island since we had little Marcus. I love him to pieces, but

I'm so okay with leaving him with Marie and Sal for the night. Hell, Marie taught me everything I know about having a baby.

He growls, standing up from his chair, and I know what's coming. I dart for the bathroom, trying to close the door, but he's way faster than me. Before I know it, my ass is planted on the bathroom counter, my skirt bunched around my waist, and my underwear pulled to the side.

"Take me out," he snarls, staring down at my pussy.

I quickly do as I'm told, getting more turned on by the second. When his cock springs free, he grabs it and rubs it against my clit.

"Oh, God," I moan. His mouth crashes down on mine as he works his cock back and forth on my clit, picking up speed. There are no slow teases. He's not dragging this out. It's clear Sean is on a mission to cum sooner rather than later.

"Have you tried on all these dresses for me? Got me so fucking hard thinking about taking it off you when we get home tonight. But knowing you'd be walking around for people to see you like this, that has me having a whole other feeling." He pulls away from my mouth, looking down at me while he continues to stroke his cock against my clit.

I'm only catching about every other word he's saying.

"You're going to let me mark your pussy. That way I know when you're walking around with me tonight, I'm all over this sweet little cunt. That it's mine. Only mine."

The pressure on my clit and the dirty picture he describes make me cum instantly, his possessive words sending me over the edge.

“Say it,” he grunts, and I feel his release start to spill onto me.

“Only yours,” I moan, as he continues to rub himself across my clit, milking both our orgasms. He uses the head of his cock to smear his cum around, making sure my pussy is covered in it before pulling my panties back into place.

He tucks himself back into his pants and pulls me off the counter.

“All better?” I tease, looking up at him.

“It helped, but only tonight will tell.”

I turn to look in the mirror and see my lipstick is smudged.

“I’m going to need another five minutes,” I tell him as he stands behind me, looking at him in the mirror. He moves in closer, moving my hair off one shoulder, kissing me there before taking a light bite.

“Why? You look well loved by your man. Nothing fucking hotter than that.”

I have to agree.

Needless to say, it still takes us another hour before we finally make it to the main island and to our dinner reservations.

The food was good but not as good as Marie’s. But it’s nice to be out, just the two of us. I drink champagne, almost killing half a bottle by myself.

“I’m going to have to pump and dump,” I say. Sean pulls me from my chair and leads me out of the restaurant to our next spot.

“Don’t worry. I’ll take care of that when we get home.”

My pussy clenches at his words, knowing what he means. Sean can’t seem to get enough of my breasts since I’ve had Marcus.

“We could skip dancing and go home,” I suggest, wanting him to make good on his word. I rub up against him a little, not caring we’re in the middle of the street. The champagne made me a little bold.

“You said dinner and dance. That’s what I’m giving you, little fox.”

I smile up at him, getting on my tiptoes to get a kiss. He leans down, meeting me. The kiss is soft and only lasts a few seconds.

“We’re here,” he says, pulling me into a little bar.

A live band is playing, and people are already dancing even though it’s a little early.

Sean finds us a table in the corner and orders us both a drink before pulling me onto the dance floor and holding me close as a slow song fills the bar.

“I love you,” he whispers in my ear.

“I love you, too.”

He pulls me even closer, holding me tight.

“Never knew I could be this happy. Hell, this fucking lucky.”

“You did this, Sean. You made all this happen for us. You fought for us even when I fought against us.”

“Don’t say that,” he says quickly. “All of this is nothing without you. You’re the heart of it all.”

“Kiss me.”

And he does. Until the song finally ends and a faster one comes on.

“I’m going to the bathroom, baby. Stay at our table until I get back.” I nod, making my way back to our table. I’m stopped by a young man who looks to be about my age. He’s got blond hair and blue eyes and has ‘American’ written all over him. It’s easy to spot now who lives on the islands and who doesn’t.

“You have the time?” he asks, a little slur to his words.

“Yeah, sure.” I reach into my purse and pull out my phone. “Just a little after nine.”

He steps a little closer, and I try to retreat but bump up against our table.

“How about you give me your number and we meet up later? You look like a good fuck after how you were all over that guy on the dance floor.”

“My husband,” I correct.

“I don’t care what he was. I know an easy lay when I see one.”

Suddenly Sean is next to me, taking my phone from my hand. I hear the crack of the shattered phone and see the broken pieces to the floor.

“Jesus, was that thing made of crackers?” I say, looking down at the phone.

“I suggest you take a fucking step back from my wife.”

“Hey, man.” The guy steps back, throwing his hands up like he’s going to walk away. But he doesn’t. No, he does the wrong thing altogether. “I’m up for sharing, man. She got enough ass and tits for the both of us.”

I barely see Sean move as the blond guy gets a fist to the face. He falls back onto a table before rolling to the floor.

Sean turns to me and cups my face. “You okay, baby?”

He just hit someone and he’s worried about me?

“Your hand.” I’m thinking about the shattered phone and the punch. That should hurt, right? I feel like I’d cry if that was me.

He kisses my cheek. “Told you that dress would be trouble, and now you’re in trouble,” he says in my ear, pulling me from the bar after throwing some money on the table. “Sorry about your phone. I’ll get you a new one.”

I can’t wait to get home, and for Sean to show me all the trouble I’m in.

Epilogue

Sean

Six months after that...

“Sean! Are you in here?”

I hear Tessa coming into our room, and I go to the closet to hide the bag.

“What are you doing?”

I turn around, wondering how the hell she got to me so fast.

“Nothing.”

Tessa rolls her eyes and stands there, crossing her arms under her big breasts. All it does is accentuate them in her bikini top, and I lick my lips.

“Focus, big guy. You’re a terrible liar. What’s in the bag?”

