



Toxic Love: a dark romance novella

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Category: Dark Erotica

Description: Meeting Aaron was the biggest mistake of my life. Not the addictions or my career choice, but the man I chose to marry. He wanted men to hurt me so he could ride in on the white horse to rescue me and take me away from the person he commanded to cause me all the pain in the first place. He was no hero. No white knight. Aaron took it too far when he brought a man to our home who looked past the bruises and saw the broken woman beneath them. Ryan was fiercely protective from the moment he laid his eyes on me and received his assignment. His dark confidence was more intoxicating than any drug, and I found myself wanting more of it. Would I be able to find my way out of the hell I was forced to call home?

Toxic Love is one of the first stories in Lauren Biel's "After Dark" novellas. These stories will have more steam or spice in them than her novels. TW: Abuse, dubious consent, sexual content, violence, and substance abuse This contemporary dark romance novella is strongly recommended for adult readers only.

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Iknocked on the heavy hotel door, paint peeling off the metal. With a mechanical click, the door opened and revealed my client for the evening. Blue eyes looked back at me from beneath his dark, graying hair. The sleeves of his pinstripe dress shirt rolled up his wrists, folded neatly above an expensive watch. He was perfection.

He looked like someone who'd be best friends with my father. In fact, he looked hauntingly similar to the man who took my virginity. The close family friend...until my dad found out he obliterated his barely legal daughter's pussy under his own roof.

That man ruined me. He left a meeting with my dad to throw me onto the bed and rip my panties down, which was the cataclysmic excitement I continued to chase. He fucked me with a hunger I hadn't experienced since. As if my pussy were the proverbial fountain of youth. As if he'd stay young forever, as long as he sank inside me. I spent the next twelve years chasing that same high and searching for an orgasm half as good as the one he gave me. How could he look at my father from across the big wooden table and pretend he didn't have my scent on his fingers or my taste on his tongue? My come drenched his boxers, marked for his wife to find and feel shitty about later.

I was a bad person, and in some ways, I hadn't changed. I still ruined marriages, but now I got paid for it.

The client let me inside the room. The tingling flood of memories gave this client an advantage. He hardly had to work to get me wet enough to fuck.

"What's your name?"he asked.

“Scarlett. You”re Aaron, right?”

His lips turned down, a frown planted on his face. No one liked to think they didn”t matter, especially when they paid a hefty sum for me to treat them like they did.

“I”m so sorry. You just reminded me of someone,” I said.

“Hopefully someone good.” His lips shifted into a pinched smile.

Incredible, actually. “Yes, someone very good.” I flashed a flirty grin at him, trying to gain his forgiveness. If he didn”t accept my words, he’d accept an apologetic blowjob. I was certain of that.

He wasted no time. He captured me in his grasp, his hands roving over and squeezing every fleshy part of me. I usually asked for money on the dresser first—somewhere between entering the door and reaching the bed—in case I needed to make a quick escape. Something told me this man would have no issue paying...so long as I did as he asked.

There was a knock on the door. My gaze leaped toward it. For the first time that night, fear crept up my thighs. Aaron rolled his sleeves down and went to the door. He stepped aside and let another man into the room.

I wasn”t prepared to take two men at once. The tug and tear of two dicks. Nope, not tonight. Not enough money in the world. “I...” I started, but the simultaneous gazes of the prestigious-looking men shut me up.

They drew out their wallets. The subtle scent of expensive, masculine leather wafted over me. They pulled out hundreds. Hundreds. More money than I”d ever seen fanned from their hands.

“I’m not taking you both at the same time,” I said warily.

Aaron laughed and brushed back his hair. “No, you won’t be. Don’t worry. Me and Mr. B here will take good care of you.” His words were buttery smooth, and it melted my fear back into the floor.

Mr. B—a man hiding his name—most likely had a Mrs. B at home. He was cute, but not in the same devilishly handsome way as Aaron. He was taller and lankier, with long arms that he kept low at his sides. While he had a slightly receding hairline, his friendly smile was attractive as hell.

Aaron grabbed a small liquor bottle from the mini fridge, tossed it to Mr. B, and pulled out another for himself. He looked at me. “Do you want one?”

I nodded, but what I actually wanted was a bump. I wanted to inhale the shit out of the cheap, cut coke that made me cough. That was what I did. I snorted every dollar my pussy made. From one hole into another. I needed to get fucked up, and itty-bitty bottles of liquor weren’t going to do that for me. It would tease the nerves in my brain, but it wouldn’t quiet the hunger. I inhaled, sniffing up the longing.

“Are you implying you want something more, sweetie? Something a little less...legal?”

I don’t know what made him ask me that. How much did my desire for cocaine cross my face? How much did it infiltrate my expression? Enough, I guess.

Aaron carried both drink bottles to the other side of the room. He searched through a suitcase—the kind you only get when you’ve succeeded as an adult. He pulled out something that looked like a glass urn. Instead of ashes, it was filled with white powder. Drool formed beneath my tongue. He smiled at me and walked by, rubbing my cheek as he passed. He twisted off the cap and poured some of the contents onto

the dark, smooth wood of the dresser. The stark contrast between the two colors drew my eyes.

Aaron retrieved a piece of a straw buried within the powder and ran the plastic between the seam of his lips. It was the most sensual thing I'd ever seen, and I wanted him. And the drugs. Not necessarily in that order. He leaned over and inhaled a thick line, rubbing his nose and sniffing. He gestured toward Mr. B, who waved the straw away. I sat like a child waiting to be called upon in class, my feet fidgeting in my shoes. He offered it to me, and I happily took it.

I leaned over, the skirt of my dress riding up and drawing the attention of one of their hands. If I had to guess, it was probably the brazen touch of Aaron. I put the straw in my nose and inhaled the powder.

Oh God, is this what real drugs feel like?

It was smooth, and didn't attack my nasal passages like the coke I usually snorted. The high felt cleaner. One more thing to chase after. I selfishly inhaled another line as the fabric of my dress lifted and firm hands squeezed my ass.

"I want you to fuck her," came Aaron's voice behind me. I knew it was him. He radiated confidence. "And I want to watch."

I turned toward him and cocked my head. I had clients who liked to watch, but it was usually as I ate out their wives. I shot a glance toward Mr. B. He'd already unbuttoned his slacks and was working on the zipper. Aaron sat down on an ugly, multi-colored chair. It let out a squeak. Aside from that and the clang of Aaron's belt as he unfastened it, silence hung between us.

Mr. B grabbed my hand, dragged me toward the bed, and pushed me onto my back. I slipped off my heels. He fumbled with a condom, tearing at the package with his

teeth. He tossed the wrapper, and it landed beside my head. The smell of latex swirled around me and twisted my gut, but the pleasant high from the cocaine tornado calmed my stomach. My cheeks flushed red as he guided himself inside me.

“Slap her,” Aaron whispered from his corner of the room.

I shook my head. Aaron’s intense blue eyes locked on to mine as he reached into his wallet and pulled out more money.

Fuck.

Mr. B didn’t wait for my permission before he brought a hand against my cheek in a harsh slap. My skin flamed hot, and I held back a yelp.

“Again,” Aaron said.

He slapped me again. The pain intensified as it crossed over the other handprint. Mr. B grabbed my chin and squeezed. He grunted and hastened his thrusts with his long legs. He fucked me carelessly, as if I were a doll and not a human being. I caught a glimpse of Aaron stroking his throbbing dick. The way he watched made me wish the bed would open up and suck me into it. He eyed me like a predator trying to figure out the best way to kill the prey in front of him.

“You know what I want you to do,” Aaron said to the man between my legs.

Aaron’s words vitalized Mr. B, as if he were waiting for permission to drop his leash. His hand wrapped around my throat, squeezing with sharp fingers. I grabbed at his wrists and fought for breath. I didn’t agree to this. I squirmed beneath him, but he just leaned his weight into his hand and fucked me harder. My entire face grew hot, and my vision clouded. When he finally released his hold, I sucked air into my burning lungs. My nostrils flared as he climbed off me, and I clutched my throat. I

shot daggers at Aaron with my eyes. He continued stroking himself with a smile. He liked this shit.

Mr. B grabbed a fistful of my hair and jerked me to a sitting position. He used one rough movement to flip me onto my belly. His bony hands lifted my hips, and he surged back into me.

“Please, stop,” I whispered as he fucked me with driven thrusts that radiated pain through my pelvis. My pleas just made Aaron jerk himself off faster, biting his lip.

“I’ll stop when I’m done,” Mr. B said.

“I wish you”d bring that passion into the boardroom with you,” Aaron said with a laugh.

“Fuck you,” Mr. B said. He enunciated each word with a heavy thrust inside me.

I wanted it to stop. I hated it. But it was me against two grown men and a whole lot of money.

He lifted me by my hair, wrapped an arm around me, and held me to his chest. He gripped my breasts until the skin felt like it would burst from the pressure. They would bruise soon after. He pulled out and pinned me to the bed, forcing himself into my ass. I cried out, but he wrapped a hand around my mouth to shut me up. He laid his full weight on my back and continued pushing inside me. Tears dripped down my cheeks, smearing my makeup. I kept my eyes on a picture hanging on the wall. A boat encased in a cheap gold frame. I closed my eyes and listened to the rubbing sound of Aaron jacking off to my humiliation.

Mr. B groaned above me. His hot breath on my neck twisted my stomach again. Not even the coke could numb what I felt. He released his hand from my mouth but not

his grasp on my hip. I opened my eyes. Aaron stood in front of me, his cock too close to my face. He leaned down and poured a line of powder along the length of his dick.

Are you kidding me?

He grabbed my hair in his fist and forced my face toward the base of his cock. I held my breath. Even in that shitty moment, my body knew not to exhale and blow away the precious powder. He shoved my nose against his hot skin and dragged me toward the tip, ripping me away as I inhaled. Somehow, it made the destruction behind me more tolerable. Mr. B bottomed out inside me and groaned with a final, drawn-out exhale.

Aaron squatted beside the bed and brushed the tears from my cheeks. “Don”t worry, darling. He was the bad guy. The one to cause you all the pain I wanted to see.” He brushed my hair, now sticky with tears, back from my face. “You see, now my job is to make you forget about him. The pain he caused. How his cock felt inside both of your holes.”

Aaron eased me onto my back, kissing my cheek and neck where the handprints remained. His lips roved down my chest, and his hand snuck beneath the thin fabric to rub my nipples. My body felt confused as fuck. Aaron stood up. He licked his finger and ran his spit in a line along the top of his cock. He grabbed the glass jar and loaded another thick line onto his dick.

“I”m not really an ass man, so I can”t help you there, but this should numb your pussy.” He leaned into me carefully, steadying himself with his hand as he put himself inside me.

I pushed at his arms. Condom. He needs a condom.

“Shh, I”m snipped,” he said as he pushed my hand away.

“That”s not the point.” I tried to raise up on my elbows.

“I don”t like condoms.” He grabbed my chin. “How much to let me sink into your pussy without one?”

Oh God. I can”t. But the clawing stomach pain of intuition told me he would do what he wanted, whether I agreed to it or not. At least I could get paid...

“A thousand,” I said with a deflated drop back to the bed.

He smiled and stroked my cheek. I flinched at his touch. He pushed himself inside me, and my insides tingled as the coke seeped into my pussy. My head swam with intoxication. The smooth bareness of his cock. The warming heat of the drugs. I finally caught what I’d been chasing.

I looked up at him—the calm, sweet face that veiled how good he could fuck. He reminded me so much of my dad”s friend. Even the way he buried his face into my neck while he curled his hips into me was the same.

The drugs somehow numbed the pain in my ass from Mr. B ripping through me. I inhaled sharply as my body tensed. My head. My pussy. Every nerve was high as fuck.

“I can feel you tightening on me. Pulling me deeper inside you. Are you gonna come on my cock?” His words sent me into a spiral. “For a girl like you, you feel incredible. And you”re letting me fuck you raw. There”s nothing between you and every woman I”ve ever fucked.”

A girl like me? What? A whore? A cokehead? Both? And oh God, he”s right. I”m essentially fucking every woman he has. This...this is why I use goddamn condoms. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

“You’re going to take my word that I’m snipped, and I’m going to fill you up. Who knows if you have to worry about getting pregnant as I make you take every drop.”

What kind of mind fuckery is this? This dude is insane. But somehow worth the fucking risk at this moment. I bit my lip and nodded. I was on the pill. I wasn’t stupid. I didn’t trust men. Ever. But the thought of him knocking me up without worry as he came inside me?

Fuck.

I came. Hard. A cleansing orgasm that was like nothing I experienced since I was eighteen. I shuddered against him, and he followed my pleasure. I milked him for every drop, just like he wanted.

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I closed the car door after coming home from a client's house. The apartment's poorly lit parking lot sprawled in every direction. I tugged down the hem of my short dress, bracing against the brisk spring air that bit at my skin. I wrapped my jacket around my shoulders, holding myself together as the wind whipped my hair.

Fucking A.

A black BMW crawled beside me, bypassing open parking spots. I tugged my jacket closer and kept my gaze on the slick black pavement. The window lowered with a mechanical whir.

"Scarlett?" came a voice from within the car.

I refused to peer into the shadowy darkness. I didn't need to look to know who it was. The confident and suave tone, deep and seductive. Panty melting. It was Aaron, and he was the last person I wanted to see. I ignored his requests to meet for a reason.

How the hell does he know where I live?

It took a week for the bruises from our last encounter to fade from my skin. It took a little more than that for my insides to stop feeling torn apart. I had to turn away clients because of him. I lost money because of him. I'd just taken my first client since that night in the hotel room, so no, I would not respond to him.

"I won't ask you again," the voice said.

I quickened my steps, my heels tapping against the pavement rhythmically. My

heartbeat quickened in my ears and thumped against my chest wall. The car sped forward and I finally took a deep breath, but my relief was short-lived.

The car's engine cut out, and the night air went silent. My heart drummed. The driver's side door opened, and Aaron stepped out. He walked around the car, blocking my path. I kept my gaze away from him as I tried to step around him, but he blocked me again by matching my stride. His powerful hands grabbed my shoulders, stopping me in my tracks.

He lifted my chin with a rough grasp. "Scarlett," he said in a fatherlike tone.

His voice made me feel like I'd done something wrong. Like I needed to apologize for something. When I finally met his blue eyes, his gaze weakened me.

"You've been ignoring my calls. My texts." His angular jaw pulsed, his frustration clear in his expression.

"Because I didn't like what happened." I tried to sound confident, but my trembling voice gave my weakness away.

He squeezed my chin. "Well, I loved what happened. And I want it again."

"I don't." I tried to step away, to free myself from his grasp, but he looped his arm around my waist.

"How much?"

No amount of money is worth it. "Not for sale," I said through clenched teeth.

He brushed my dark hair away from my face. "Everything's for sale. Money is no object."

No. Nope. I shook my head.

“Five thousand dollars. I’m willing to pay that much for another night with you.”

N—Wait. Five thousand dollars? As in five and three zeros? My dark eyes looked up at him.

“Fine.” I rolled my eyes.

He gripped my shoulder and squeezed. “Watch that face of yours.”

I swallowed hard.

He guided me to his car, and we got inside. He pushed the ignition, and the engine roared to life.

“I’m glad you agreed to accompany me, Scarlett.”

* * *

Aaron wrapped his hand around my waist as we walked up the long driveway. He lived in a condo in a beautiful neighborhood. One I could never afford. He led me toward the end unit, releasing me long enough to put a key into the black door. A gold number plate stamped with 363 looked back at me. My nerves were on fire.

I tried not to show fear around men because it only fueled them. They loved it when we were scared. They loved to push their way inside us when we were afraid of them. But I was scared. For five-thousand dollars, I could only imagine what Aaron had in store for me—what would have me crying but still coming by the end of the night.

The door swung open, welcoming us into a tranquil, dimly lit home. The soft yellow

light created a relaxing ambience that put my nerves at ease.

“How’d you know where I lived?” I finally mustered up the courage to ask.

Aaron laughed. “Oh, Scarlett, I can find anyone or anything I want.”

He smirked as he hung his suit jacket on the rack by the door. He unbuttoned the cuffs and rolled up the sleeves of his maroon dress shirt. He looked so goddamn handsome. But I knew he wasn’t anything he appeared to be.

Aaron lit the electric fireplace and sent a warm orange glow cascading over the living room. He called me to him with a soft pat of his hand against his lap. I slipped off my jacket and hung it beside Aaron’s. I leaned over to pull off my heels, letting my bare feet land on the soft carpet. He tapped on his lap again, as if calling over a child. I sat down on the soft, pleated fabric of his suit pants.

“That’s my girl,” he whispered. His hand trailed up my bare thigh. “Who’d you fuck tonight?”

I was taken aback by his question, but I shouldn’t have been surprised. I already knew he liked it when another man fucked me.

“A client.”

“Don’t be a brat. You know what I want to know. Who was he?”

I swallowed. “A man in his forties. Bald. Family man.”

He groaned as he pulled me deeper into his lap. “How’d he fuck you?”

I hesitated, and he squeezed my hip until it hurt. “I rode him.”

“Mm, I bet you look so fucking good like that,” he groaned. “Did he hurt you?”

I shook my head.

“Too bad.” He curled his lip. “Did you use a condom?” He brushed hair away from my face.

“Of course.”

“Such a good girl. Have any bare cocks been in your cunt since mine?”

I shook my head.

He groaned as he grinded his hips against my ass.

“I told you. I always use condoms.”

“Not with me.” He lifted my chin to draw me toward his face. “I won’t ever use a condom with you. I’m not going to ask. You’ll let me feel that bare pussy around me. I won’t ask you if I can come inside you, either. I’m just going to fill you. Do you understand?”

I nodded. I didn’t want him to, but I didn’t not want him to, either. His fatherly, commanding tone made me a watered-down mess. It reminded me of my dad’s friend. The way he’d tell me what to do before fucking me senseless. He always wanted me on my knees, talking about my barely legal mouth on him. He’d tell me how he loved to fuck me because I hardly looked old enough to take a cock, let alone from someone as old as my father.

“Do you have any—”

“Coke?” He smiled. “I knew you’d ask. I have someone bringing me the very best. For you.” He tapped my nose.

My heart skipped a beat. I wanted the very best. But I also knew what I’d have to do for it. For a ride on the greatest white horse money could buy, it was almost worth it.

“Is he—”

“Going to fuck you? Most definitely.” He rubbed my cheek. “He’s going to break you.”

Heat burned behind my eyes, tempting tears to fall. “I don’t want that,” I said with a shaky voice. I wasn’t sure I could handle another session like the one with Mr. B.

“I’ll make everything worth it. I promise. However he breaks you, I’ll fix it.”

The doorbell rang. The sound echoed in my head, ominous and taunting. Aaron pushed me off his lap and went to the door. Panic squeezed my lungs at the familiarity of my situation.

Aaron opened the door and greeted the man, and the man passed a package of white powder between them. When the stranger turned around and pulled down his hood, I gasped. He wore a mask with a terrible grin on its plastic face. My heart quickened in my chest. How bad were the plans if they warranted a mask? A hidden identity? One even more secretive than the nickname “Mr. B.”

Fuck.

I wanted to back out. I needed to leave. I had to—

Aaron looked back at me as he poured white powder along the glass of a handheld

mirror. I bit my lip, forgetting about the man in the mask for the moment. Aaron sat beside me, dividing the coke into fat lines. He leaned over and snorted, sucking the powder deep into his nose. My mouth watered as I took the straw and inhaled my own line. And then another. I kept inhaling until the fear of what would happen left my body and dissolved like the powder in my bloodstream. I leaned back, sniffing up every bit of whatever coated the inside of my nose.

“Scarlett, meet James,” Aaron said, low and sultry. His voice pulled me out of my glorious haze.

James walked over and stared at me with haunting gray eyes behind the smiling mask. He reached out and touched my face. His touch was so gentle, I almost felt relieved. Maybe he’d be kind.

If he was going to be kind, he wouldn’t hide behind a mask.

Aaron fisted my hair, craning my neck. He rolled his tongue over the tip of my nose, cleaning the residual powder off my skin. “James is going to break you now.”

Breath hitched in my chest. The only thing I knew I could expect was pain. Aaron sat back and crossed his legs. He motioned to James. Before I could speak, James wrapped a tie around my face, gagging me. My eyes glassed over as he grabbed the back of the tie and pulled me off the couch, making me crawl on my knees to keep up with him. He didn’t speak, but the violent tugs told me all I needed to know. He thought I was a whore to be used, and I kind of was.

James dragged me to my feet, pushed me against the wall, and placed my hands against the cool surface. He grabbed my hips. I whimpered and arched my back. With rough hands, he raised the skirt of my dress. It caught on the cuffs of my ass. He ripped the belt from his pants and rubbed the leather along my flesh. I trembled. The belt was off my skin for only seconds before it came down again in a biting whip of

motion. I strained against the gag, screaming over the material.

James whipped me again, and a groan slipped past Aaron's lips. The leather ripped at my skin. Tears slid down my cheeks. He lifted the leather away and came down on me again. A streak of warm wetness rolled over my ass and down the back of my thigh.

"Please," I tried to say through the gag, but the word was too muffled. Or maybe he heard me and didn't care.

James ran his hand through the blood and rubbed it between my legs.

Oh God.

I shivered in disgust. He unzipped his pants, the sound of the zipper somehow amplified over the heartbeat in my ears. He surged into me. I shook my head, panicked breaths racing from my lungs.

He isn't using a condom!"Aaron!" I tried to call to the leader of the pack to destroy one of his pack mates. I didn't agree to this! I don't know what I agreed to, but it wasn't this!

I don't think Aaron would have agreed to it, either. He wanted to be the only one inside me without one.