She goes up on her tiptoes, trying to look behind me, and I feel my face blush.

“It’s nothing.”

“Then why are you being so sneaky?” A devilish grin crosses her face, and I know what’s coming.

Suddenly, she’s jumping at me, and I have no choice but to catch her, dropping the bag of pregnancy tests behind me.

“What the—”

“I just wanted to be prepared,” I stumble. Feeling silly. “You know, whenever you’re ready.”

Tessa laughs and wraps her legs and arms tighter around me.

“It’s funny, because I don’t remember you asking at all last time. I just remember you putting a baby in me.”

My cock twitches at her words. She's right. Things have grown stronger between us since we've been on the island, and I know I never have to worry about her leaving me. But I still want another baby with her. She's an incredible mother, and seeing Marcus grow over this past year has been magical. I never thought I'd be the guy who got excited about first steps or first words until I met Tessa. I never realized how much I wanted to make a family until the first time I laid eyes on her.

I carry her over to the bed and climb on, laying her down under me.

"I'm ready, but I've also come to realize we have lots of time. I just thought I'd cum in you as many times as possible and then maybe steal your pee out of the toilet and keep testing it until I get you bred."

Tessa puts her hands over her face and I hear her giggle. "There's that crazy love of mine."

"Is that an invitation?" I push her sundress up, revealing her naked pussy. She stopped wearing bottoms a long time ago, and it's made life a lot easier.

"Marcus is with Sal and Marie this afternoon. I think that's all the invitation you need."

Growling, I move down her body and shoulder her legs apart. I put my mouth on her cunt. I know exactly how to get her off, and I don't want to draw it out. I plan on having her at least three times before Sal comes back with Marcus, and I want to make the most of it.

Pushing two fingers inside her wet channel, I curl them up, hitting her sweet spot and making her back arch off the bed.

"Sean," she moans, gripping my hair and grinding down on my mouth.

“That’s it, little fox,” I mumble against her wet core. “Fucking use my mouth.”

I suck her clit as she pushes against me, begging for what only I can give her. I lay my free arm across her hips, holding her down and pulling her orgasm from her.

She cums in my mouth, shouting my name and pulsing under me. Her body is like an instrument and I’ve gained mastery over it. Strumming the right strings makes the sweetest music.

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I move back up her body, pushing down my loose shorts and gripping my thick cock. I rub the head through her wetness and thrust in, feeling the aftershocks of her orgasm in the contractions of her pussy.

I start fucking her hard, burying myself balls-deep. I pull her top down, letting her breasts spill out as I lean down and suck a fat nipple in my mouth. God, I miss the taste of her milk, but soon enough I'll have it again. Thinking about it makes me harder, and I thrust roughly into her.

"Sean!" She pulls at my T-shirt, and it's then I realize I'm still dressed. Only my cock is out, and it's working in and out of her tight body. My shirt is the last thing on my mind.

I don't stop moving inside her as I help Tessa remove my shirt. I'm like an animal, wanting to give her my seed make a baby.

Kissing up her neck, I bite her earlobe and lick the shell of her ear. I feel her shiver under me, and I hold her close as she tightens her legs around my waist.

"Say it, little fox."

I hear her intake of breath as I plunge deeper, needing to be inside her body as fully as possible.

"I'm yours, Sean. Only yours."

I feel her clench around me, and I reach between us to rub her clit. She's already

ready for another orgasm, and this time I want to cum with her.

Feeling her tighten on me again, I adjust the angle of my hips, letting her have every rigid inch of me.

“Goddamn right you are. And I’m yours, Tessa. Only yours.”

She clamps down on my cock, exploding into her orgasm. She clings to me as her hips jerk upward, tensing and contracting as she goes off.

Thrusting into her as far as I can go, I hold myself there as her clenches pull my own orgasm from me. I spill my seed into her welcoming womb.

I feel the smile on my face as I hold myself up on my elbows and bury my face in her neck. Nothing is sweeter or more satisfying than being inside my love.

Grabbing her hips, I roll us over so she’s straddling me and lying on my chest. I can feel her trying to catch her breath as I try to catch mine, both of us spent from the quick passion.

“You’re welcome, baby,” I say, kissing the top of her head.

She looks up at me and raises an eyebrow. “Welcome for what?”

“I just gave you a baby girl. It’s what you wanted, right?”

I feel her pussy pulse around me again as she starts to laugh.

I thrust into her, and her giggles turn into a moan as I lazily move in and out of her soaked cunt. “Why are you laughing, little fox? You know I’m right.”

“When it comes to you, Sean, I never doubt a thing you say. I guess only time will

tell.” She pushes down on my cock, moving with me, then sits up to take all of me.

I hold her hips, rocking her back and forth on my cock, getting as deep as I can go.

“You love me, little fox?” I never get tired of hearing her say how much I mean to her, and I don’t suspect I will.

Pushing her gorgeous auburn hair out of her face, she looks down at me and smiles. “I love you, Sean.”

I sit up and kiss her neck, needing my mouth on her. “Stealing you was the best decision I ever made.”

I feel the vibrations of her laugh against my lips, and I smile, too. It sounds crazy saying it out loud, but I’ve never once regretted it. Taking Tessa and bringing her to the island and making a family has been more than I could have ever dreamed of.

She’s given me a life I don’t deserve, and I spend my days worshiping her and taking care of our son.

One day I’ll tell him the truth about what I did and how we came to be here. He deserves to know when he’s older, but not today.

No, today is for making love to my perfect goddess and creating a new life inside her. Today, like every day, is for happiness. Today I hold my angel in my arms and tell her over and over how beautiful she is and how lucky I am that she chose me.

Even if I never gave her a choice.

THE END