James' hands gripped my hips as he slammed into me. His body pressed against me and stopped me from taking my hands away from the wall. In a panicked exhale, snot fell from my nose. His thrusts slowed, becoming forceful and deep, until he came inside me.

Fuck! Fuck. No.

He pulled out of me, and I dropped to the ground. I sobbed against the carpet, pressing my face into the fibers.

Aaron came up behind me and lifted my ass. “You better not have gotten any blood on my carpet!” he snapped at the masked man.

Aaron grabbed a towel as I cried and drooled. He wiped the blood off my skin, grazing over the welts from the belt. He tugged the knot at the back of my head, and my gag fell to the floor. I choked on my spit, slobbering through burning lips.

“He didn’t use a condom!” I said with a deflated drop of my chest.

Aaron turned to James. “You didn’t?” His voice was raised and stern. Enough so that James started to lift his mask. Aaron grabbed me by the hair and turned me away so I couldn’t see his face.

“I—” James began.

“There was one fucking rule, James. Her pussy is mine. I told you that you could use her however you wanted, but your one rule was to wear a goddamn condom!” He snarled in frustration. “Get the fuck out!”

I was torn. I was in so much pain, but he was defending me.

The door slammed, and he finally released my hair so I could peel myself off the carpet. He pulled me into him, wiping the mascara from my cheeks.

“I’m sorry,” he said as he brushed back my hair. He leaned me over, dropping me to my hands and knees.

“But...” I tried to speak over the sound of his falling zipper.

“You’re mine.” He growled as he got behind me and rubbed his cock between my legs.

Heat burned behind my eyes again. He reached toward the coffee table and dropped the mirror between my bent elbows. To fight off the pain, I inhaled the remaining lines from the mirror’s surface and stared at my broken reflection. Raw, red lips from the gag. Makeup staining my cheeks.

What am I doing?

“I’m not going to let his come stay inside you.”

He pushed himself into me, and I gasped. His hands raced over my sides with every thrust. He dipped his cock into James’ come, trying to claim me with his instead. It disgusted me.

“Fuck,” he groaned. His thrusts were slow and drawn out, as if he were bathing in the moment. Like he liked the swirl of another man’s come on his dick. He leaned over and kissed the nape of my neck, slick with sweat. “I want you on top of me,” he whispered.

Aaron lay on the floor, letting me climb over him. I hurt, but in such different ways than the first time, and the drugs were helping cure what ailed me. He tugged his slacks down his thighs, exposing the soft, graying hairs of his pelvis. I put him inside me to stop the drip of James’ come. Aaron gasped as I lowered myself onto him and rode his dick, scooping my hips forward so I could grind my clit against his pelvis. He ripped the fabric of my dress to get to my breasts. I opened my mouth to protest.

“I’ll buy you another one,” he grunted as he thrust upward. His hands squeezed and roamed over my chest. His groans were low and seductive.

Despite how fucking horrible I felt, his tone and the thrust of his cock drew pleasure up from my pelvis. A radiating wave rolled over me, carried by the drugs. It wasn't enough to make me come, though. Not after everything else.

“Do you want my come inside you, too?” he growled as he lifted his hips and moved mine with a rough grasp.

I nodded.

“My little whore,” he whispered.

His words bit, but not as much as they probably should have. A nip maybe. I was a whore. Look what I let happen for a few grand.

He groaned and stopped thrusting. His cock throbbed, releasing everything from his balls inside me. When I tried to climb off him, he grabbed my wrist and pulled me back. Thick pearls of white dripped from me and landed on his pelvis. He rubbed his fingers into it, bringing it to my lips.

“Taste us both. Taste what we left in your cunt.” He pried my lips apart and pushed his fingers into my mouth.

The salty mixture hit my tongue, and I fought back a gag. One load was bad enough, but two from different men? It was too much.

“Can you taste the blood?”

“No. What blood?” I asked as he pulled his fingers from my mouth.

“James is family.”

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Aaron took me to bed after helping bathe my aching skin. When his touch was gentle, almost like my father, I felt a high that went higher than the drugs he let me inhale. He wrapped a bare arm around my waist, and I flinched when his boxers rubbed against the painful welts on my ass.

“How could you let that happen?” I asked, hardly above a whisper.

“What? I told you I like it when they hurt you.”

I sighed. “Not that. Letting him have sex with me without protection.”

He drew a long breath from behind me. “That wasn’t supposed to happen. And I’ll take care of him.”

Realization washed over me like the water from his fancy showerhead. “Wait, you said he was family?”

Aaron cleared his throat. “James is my brother.”

My gaze snapped to him. “You let your brother have sex with me?” My lips drew down. That was beyond fucked up.

“He’s the only one I trusted in my home. I needed to see someone use you.”

“I don’t understand why you can’t do it yourself.” I looked down at my hands.

“Oh, princess.” He rubbed my side. “There’s so much more to this than you’ll ever

know. I'm so attracted to you, but I can't just sleep with you. When I see them abuse you and hurt you, I just have to make it all better. I have to fuck you better. Fuck the pain away." He kissed my forehead. "I want to be your hero."

I gnawed at the inside of my cheeks. What kind of shit is that? Aaron is many things, but a hero ain't one of them. Everything that happens to me around him is because of him!

"I was supposed to be the only one to come inside you, though, and he fucking ruined it." He brushed a hand through his styled hair. "The worst part is, I liked it. I loved claiming your pussy after he claimed it. The sticky warmth of him inside you. I'm torn between wanting to keep your pussy for myself and letting them unload in you so I can claim it for myself afterward." He groaned. "What a goddamn power move. Drawing their come out of you as I fuck you, just to replace it with my own." His body trembled with the memory.

My stomach sank. I knew what that meant. And I wanted nothing to do with it. No amount of money would be worth strange men coming inside me. I tried to shimmy out from under his strong grasp.

He tugged me closer. "Where are you going?"

"I want to go home." I pried his arm away from my waist.

"Princess, this is your home now," he said with a pleasurable release of breath.

The fuck it is. "I'm not staying here." I shook my head.

"How much to let me keep you?"

I leaned on my elbow. "I'm not something you can own."

He gripped my chin and lifted my face toward his. “Everything can be owned.”

I huffed, ripped myself from his grasp, and began searching for my dress. I remembered him ripping the fabric from my chest. “Where are my clothes?” I put my hands on my hips, my cheeks flaming red.

“I tossed your dress while you were in the bath. It was all torn,” he said evenly.

Of course he did. I stomped out of his bedroom, wrapping my naked body in my jacket. I grabbed the doorknob, willing to walk out of that damn house while wearing only my jacket...but he had given me a ride there.

Fuck.

Aaron appeared from the shadows of the bedroom, walking toward me with confident steps. Sweatpants hugged his waist. “Do you want me to call you a cab?”

I wanted to yell at him, but I swallowed my voice. He knew what he was doing. It was all about control for him. It was a game.

He pinned me against the door and placed a hand on either side of my head. One of his hands roamed down my chest and gripped the belt of my jacket. He tugged it, and the lightweight fabric spread, exposing my naked body to him once more.

“What do you want, Scarlett? What is it that you want from me?” His hand raced up my stomach and landed between my breasts. He looked at me, his blue eyes intense and hungry.

My mind went back to my father’s friend. To the first time he fucked me. Much like Aaron, he had pinned me against the wall of my bedroom. His hand had slipped down the front of my pants. A forceful touch I couldn’t form a word to stop, even if I

wanted to. He'd been so hungry for me, as if he'd devour me whole if I didn't give him at least some of me. As if he'd been watching me and wanting me, and the moment I turned eighteen, he'd struck. Despite how scared I was at first, he threw me on the bed and took me like no other. He made me come on his dick. No one ever fucked me the way he had. His experienced touch and the movement of his hips made me weak, and I wanted all that again.

"Scarlett?" Aaron's voice drew me out of the moment I enjoyed so much in my mind. "Who were you thinking about?"

"No one," I snapped.

"That look wasn't from no one."

I scoffed like a petulant child. Aaron grabbed my face.

"Someone I knew when I was younger," I begrudgingly admitted.

"What kind of teenage boy would fill your mind while my hands are on you?" Aaron laughed humorlessly.

I shook my head. "It wasn't a teenage boy."

He cocked his head, waiting for me to say more. Instead of telling him, I dropped my gaze.

He fisted my hair with a frustrated groan. "Tell me who occupies your mind."

I groaned. "His name was Mark. He was fifty-five, and I was eighteen. He was my father's friend and employee."

A grin crept across Aaron's face. "Sweet little Scarlett. A man just a bit younger than me fucked with your mind that much, huh?" He let go of my hair and ran his hand down my body until he could pry his fingers between my legs. "You like how we fuck you? How we know how to please you more than the men your age?" He leaned his face into me and bit the skin of my collarbone. "How many pussies do you think we've been inside to be able to make yours feel that good? Did he even put his mouth on you?"

My father's friend never had the opportunity to go down on me. He'd fucked me in a hurry while my father was on the other side of the house, waiting for him to return. There was no time for that, as much as I had wanted his mouth on me. He'd licked my come off his fingers, though, wearing it like a badge of honor in front of my father.

I shook my head.

"Oh." He bit his lip. "I don't go down on whores."

That time his words did more than nip. They took a massive bite out of my dignity. I never wanted to be thought of as dirty, because I worked so hard to be clean. Besides Mark, no strange man had ever been inside me without protection. Until Aaron.

"But you're such a special one." His hand grazed my cheek. "Will you stay with me if I show you what you've been missing?" His low and seductive voice made me throb between my legs. But his words also made me flush with anger.

Fat chance. No one's going to hold me hostage with just the promise of a little oral.

Without waiting for my answer, he tugged my jacket down my arms and let it fall to the floor. I opened my mouth to argue, but he dropped to his knees before I could utter a word. I leaned against the door, drawing my hips forward as his fingers raked

my thighs. His warm breath made me shiver as it rolled over my skin. I laced my hand through his beautifully graying hair, half of me trying to keep his mouth off me while the other half wanted to pull him closer. I didn't have to close my eyes to imagine Mark. I felt like I had him between my legs already.

A mature confidence radiated from him as he grabbed my ass and buried his face between my legs. His tongue worked me in ways I'd never felt. I gasped. An experienced flicking between drawn-out, upward licks. I gripped the back of his head and drove my hips forward, grinding against his mouth. Aside from the pleasurable pricks of a five o'clock shadow, his face was smooth.

Aaron brought a hand down and pushed his fingers into me. My orgasm lurked just beneath the surface of his starving mouth and thrusting hand. I'd never come from oral. It never did anything for me. Sure, it felt goodish, but it just wasn't enough. Aaron's dedicated tongue changed everything. I wanted to come on his face. My thighs trembled, and I could hardly hold myself up as my orgasm drew closer, ready to roll over me like a tidal wave.

"I can't stand any longer," I whispered, trying to steady my quivering muscles.

He looked up at me, his mouth shining with my wetness. A sadistic smirk crossed his lips. "You're going to, and you'll come against my mouth like my good little whore."

He buried his face into me again, licking until it was all I could do to hold myself upright with my hand on his head. I came so fucking hard—an explosion of pleasure that made me forget why I wanted to leave in the first place. He held my hips as I shuddered against his mouth.

"Stop," I whispered, gripping his hair to pull him away. The feeling was too intense.

He continued, making me spasm and jerk with the torrent of overstimulation.

“Please,” I begged.

He ran his tongue through me a final time, capturing the flood of wetness between my legs. He got to his feet, and I tasted myself on his lips as he kissed me.

“I wish there was someone else here so I could watch them fuck you, my little girl.” He brushed the hair from my face. “I’d give anything to rip into you with my cock right now.”

His words frustrated me. I wanted him, and I needed him to want me. I didn’t understand why he wouldn’t just have sex with me. Why did he need to follow on the coattails of another man? I reached out to stroke his cock through his sweatpants, but it wasn’t hard.

Damn it.

“I told you. I can’t fuck you without another man involved. I need to see you spread open by someone else.”

What kind of fucked up game was that? “It feels like you aren’t attracted to me,” I said with a deflated sigh as I gathered my jacket off the floor.

“Oh, Scarlett, no. I’m really fucking attracted to you.”

“Then why do you want people to do this to me?” I turned around and gestured toward the tender bruises and welts.

He took a deep breath, trying to figure out his response. “I’m a bad person, Scarlett. I get off on your pain. God, I love seeing your pretty face coated with tears and smeared makeup.”

I shook my head. There were plenty of men who did. “Then why don’t you hurt me yourself? Why make someone else do it?”

Aaron touched my cheek. “Because I’m less depraved when someone worse is inside you.”

That makes you the most depraved of all.

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I stupidly stayed with him. I stuck around with the promise of money and drugs.

He had a bunch of pretty, new dresses delivered to the house, and he made me model each one of them. When Aaron had me slip into the girly pink dress, I knew something was awry. It was longer than the others, and the allure of innocence surrounded me when I put it on.

“Who’s coming over?” I asked. The touch of annoyance in my voice made him furrow his brow.

“No one’s coming here. But you’re going to meet someone special.”

“More special than your goddamn brother?” I bit back. I wasn’t trying to be obstinate, but I needed a bump. Soon.

Fire burned my cheek as he slapped me. “Watch your damn mouth, little girl,” he commanded.

I whimpered, my cheek burning hot. That was the first time he laid his hands on me like that.

“I need you to behave yourself tonight. It’s very important.”

I bit my lip, trying to hold back any curse words brooding in my throat. Aaron was paying for everything, which kept me from taking on clients, but his clients were worse than any of mine ever were. Well, almost.

“Stop pouting. This is a mutually beneficial opportunity. He uses you, I get to watch, and I potentially gain him as a business partner. Do you know what that means?”

I shook my head.

“That means I’ll get a lot of money. And I can spoil you.”

I fought back a curl of my lip. I didn’t want to be spoiled. I wanted to be loved.

“What’s his thing?” I asked.

Aaron sucked the roof of his mouth and shook his head. “That’s a surprise.”

I fucking hate surprises.

* * *

I sat up and inhaled powder until it hit the back of my sinuses like a freight train. My mind clouded, and my body relaxed. Aaron came into the room with a glass filled a quarter of the way with water. He brought it to my mouth and tipped its contents down my throat.

“That’s a good girl.” He rubbed my cheek.

I started to feel a little drowsy, which was odd because coke never made me feel tired.

“Did you drug me?” I asked.

“Just a little something to take the edge off. Maybe help you be a tad bit more pliable tonight.”

Pliable?“Why the fuck do I need to be pliable, Aaron?”

He grabbed my chin. “Don’t talk to me in that tone, little girl. I’d give you another slap, but I don’t want to ruin your makeup.”

I shut my mouth, but my mind swam with fear. Is this really worth it?

Aaron guided me to his car, and I wobbled on heavy legs beside him. When I was too slow, he lifted me up and carried me the rest of the way. Despite how relaxed my body felt, my nerves sparked with anxiety.

“Where are we going?” I whined.

He put me on my feet and slapped my ass. “You’ll see.”

He helped me into the passenger’s seat and buckled me in. With my brain in a fog, I watched the white lines zip along the road as we drove into the middle of nowhere. We turned onto a gravel road, and my eyes strained to look at the headlights in front of us. Dust rose around the car as Aaron pulled his BMW beside a man in a Lincoln.

What is it with these rich dudes?

The stranger got out of the car, his golden hair combed back on his head, but I couldn’t see his face over the glare of the headlights. He adjusted the tie on his fancy fucking suit as Aaron stepped out to speak with him. A sly grin slipped across Aaron’s face while they talked. Whatever was coming was going to make Aaron really happy. Which was terrifying.

The man returned to his car and drove off.

Aaron opened my door and pulled me out. “Be a good girl,” he whispered as he

kissed my forehead.

“What?” My voice felt disjointed and far away.

He didn’t answer me. He got in the driver’s seat and locked the car doors. I tugged at the handle and knocked a sluggish fist against the window. Aaron waved and drove off, leaving me alone in the middle of bumfuck nowhere.

I rubbed my hands up and down my arms, chilled from the night air. The wind kicked up the skirt of my dress, and my eyes struggled to adjust to the darkness. Ominous trees towered around me.

What the fuck?

Panic clawed at my throat, but I was too damn tired and confused to do anything about it.

I shielded my eyes as headlights came back into view. I hoped it was Aaron, but I knew it fucking wasn’t. The hazard lights came on, and I walked toward the bright flashes, my legs as unsteady as a newborn deer’s. As soon as I leaned against the car’s dark hood, I knew it was the Lincoln. I squinted my eyes to see into the driver’s seat, but there was no figure inside.

Fucking A.

I tried to stumble toward the driver’s side door, but fabric covered my head. A pillowcase. It bunched around my neck and cut off my breath. Strong arms wrapped around me and held me in place.

“Fight back, or I’ll give you a reason to fight,” the deep voice said.

I strained against his grasp, writhing within the immovable strength of his arms. I screamed. I wasn't foreign to rape play, but this was my first experience with abduction play.

He gripped the side of my face, bent me forward, and slammed my head into the car's side panel. The metal crunched...or maybe it was my skull. A wave of dizziness washed over me, and I fell to my knees. Warm blood dripped from my forehead.

Goddamn it, Aaron!

The man unlocked his trunk and grabbed something from inside. The unmistakable ripping sound of tape being pulled from a roll pierced the silence. He wrapped it around my wrists.

"Please," I begged.

He lifted me, threw me into the trunk, and slammed it closed. My hands grasped at the carpet beneath me. The knock to my head sent the ground spinning until nausea nearly overcame me. The trunk amplified the road noise. I struggled against the tape for no fucking reason. I hated myself so much at that moment, and I really despised Aaron. None of that was worth the money. I'd rather take my chances with weird suburban dads.

There was a mechanical whir of sound, like a garage door opening and then closing again. The noises around me stopped, and I held my breath as the lock on the trunk clicked. The hair on my arms prickled. The man grabbed me and threw me over his shoulder. His hand raced up my thigh, digging his fingers into my skin.

He set me down on the ground. My knees rested on cold hardwood floors. He snatched the pillowcase off my head, and I reached my bound hands up to my forehead. I looked up at the man, still in his suit, but now wearing a masquerade mask

of lacy black metal.

Great. Another masked fuck.

He grabbed a fistful of my hair, craning my neck and lifting me onto my sensitive kneecaps. With a flick of the knife he pulled from his pocket, he ripped apart the tape.

“You’ll call me Daddy,” he said through a snarl as he tossed the knife aside.

I looked around the room. White drop cloth covered all four walls, disguising any recognizable details about the home. I was in a nondescript box with the masked man, but I could tell it was a kitchen.

“Why aren’t you scared?” he asked.

I wasn’t easily frightened. Not outwardly, at least. Most of my fear went without notice. But of course I was scared. Aaron fucking left me to be picked up by a guy with an abduction fantasy. What could possibly go wrong?

When I didn’t respond, he punched me in the face. His knuckles glided along my jaw without inhibition. Tears swelled behind my eyes. He grabbed me by the hair and lifted me to my feet. I whimpered as he leaned me over the butcher’s block table. He wrapped his hands around my throat and began to squeeze. As he put more and more pressure around my neck, I fought to breathe. My hands flew toward his fingers to try and loosen his grip. He grunted and tightened his grasp.

“Do you like when Daddy chokes you, sweets?”

I loved Daddies. They were my favorite men to play with. But he wasn’t a Daddy. Not even close. Daddies didn’t hurt their littles like this.

Aaron's words echoed in my head, telling me to be a good girl. I forced a nod.

"Wrong answer."

Oh, he doesn't want me to like it. He wants me to hate it. Good. That's a much easier part to play, because fuck him!

"Do you like when I choke you?"

I shook my head, finally freeing the tears trapped behind my eyelids.

"You're going to take Daddy's cock in that sweet little mouth of yours."

He released my neck, and I collapsed against the countertop. The man grabbed my shoulder and pushed me back to my knees. It sounded like he was possessed by the devil as he unbuttoned his slacks and pulled out his cock. He groaned and stroked himself. He gripped his base, grabbed the back of my head, and shoved himself into my mouth. There was no hesitation as he pushed to the back of my throat. His swollen head slid far enough to make me gag, and I tapped his thigh. He didn't stop. Instead, he rammed his hips forward until I choked. I tapped harder. That was the sign. That was the universal sign to fucking stop.

Tears flowed down my face, smearing my makeup. I puffed out my cheeks, trying to draw in air as he fucked my throat. I hated it. My lungs tightened, and my throat heaved with another gag. He only pulled away once the warm chunks of vomit filled my mouth. It spilled down the front of my dress and onto the floor.

Fucking piece of shit!

I leaned forward and continued to throw up on his floor, a scream begging to erupt from my throat. He hopped on one leg as the liquid splattered against his expensive

leather shoes. He snarled and grabbed my face, turning my head to wipe the vomit away with my hair.

“Fucking disgusting bitch,” he said. “I was told you could take a dick.”

“I can if someone listens when I say it’s too much. I tried to tell—”

He slapped me, silencing my words. I grabbed my face and panted through the pain.

“Shut the fuck up.” He snatched my hair with his fist and dragged me away from the mess on the floor.

I fell onto my butt and reached for his hand. He wrapped his hand further in my hair, lifted me to my feet, and bent me over a dining room table. My fingers slid along the tablecloth. Something about it screamed “family” to me. Like he had one which sat at that table every Sunday after church.

“Hopefully your pussy can take a dick better than your mouth.”

My heart thumped against my chest and hammered against the table beneath me. I wanted him to use a condom, but he seemed like he’d beat my ass if I asked. His hands raced up my dress and lifted the fabric. His fingers hooked my panties and ripped them down, and I fought back the heat behind my eyes. Men like him loved it when we cried.

“Will you use a condom?” I stupidly asked.

He bashed my head against the table, sending a wave of dizziness crashing over me again. It toyed with what remained in my stomach and threatened to bring it up.

“I’m not using a condom. Tell Daddy you want his come inside you.”

I groaned, and he made a motion to go for my face again.

“I want your come inside me.”

He punched me again, rattling my jaw. “What did I tell you to call me?”

“I want your come...inside me...Daddy,” I said through clenched teeth.

Fuck you, Aaron. I’m not fucking going back there.

The man surged inside me. I wasn’t wet enough for the force he used, but he didn’t give a shit. He fucked me, and I zoned out until he came inside me. I squeezed my eyes shut, feeling disgusted about myself. That wasn’t who I was. Aaron made me do things I’d never do.

He smacked my ass and tugged my dress down. “Thank me,” he said as he raised my face to his.

I gnawed at the insides of my cheeks. “Thank you, Daddy.”

A knock came from behind a drop cloth covering a doorway. The man grabbed the pillowcase from the floor and shoved it back over my head. He pushed me through the cloth and toward the direction of the knock. He opened the door and forced me into strong, familiar arms. Fucking Aaron.

“We’ll be in touch,” the man said from behind me.

Aaron led me to the car and sat me in the backseat. He got in the driver’s seat and drove away. “You can take that off your head,” he said.

I tugged it off and threw it to the floor. His eyes caught mine in the rearview mirror.

He swallowed hard at the sight of me, but it wasn't from anger. He looked turned on as hell. A silver disc in a case caught my eye. Before I could get a good look at it, he tossed it into the center console.

Did he fucking record it? Had he watched through a camera?

When he pulled off the road and climbed into the backseat with me, I knew what he wanted.

Aaron kissed the marks on my head. "I'm so sorry," he whispered against my skin.

I rolled my eyes. Fuck him.

He unzipped his pants, feeling the warm, foreign wetness between my legs. He groaned as he pushed inside me. Claiming me once more.

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You can usually tell when someone loves you, even if it's buried somewhere inside them. It might be anchored in their darkest depths, but it's there. That wasn't Aaron. The only things inside him were anger and pain. And a deep-rooted love for himself. Even knowing that, I still pulled on a pair of panties for his friends to rip off. I still laid myself out for Aaron afterward, because somewhere deep inside me, I needed to make him happy.

A bruise blanketed half my face. Others marred my breasts and wrists. I looked like a battered wife. I was a battered wife. Yes, I married him. The monster was my goddamn husband.

I leaned over our dresser and snorted another line, cleaning it from my sinuses with a hard sniff. I rubbed the bridge of my nose. I wasn't sure what was in store that night.

I went into the living room. He looked me over, his intoxicating eyes relaxed and rounded. When he gestured to his lap, I happily obliged. I curled up on him, burying my face in his neck.

"What's wrong, sweet girl?"

"I'm just sore...everywhere." I buried myself deeper into him.

"I know. After tonight, I'll give you a little break. I got something special in mind."

I sighed. "I can't do anything special tonight."

He grabbed my chin with a firm hand and pulled my face away from him. "You can,

and you will. Don't be defiant."

Defiant? I never said no to him, but I was in too much pain to do anything more than what we usually did. That was all.

"I can't."

Aaron slapped me hard across the discolored bruises. The stinging throb made tears well up in an instant.

"Go get your little ass higher, and be ready in an hour."

* * *

I lay down on the couch, the skirt of my dress riding up my thighs and exposing a bruise between them. I was high as fuck. I inhaled until I stopped feeling hurt. Physically or emotionally. I was numb, which was exactly what I needed to feel to get through that night.

The doorbell rang, but I didn't panic like I used to. Instead, I rolled my eyes. Aaron no longer gave a shit about who he brought over to the house. Overall, he got more reckless. He took more risks with my body. The same group of men had fucked and used me for so many years that the doorbell didn't faze me any longer.

Aaron answered the door in a pale green polo and jeans. He looked like a father instead of the sadistic husband he was. He welcomed whomever it was inside. Was it the guy who liked to beat me? The one who liked to rape me? Was it the one who fucked me until it felt like his dick was in my throat? I groaned as quietly as possible. I hated it all. I hated them. I hated him.

Aaron stepped aside, and immediate recognition washed over my face. The well-

combed blond hair...the suit...goddamn it. The abduction fetish guy.

Guess they ended up business partners after all. Fuck that guy.

Aaron knew I wanted nothing to do with that man. He recorded what he did to me and gave it to Aaron, who came on my face as he watched it. There weren't enough drugs in the world to deal with him again.

He turned toward me, and I finally saw his maskless face. He looked like someone who got into Harvard just from writing his name on the top of the application. If he even had to apply. Probably a generational acceptance.

Gag.

His eyes widened with a hint of excitement, and I focused on controlling my facial expressions.

"Don't be rude, Scarlett," Aaron said, gesturing toward our company.

I stood and walked over to them, extending my hand to the man. He took it with a creepy smile.

"Glad I didn't leave a mark," he said as he touched the area of my forehead he'd slammed into his car.

I recoiled from his fingers.

"Samuel, come have a drink," Aaron said before Samuel could notice my disgust.

They went to the kitchen, and I sat down on the couch, dropping my face into my hands. Glasses clinked and laughter rose from behind the barn door. It was all a big

ol' party for them. For me, it was hell. Or was there somewhere worse than hell? Somewhere buried even deeper than the fiery gates? That's where I was.

The doorbell rang again. This time, my heart raced. I couldn't handle two men and Aaron.

"Answer the door, princess!" Aaron yelled.

I let my face draw all the annoyed expressions I could before I tugged open the door. My breath hitched when I saw what stood on the front step. The stranger's eyes widened, but not from excitement. He was horrified.

That can't be one of Aaron's friends.

"Does Aaron live here?" he asked.

I nodded and stepped aside. He came in and slipped off his jacket, offering me a sympathetic glance. A tattoo of an American flag with dog tags painted his strong bicep. When he noticed me staring, he tugged down his sleeve.

"I'm Ryan. I work for Aaron." He put his hand out to me.

I took it with a shaky grasp. "I'm his wife, Scarlett."

"Ryan?" Aaron came through the barn door with a glass of golden liquid. He shoved it into Ryan's hand.

"Hey, man. What's going on?" Ryan asked as Samuel appeared behind Aaron.

"Nothing's going on. Relax. Come have a seat." Aaron walked to the couch, raised the crotch of his pants, and sat down.

My head swam with confusion. What the hell was happening?

Samuel sat beside Aaron, and Ryan gave in to the glaring stares coming from both men. He sat on one of the recliners and took a sip of his drink.

I went and pinned myself against the wall in the living room, trying to stay small and invisible within the suffocating silence. In the many years I dealt with Aaron's fetish, all the visitors knew why they were there. They also never looked like Ryan. Instead of the usual piece of shit businessman, he was more rugged. If he worked with Aaron, it wasn't in the boardroom.

"Why'd you ask me here?" Ryan finally said, drumming his fingers on his jeans.

"I have a bit of a favor to ask." Aaron smiled. "Well, not so much a favor as a request."

"Hardly a request either, Aaron," Samuel quipped.

They both laughed.

Fuck.

"I'm not following." Ryan's eyebrows furrowed.

"You're going to fuck my wife."

My stomach clenched at Aaron's casual words.

Ryan's eyes shot to me, his lips drawn tight. "What?" He couldn't process the question, let alone a response.

Samuel leaned forward and put his glass on the table. “You and I are going to fuck Scarlett.” His cold, dead eyes met mine. “Aren’t we, sweets?”

I fought the urge to curl my lip. His gaze drifted back to Ryan, whose mouth was slack with confusion.

“I’m not...” His dark eyes turned to me. “No offense at all, but I’m not doing that.” He put his glass on the table and stood.

“Sit the fuck back down!” Aaron commanded. I hadn’t heard him raise his voice like that since the night with his brother.

Ryan swallowed hard, but refused to sit. His eyes narrowed at Aaron.

Samuel egged Aaron on. “Do it.”

Aaron dropped his head back and took a deep breath. “Ryan, you’re the big computer whiz. The guy. Right?”

Ryan’s cheeks pulsed at his question, but he nodded.

“See, that’s the thing. There’s about one hundred and fifty thousand dollars unaccounted for. Which is crazy, because my accountant here...well, his numbers all match.”

Samuel nodded and threw a grotesque smile toward Ryan and me.

Ryan shifted in his seat. “I had nothing to do with any missing money. I’m only the technology behind your numbers. I don’t do shit with the input or output of anything.”

Aaron leaned back, reached into his pocket, and unfolded a piece of paper. He slid it across the glass coffee table and crossed his legs again.

Ryan took a deep breath and picked up the paper. His eyes closed, and the pulse in his cheeks intensified. “Fuck,” he whispered. “I skimmed some money over the last couple years for my wife’s cancer treatments. Not that it fucking mattered in the end.” His shoulders fell in defeat, and his voice trembled as he tossed the paper onto the table. “So, now what?”

“If you play our little game with my wife whenever I ask, we can overlook this minor transgression.” Aaron uncrossed his legs. “Sorry about your wife.”

Ryan looked over at me. “So all I have to do is have sex with her?”

“Not quite. She has to be fucked a certain kind of way.” A sadistic grin crossed Aaron’s face.

I swallowed. Ryan looked so strong. He was more muscular than the other men Aaron forced on me. I shivered at the thought of the damage he could do with arms like his.

Does he live at the goddamn gym?Fuck.

“What do you mean?” Ryan asked.

“She likes to be roughed up, don’t you, Scarlett?”

I didn’t respond.

“You two will fuck her like the whore she is. Fill her up and leave her for me to finish off. Samuel, show him what we mean.” Aaron stood and motioned for Ryan to sit on

the couch. He then took his place in the recliner and crossed his legs.

Ryan drew a quick breath but went to the couch as he was told. With stiff shoulders and tensed muscles, he sat down.

Samuel wasted no time grabbing me and pulling me into him. I gnawed on my cheeks as his hands raced over my hips. He gripped the back of my dress and dragged me to the couch, pushing me to my knees and forcing me against the buttery leather. Ryan looked like he wanted to speak, so I shook my head at him.

Don't bother.

Samuel raised the skirt of my dress and ripped down my panties. I fought back the teasing tears. He spit in his hand and rubbed between my legs. I flinched at the touch because I was still so damn sore. He surged inside me, and I dropped my head in embarrassment. I was ashamed because Ryan wasn't one of them. He wouldn't understand why I allowed them to do that to me. He didn't know it started with an infatuation when Aaron reminded me of someone who made me feel special. The drugs and money kept me trapped there for too long, and now it was too hard to get out from beneath it all. I became so dependent on him. Where would I even go?

Samuel's hips pressed against me, driving me into the couch. I whimpered against the pain.

"When you're ready to come, do it in her ass," Aaron said.

I finally let the tears escape from behind my eyelids. I refused to look at Ryan. I could hear his hitched breaths, and they sounded angry.

"Why wait till I'm about to bust to do that?" Samuel said with a groan as he pulled out and pushed himself into my ass.

I cried out. I tried not to, but the pain overtook any control I had. The cushion shifted beside me, and I craned my head to look at Ryan. His dark, intense eyes stared at the scene playing out in front of him. Anger coursed through his muscles until they trembled. He readied himself to stand, and I shook my head again.

Play along,I mouthed.

Ryan sat back with a trembling lip, and I dropped my gaze again. I tried to ignore the pain behind me as Samuel fucked me.

He grabbed my hair and tugged me up to him. “You remember what I like you to say to me?”

I closed my eyes and fought back more tears. “I want you to come inside me...Daddy.”

Samuel slowed his thrusts, bottoming out inside me. “Good girl,” he whispered as he came.

He pulled out of me. I tugged down the hem of my dress and sat on the couch, drawing my legs to my chest. My hands wove through my hair, and I tugged, trying to ignore the pain that continued to sear through me.

Samuel turned to Ryan with a smile. “Your turn,” he said as he zipped up his fly.

Aaron pointed to his watch, tapping the face of it impatiently.

Ryan stood and unzipped his jeans. The denim spread open to expose his boxers, and he rubbed himself through the fabric. “I can’t do it with an audience,” he said.

“Scarlett?” Aaron gestured toward me and then at Ryan.

I leaned over and rubbed the front of his boxers, trying to get him hard. I needed to get him hard. We all knew what would happen if he couldn't perform. I looked up at him, telling him it was okay without words. He shook his head.

"I really want to fuck her, but I'm gun shy. Can I take her for the first time in private?" Ryan fisted my hair and pulled. His words were harsh, but I couldn't stop watching how his lips moved as he talked about me. "And can she suck my cock? She has such a perfect mouth."

I whimpered against his hand. He was as strong as I thought he'd be.

Samuel shook his head, but Aaron leaned his elbows onto his knees.

"You aren't from this world of ours," Aaron said, "so I'll allow it. This time. But we're listening. You better fuck her. And I don't care what hole you take as long as you finish in her pussy."

"I will," Ryan said with a growl. He didn't release the hair balled up in his fist as he lifted me to my feet and dragged me toward the hallway. "What room can I fuck her in?"

Aaron smirked. "Last room on the left."

Ryan nodded, dragging me further down the hall. He opened the dark mahogany door and pulled me inside. "I can't wait to fuck that mouth," he said as he closed the door behind us.

As soon as he released my hair, I dropped to my knees. I wiped at my eyes before reaching my hand out to draw his boxers down. He was hard, but he stopped me, grabbing my wrist in his firm hands.

“We’re not doing that,” he whispered.

I looked up at him and shook my head. “We have to.”

“You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to.” He grabbed my arm and helped me to my feet.

“You don’t understand. I have to do whatever Aaron demands.”

Ryan touched my cheek. “Well, I don’t.”

He did have to. It wasn’t a choice for either of us.

“You like how my dick feels in your throat?” He raised his voice when he spoke, ensuring Aaron could hear. “I love when you choke on me.”

He sat on the bed and pulled me beside him. He wrapped his hand around the back of my head and pulled me into his broad chest. I buried my face into his black t-shirt.

“I can’t do it,” he whispered.

There was a quick knock on the door, and Aaron’s sickeningly calm voice came from the other side. “I know she has a great mouth, and you might be tempted to come in it, but you need to come in her pussy. That’s what she’s for.” There was so much thick silence that I thought he’d say something more. Instead, his steps receded, and I released a harsh breath.

Ryan shook his head.

I sat up taller, my eyes pleading with him. “You have to. He’ll know if you don’t come inside me. It’s part of his thing.”

“Are you kidding me?” Ryan said with a brush of his hand through his short, dark hair.

“Not kidding.”

Ryan sat silent for a few moments while he weighed his options. I knew what he needed to do. I reached out and rubbed the front of his boxers, waiting to feel him swell beneath my touch. When I felt no movement, I let out a sigh.

“We’re both fucked if you can’t get hard,” I whispered.

I pulled the front of my dress down and released my breasts from the fabric. His eyes widened, and he bit his lip.

“Have you had sex with anyone since your wife...”

Ryan shook his head. “I haven’t wanted to.”

I grabbed his hand and put it on my chest. His fingers moved along my skin, focusing on my nipples. He traced the bruises with tightening lips.

“What have they done to you?” he asked.

“Everything.” I dropped my gaze. “I need you to fuck me.”

He took a deep breath and leaned in to kiss me. His lips spread on mine. One of his hands snaked around the back of my neck as the other groped my breast, rubbing his thumb along my nipple. I rubbed my hand against the front of his boxers until I felt him harden beneath my touch. I flashed my eyes up at him and smiled.

“I’m not going to fuck you like that.” He gestured toward what waited outside the

door.

He stood up and pulled his cock from his boxers. Breath caught in my throat. Everything on him was big. He climbed over me, and his hands raised the fabric of my dress. He saw the bruises on my thighs and looked away so he wouldn't lose his erection.

He rubbed my thighs. "I would fuck the hell out of you, but it's hard to see a woman as beautiful as you getting beat on."

He sighed and rubbed his cock against me. He spit in his hand and ran it over his dick. Ryan pushed himself inside me with such reservation, as if he were trying not to hurt me. Everything hurt me, but he didn't need to worry about that. I drew him into me with my legs, and he leaned over to kiss me. I pulled away from him and turned my head.

"Stop! You're hurting me!" I was playing the game Aaron masterminded, but Ryan looked at me with such concern. I shook my head. "He's probably listening."

Ryan thrust, slow and shallow. He kissed me, pulling my face to his chest as he curled his hips forward and deeper into me. His strength hovered over me, and it made me feel oddly safe. I fought back a moan. I hadn't felt an urge to scream out from pleasure in so long. I grabbed his hand and used it to cover my mouth as the urge to moan grew too strong. He put pressure against my lips, trying to silence the growing sounds from beneath his hand.

"You feel so good. Such a good whore," he said with a roll of his eyes.

His attempts to keep me from getting into trouble made me tremble beneath him. I grabbed his hips and pulled him deeper into me. He didn't want to, but I forced him to. I didn't care about the pain. I wanted to feel him fully inside me.

“Are you gonna take my come?” he asked, much too loud.

My eyes rolled from the seductive sarcasm leaving his lips. I nodded beneath his hand, and he drove his hips into me. The tension between my legs reached an apex, and I came beneath him. I hadn’t come in far too long. He had to grab my mouth harder to keep the sounds at bay as I shuddered beneath him.

“I’m going to come, okay?” he whispered.

I nodded. He brought his hand away and dropped it beside my head. I looked up at him. His strong arms were to either side of my head. I swallowed hard. He gave me another few powerful but gentle thrusts and moaned as he came inside me.

Ryan rubbed his hand down my bare thigh and back up toward the notch of my hip. “You’re way too good for this guy.”

“Will you fuck me again?” I asked. I hoped he’d say yes, because I wanted that again. I wanted his touch. For a moment, I forgot about what would follow it. How Aaron would claim me once they left.

Ryan rubbed my makeup down my cheeks with his thumbs. “I don’t think I’ll have much of a choice.” He gave me a final kiss.

Ryan stood and pulled his boxers up. I made myself cry—which was easy enough to do—and the red flush of my cheeks from pleasure easily mimicked the flush from fear.

He opened the door and met Aaron just outside of it. He zipped up his jeans and nodded toward him. “She’s yours,” he said.

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The doorbell rang while Aaron was at work, and my heart stalled. People weren't allowed at the house when Aaron wasn't there. I pulled up the app on my phone to view the camera feed and saw Ryan standing on the doorstep. I ran to the living room and flicked off the power to the router to make it look like we lost our camera service because the Wi-Fi went down.

"Hold on!" I called out. I viewed the clip of Ryan walking up the driveway, hoping Aaron hadn't seen it yet. Among clips of all the men coming and going on the regular, I found the one from today and hit delete.

I drew my robe tighter to my body and tied the belt again. I eased open the door, the fear of the devil probably all over my face. "Get in here," I snapped.

He came inside and stared at me with wide eyes when he noticed the new marks on my face. Samuel did a round two once Ryan left, and it went as expected. He reached out his hand and touched a cut on my cheek.

"What the hell are you doing here?" I asked.

He took a step back. "I had to know you were okay. Clearly, you aren't." He spoke in such a matter-of-fact tone. And my answer was a matter of fact. I wasn't okay. I'd never be okay.

"I'm fine, but you need to leave!" I peered out the window at the empty driveway. "What were you thinking? You think someone like Aaron doesn't have cameras?"

He rubbed his chin, messing up his neatly groomed beard. "I guess I didn't think

about it. As someone who works with shit like this for a job, I probably should have.”

My phone rang. My heart wanted to beat out of my throat. “Hey,” I answered. With my eyes, I pleaded with Ryan for complete silence.

“The cameras aren’t working,” Aaron’s voice blared from the speakerphone.

“They aren’t? Let me look.” I tapped my foot on the carpet, counting the seconds.

“Damn it. Yeah, there’s no light on the router.”

“Is it plugged in?”

“Yeah.”

“I’ll call the damn internet provider. Fucking idiots,” he said, loud enough that I needed to pull the phone away from me.

“Hopefully it’s just down for a little while.” I listened to Aaron’s annoyed sigh over the other end.

“I’ll see you when I get home. Love you, my girl.”

I cringed. “I love you too. Bye.” I hung up. “See?” I said with my own frustrated exhale.

“You love him?” Ryan cocked his head.

“That’s the only thing you took from that?” I rolled my eyes. “You’re putting me in unbelievably deep shit and expecting me to wade through it unscathed, and all you can ask is if I love him?”

“How?”

How? I don't fucking know how. Probably stupidity and desperation. I had to play my part for Aaron. He took care of me, and I owed him at least that much.

“He treats you—”

“Horribly?”

“It's more than that. Look at you.” He took a step forward and placed his warm hand on my cheek. I melted into his touch for only a moment.

“It doesn't matter,” I said. “None of it matters. You have to leave. Aaron—”

Ryan grabbed the phone from my death grasp and tossed it onto the couch. “I parked down the road and walked.” He put his hands on my shoulders. “Stop for a minute and listen to me.” His rugged hands tightened their grip. “Aaron doesn't scare me. He has some shit on me, but that's it. Come with me. I'll take you somewhere safe.”

One hundred and fifty thousand dollars is more than just some shit. I shook my head. “I can't leave, Ryan. He's more influential than you think. I put myself in the wolves' den, and now I have to sleep with them.”

“I don't care if you walked into a goddamn bear's cage. You don't deserve to be mauled.”

Oh, Ryan. Innocent Ryan. You aren't from this world. “I can't,” I said firmly.

He took another step forward, grasped the belt around my robe, and pulled it open. The fabric spread, exposing a barrage of discolored skin. I fought back tears and tried to cover myself.

“Come here.” He grabbed my arm, and I dug my heels in as he dragged me into the hallway where a full-length mirror lined a closet door. He positioned me in front of it, drawing the fabric away from my body again. “Look at you!”

I couldn’t. I refused to lift my eyes to see my reflection. I hadn’t looked at my body in so long. I just felt the painful areas as I put on a new outfit each night. He grabbed my chin and forced me to face myself. What stared back at me made me sick. It was me, but it wasn’t me. I ran a hand along the bruises on my stomach.

“Look what you let them do to you. You have to know you’re better than this,” he said with a hint of desperation. He covered my hand with his.

“If Aaron comes—”

“Then Aaron comes home. I’m already eager to get my hands on him. I have things I need to take care of, one of those things being getting you out. But he’ll get his. I promise you that.”

I flashed my sad eyes up at him. I pitied him. He had no idea what he was getting into. With a soft but firm touch, he pushed me against the wall. He leaned into me as he closed the fabric of my robe, tying the knot between us. His lips met mine. A sting of guilt, a buzz of fear, and a wave of excitement swam through me. His hand slipped behind my neck, and he kissed me deeper.

“I didn’t serve my country to let some entitled prick ruin my life, and I sure as shit ain’t letting him ruin yours.” Ryan brushed my hair away from the slick of cold sweat on my forehead.

“He’s going to make you hurt me, you know,” I whispered against his lips.

He shook his head. “I’m going to do what I can to avoid it. But if I have to, while I

try to figure out how to unfuck what I got myself into, I'll make it up to you."

I dropped my gaze. If I was the first woman he slept with since his wife, it would explain why he was obsessing over the one person he shouldn't. He couldn't. He would get himself killed, and for what? Me? I wasn't worth it. That I could promise him.

I knew he wanted me. He'd been hard since he kissed me. I wanted it too, but that couldn't happen. Aaron would know. I didn't know how he'd know, but he would. To protect Ryan, even more than myself, I could never allow that. He wasn't like them. He was the only man to show me kindness in years. To treat me like I wasn't a piece of meat whose only purpose was to be devoured.

He lifted me and wrapped my legs around his waist. He pinned me against the wall, his hands firmly on the backs of my thighs. He was so fucking strong, and it let me be weak. Which was real fucking shitty of him. I didn't survive by being weak.

He kissed me again. I wrapped my arms around his neck and returned every ounce of affection he offered me. It made me feel like a person again. Like I was more than what was between my legs. He had no idea what he was doing to me. He was changing how I saw my world, which was horrible because I would still continue to chase the feelings that got me there in the first place. Changing my view wouldn't make it any less my fucking world.

He squeezed my thighs and bored into me with his dark eyes. "I'm getting you away from him, Scarlett. I'll play his game for now, but the moment I can, I'm taking you away, whether you want to come or not." He gave me a reassuring smile that let me know he meant every syllable coming from his mouth.

When he left and I plugged the router back in—arming my prison—I had dreams beyond those walls, and that was a really painful thing.

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I had a two-day reprieve from sex with Aaron and the sickos he loved to let into our world. I reveled in the lack of dick.

I sat curled up on the couch beside Aaron. His jaw was so tense that it trembled. Something was going on with him, but it was best not to ask for details. Maybe he noticed something was going on with me. Either way, he couldn't be bothered to speak to me about any of it.

He grabbed my arm and pushed me between his legs—something he'd never done in all the years I'd known him. He unbuttoned his slacks, lowered the zipper, and pulled himself out. He was hard, which was also unusual. He grabbed my hair and forced his cock into my mouth. It had been so long since he forced himself past my lips. If he was going to have anything, it was always my pussy.

Aaron pushed himself to the back of my throat, bucking his hips to make me take that much more. He must have been stressed at work, and that was how he wanted to release it since he had no other option.

"I can't fucking come like this," he said as he pushed me away from him, tucking himself back into his pants.

"What's wrong?" I asked, wiping the drool off my chin.

"None of your business." He picked up his phone and hammered his thumbs against the screen.

If using me was his outlet, how was it not my business?

He pushed me back, and I fell on my ass. He towered over me. I looked up at him like a scolded dog, as if I'd done something wrong.

"I'm going to go take a shower. Be ready by the time I'm out."

Be ready. I knew what that meant. Aaron was still too much of a coward to use me himself, so he'd messaged one of his buddies to get on top of me so he could get beneath me.

I went to the bedroom and put on a deep-purple dress that flared out at the middle of my thighs. Lace crisscrossed over the top, allowing an alluring view of my cleavage. I pulled my hair into a ponytail. Loose strands fell from the hair tie. I applied a trace of lipstick to draw attention away from the healing bruises so close to my mouth. The doorbell rang, and I froze. The shower was still on, pelting the porcelain bathtub.

Fuck.

The thought of being alone with one of the men terrified me. But then again, no one jumped without their master's command.

I answered the door. I paused with my hand on the knob before finally turning it. My heart resumed beating the moment I saw it was Ryan. I no longer felt the familiar urge to shove a line of coke up my nose. I didn't want to numb myself.

I looked behind him, expecting another man to come around the corner. I wanted to reach out and tug him in, but he eyeballed the camera above the porch. He came inside and took off his jacket. Water continued to rain down from the showerhead behind the closed bathroom door.

"He wanted you to come here?" I asked, knowing the answer.

“Unfortunately,” he said. “But fortunately for you.”

“Did he mention anyone else?” My eyes darted back to the door.

Ryan shook his head. “He didn’t say anything about that. He just said I needed to come over now.” He peered down the dimly lit hallway. “He’s showering?”

I nodded.

He drew me into him, his fingers brushing through the loose strands of hair framing my face. “He’ll want me to hurt you,” he whispered. “I won’t hit you, but if he wants me to rip through you, I will. I can make sure you’re ready for me, though.” He lifted an eyebrow.

He was right. Most of the damage came from the force of their thrusts inside me when I wasn’t wet enough for such friction.

He backed me against the arm of the couch, and I sat on the leather. He listened for a moment to make sure the shower was still running, then lifted the skirt of my dress. The leather bit at the backs of my thighs. He kissed me and pushed my panties aside. He rubbed me. I stifled a moan by biting my lip. It felt...incredible. I hadn’t had such an innocent touch between my legs in so long. Even knowing how big he was, his large hand between my legs warmed me the way I needed to be.

He groaned against my mouth as he slipped his fingers inside me. “How good of an actress are you?” he asked with a smirk.

I raised an eyebrow at him.

“You’ll have to act like I didn’t have my hands between your legs when he’s watching. Remember...he wants me to hurt you when I push myself inside you.”

The shower stopped, silencing the background noise and setting a timer above our heads. He pulled his fingers from within me and wiped my excitement onto his jeans. He rubbed the smudged lipstick off my mouth, tugged down my dress, and sat on the recliner. I curled up on the couch, trying to will away the heat in my cheeks.

Aaron's footfalls sounded down the hall and drew closer. He rubbed a towel through his hair. A surprised look crossed his face when he spotted Ryan. He probably hadn't expected him so soon. His sweatpants hugged his hips, but he was shirtless. His gaze bounced to me, and I faked the sad look he'd expect to see.

After what felt like an eternity, he reached a hand toward Ryan. "Thanks for coming," he said.

"I didn't have much of a choice," Ryan quipped.

I held my breath at his brazen words, but I knew they needed to be bold.

"Why do you look so sad, princess?" Aaron looked at me, rubbing his hair once more with the fluffy white towel.

I shrugged at him. He thought I was upset because I had to sleep with Ryan. I was upset because I had to sleep with Ryan how Aaron wanted.

"Go on, Ryan. Don't be bashful." He waved Ryan toward me and took a seat in the vacant recliner.

Ryan did seem bashful. His hard cock tented his jeans, but his cheeks flushed with a red hue. He wanted me, but he didn't want me the way Aaron needed him to. His hands clenched at his sides, as if he were working himself up to what he needed to do. He drew a quick breath before fisting my hair and snatching me to my feet. I whimpered against his grasp. He was so strong. Even without trying, he hurt me.

Ryan smacked my face. Not hard like others did, but enough to nip the skin of my cheek. It sounded worse than it felt. He bent me over the arm of the couch with his back to Aaron. I think it was the only way he could stay hard. He tried to focus on me.

His hand swirled, filling his fingers with more of my hair. His other hand reached down and unfastened his jeans. He pulled himself from his boxers and lifted me by my hair. “You’re going to take my cock like a good whore.”

His gravelly and intense voice sent a shudder through me. I bit my lip against the strain of his grasp. He thrust inside me with a harsh, quick motion that drove me into the leather. Even though it didn’t hurt, I cried out. There was an uncomfortable moment while I stretched around his cock, but that was it. I continued to whimper as he pounded his hips against my ass, grinding my pelvis against the couch. He wrapped a hand around my throat and squeezed the soft skin of my neck. I let tears roll past my lashes and down my cheeks. It only took thinking of all the things that had been done to me to bring them out.

“Do you want my come?” he asked through a strained groan. When I didn’t answer right away, he smacked my cheek. “Don’t make me ask again.”

I nodded against his unwavering grasp.

His thrusts slowed. Still buried deep inside me, he leaned over and brought his lips near my ear. “You’re incredible,” he whispered. A deep groan followed his words.

Real tears began to fall. No one had ever said anything like that to me.

Ryan released my hair, and Aaron came to grab it. I swallowed hard, not wanting to sleep with Aaron after such an experience with Ryan.

“I want you to watch us,” Aaron said with a frustrated groan.

Ryan gave a quick shake of his head. “I can’t stay.” He zipped up his jeans.

He wouldn’t want to watch us. It would break him to watch.

“Ryan,” Aaron said, his voice firm.

He grabbed his jacket. “That’s not part of it. You wanted me to fuck your wife. I fucked her. Watching you isn’t part of this.” The end of his sentence trembled enough to show me how much it hurt him to leave me with Aaron. He was leaving me with the wolf disguised as nothing more than exactly what he was.

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Aaron rolled over, turning away from me with a groan. He'd been treating me weird since the day I slept with Ryan. He set it up. He'd been the one who wanted it, and now he was mad about it. Maybe it was his job? I had no way of knowing because he wouldn't open up to me. He just opened me up.

"Do you want to talk about anything?" I asked.

He responded with a low noise in his throat.

I took a risk. "Is it about Ryan?"

That drew his attention. His gaze snapped to me as he lay on his back.

"You were different with him," he said in a small voice. An insecurity I'd never seen.

"He isn't like your friends. He didn't do what they did. So yeah, I was different. It was different."

His eyes narrowed at me.

"I wouldn't have slept with him by choice, you know," I said. He needed to remember all of that was for him, not me. I wouldn't sleep with anyone else if he didn't need another man to perform.

"Yeah, yeah." His words were dismissive.

I got out of bed with a scoff and went to the living room. I lay on the couch; a swirl of

memories surrounded that piece of furniture. Pain. So much pain from men like Samuel and Aaron's brother. And pleasure. From Ryan. The scent of blood and depravity circled me, trying to suck me into the eye of the storm. The reminders of pleasure and welcomed touches kept me grounded. I wanted the comforting embrace of the good memories. I needed less of the daunting and angry ones that kept hold of me by their prevalence alone. I wanted Ryan.

Fuck.

* * *

When was a marriage considered broken if it was already fractured in the first place?

Nothing felt the same. Whatever troubled Aaron had seeped between us and created a divide. He wanted nothing to do with me when I was unfucked and unfilled, so we couldn't call a truce with our bodies. There was nothing worse than feeling rejected for something you didn't cause.

He wanted me to be a heartless vessel who would long for no one but him. His fatal mistake was coercing someone who wasn't like him. Someone who showed me I was more than what Aaron made me. I fell for Ryan because of Aaron's desire to share me. He fucked himself by making me fuck. How ironic.

The doorbell rang. My eyes jumped to the clock. It was seven p.m. Aaron was late coming home from work, but he wouldn't ring the doorbell. My heart raced. Did some new, sick Aaron kink wait behind the door? I pulled out my phone and opened the app connected to the camera feed. They'd been unarmed. My stomach dropped further into the depths of my abdomen. What if he'd planned my murder?

What hitman rings the doorbell?

I sucked up my nerves. "Who is it?" I called through the door.

“Ryan.”

I whipped the door open, forgetting it could all be an elaborate plot to get rid of me. But there was no plot. There was only Ryan, and he would be the last person Aaron would use for such a task, even though I could tell Ryan had been a killer at some point. As big and tough as he was, he wouldn't hurt me, let alone kill me.

I pulled him inside and wrapped my arms around him. “Wait, why are you here?”

Aaron wouldn't have sent for him. He was too jealous to let me sleep with Ryan again. He was a liability now.

“I needed to see you. Aaron has been acting fucking clinical at work, and I worried something happened to you.” He pulled me into his chest and kissed my head.

“Nope, I'm here, alive and unwell,” I said with a humorless laugh.

Ryan dragged me to the couch, and we sat beside each other.

“He's going to be home any time now.” My shoulders dropped as realization washed over me and weighed me down.

“I'm betting on it,” Ryan said as he leaned back and rested the back of his head against his hands.

I cocked my head at him, raising an eyebrow. “Why?”

“Reasons.” His words were dismissive, and I was getting pretty tired of being dismissed.

“Tell me,” I commanded. If anything was going to happen that would change my life, I deserved to know about it.

Ryan stood, lifted his jacket, and exposed the pistol tucked into a holster on his waistband. I sat up taller, my eyes wide. I stared at the small of his back, where freedom nestled against him. It made me excited and scared, but also a little sad.

“Don’t hurt him,” I whispered.

“I hope I don’t have to, but I have a feeling he won’t take too kindly to me stealing his wife.”

“Why can’t we leave before he gets home?”

“Reasons,” he said with a smirk.

I groaned.

We sat together in thick—and somewhat erotic—silence for what felt like an eternity. Thirty minutes had been added to the clock since I last looked. It was clear we wanted to jump each other’s bones, but those bones remained firmly planted a few feet apart. I pulled out my phone and tried to bring up the cameras, but I couldn’t arm them.

“They aren’t going to work,” Ryan said.

“You had something to do with this?”

He nodded. His steadfast confidence was enough to make me melt into the upholstery. I don’t know why I trusted him, but I did.

Wheels rolled over the driveway, and Ryan’s eyes flew toward the sound. His finger shot up to silence me, as if I had something to say. My eyes darted in panic.

Is this what I want? Oh God.

Ryan crept toward the door. He reached back and drew his pistol from its holster. His hand wrapped around the grip with his finger extended beside the trigger guard. On silent feet, he slipped into the room just off the front hallway. He lurked in the shadows, lying in wait.

The door opened.

Aaron's eyes met mine, an annoyed expression already on his face as he started toward me. "What's with the cam—"

Thud.

His body fell forward after a nauseating crack to his head from the butt of the pistol. He lay limp on the ground, blood pooling to the surface of his head wound. I fought the urge to run to him. To help him.

Ryan noticed my temptation. "He'll be fine," he said as he holstered his weapon.

He leaned over to grab Aaron by his arms, and my eyes were drawn to the silver pistol resting within the muscular curve of his back. After placing the limp body into the recliner, Ryan rifled through his pants pockets and pulled out a handful of zip ties. He tied off Aaron's wrists and ankles.

"Now we wait," Ryan said with a smile.

"Wait for what?" I asked.

"Go get ready." His intense gaze left me no room for negotiation.

I went into the bedroom and pulled out a bag filled with clothes. I prepared for the day I'd leave long before Ryan stepped into the house. I packed it the day after I first met Samuel and kept it on reserve ever since. I knew I'd get out one day, whether it

be on my own or in a body bag. I was glad it was neither. I wasn't alone or dead. Yet.

I tossed the bag over my shoulder and returned to the living room. As I turned the corner, Aaron stirred awake. He groaned, and his eyes narrowed.

"Fuck," he whispered. Pain and confusion laced his voice. "Scarlett?"

His eyes met mine, and for a moment, my resolve weakened. My body wanted to run to him, to comfort him, strictly out of habit. Ryan saw the flicker of movement in my muscles. He grabbed me, wrapping his arms around my waist, keeping me from taking a step toward Aaron.

"Scarlett, what is this?" Aaron asked.

I couldn't speak. His presence sucked away any ability I had to form words. His master persona dominated the room, even when he was tied up.

Ryan cleared his throat, sucking the power from Aaron before my eyes. "You want to know what this is, Aaron? This?" He pulled me into him, groaning against the crook of my neck. "This is me taking your wife, you selfish piece of shit."

He'd use my body to seek revenge, but it was more than that. He was angry about how Aaron treated me. His body tensed with such strength and hunger for me—a driven attraction I'd never felt. Not from anyone. My breath halted in my throat, trapped where his breath rolled over the skin of my neck. Ryan was driven to hurt Aaron in the most explosive way he could, and I was the gunpowder.

Aaron was rich, and he had prestige he didn't deserve. He had everything he could ever want. But Ryan wanted to ensure Aaron lost the one thing he couldn't buy.

Love.

He could buy company. Sex. He could pay for torture. But he wouldn't have love. He'd never have someone who loved him like I had. Who'd give her pride, dignity, and body away to show it.

"Scarlett isn't going anywhere," Aaron snapped. He struggled against his restraints.

"You like to lay your claim on her, don't you? Be the last one inside her so everyone knows she's yours? So she knows she's yours?"

Ryan's words were low and seductive—breathy syllables rolling over my skin. His hands rubbed down my body, hovering on the waistband of my shorts. He grinded his pelvis into my ass. I was torn. I wanted to play along—to get retribution for every strike, choke, or cock I was forced to endure—but part of me still didn't want to hurt him.

"I'll show you what claiming really is. What it means to call a woman yours." Ryan tugged me to the couch and sat me on the leather cushion. The piece of furniture that swirled with pain and pleasure, blending until it was impossible to tell whether the sun would shine on your body or if you'd have to endure a hailstorm. "I don't need another man to hurt her or make her come." He hooked his fingers into the waistband of my shorts.

"Don't you let him fuck you, Scarlett!" Aaron commanded, though he was in no position to negotiate. For once in his fucking life, he was helpless.

"She's not just going to let me fuck her. She wants me to." Ryan yanked my shorts down my thighs and pulled me to the edge of the cushion. "See how wet she is?" His hand dropped between my legs, rubbing his fingers along my clit. When he pulled his hand away, my excited wetness clung to his fingers. "When was the last time you made her come?"

His caustic words ripped the flesh from Aaron's bones. Ryan dropped to his knees

and wiped a hand through his beard before burying his face between my legs. He hooked his arms around my thighs and devoured me.

Every moan that slipped past my lips infuriated Aaron. Inhuman sounds flew from his mouth, and I let them fall into the recesses of my mind. Aaron got off on my pain, but he was broken by my pleasure.

I grasped at Ryan's hair and tugged him deeper into me, stalling the motion of his tongue as I grinded against his face. He curled the tip of his tongue along my clit. My thighs trembled, and I moaned louder, blanketing the sounds of Aaron's anger. Ryan didn't stop until I begged him to. I spasmed and shuddered against his mouth.

"Fuck," Ryan said as he got to his feet and wiped his mouth. "You truly have no idea what you've tossed away." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a roll of duct tape. He tugged off a piece with his mouth and walked over to Aaron.

"You're a dead man," Aaron hissed.

Ryan smirked as he put the tape across Aaron's mouth, silencing him. "We'll see about that." He wrapped another strip around Aaron's chest, making two passes over him and the back of the chair.

I panted for breath as Ryan grabbed my arm and tugged me onto the carpeted floor. Fibers that burned my knees so many times before. He bent me over and made me face Aaron's crazed and glassy eyes. Ryan unbuckled his belt. A metallic clank rang through the room as it came apart. The sound of his falling zipper made me shiver. I felt dirty and guilty, but I was equally excited and vindicated.

"Look at that incredible woman at your feet." Ryan sucked his teeth. He pulled himself from his boxers, and stepped beside me.

I sat up on my knees and looked up at him. His fingers laced through my hair and

guided my mouth to his swollen cock. I took him in. He groaned as he made Aaron watch me suck him off. Aaron's face reddened with anger, and I thought he might explode. Ryan's dick was at the back of my throat, and it infuriated him. I loved it.

Ryan pulled his cock from my mouth, and a line of drool clung to my chin. "We're two very different people, you and I. I could go your route and hurt her. Cause her pain." Ryan grabbed my chin in a firm grasp. "Use her." He dropped my chin and circled behind me, dropping to his knees and positioning himself behind me. His hands ran down my back and over my hips, cupping my ass. "Or I could do things my way." He surged inside me, knocking me onto my elbows. "Please her. Make her grip my cock in pleasure and stake that precious claim inside her." He thrust with unstifled desire as he spoke. Each word radiated through the pulse of his hips.

Aaron tried to stand up, but the tape kept him pinned. His intense stare made my cheeks flush. His writhing, angry body was so close that I felt the heat radiating off him.

Ryan leaned over and kissed my shoulder. A tender touch contrasting with the hard thrusts of his hips. "The last person inside her owns her, right?" His words were gritty and raw as he pulled out and laid me on my back. He crawled over me, and I wrapped my legs around him. "This is how you fucking claim her."

He growled and dropped his mouth to mine, kissing me with a passion which swam around us and numbed the sounds of Aaron's protests. His thrusts pulsed through me, exciting every inch of my body. He wrapped a hand around the back of my neck and drove his hips deeper into mine. So deep I thought we'd become one with the floor. That we'd be trapped there forever. He groaned against my mouth, and for a moment, we forgot Aaron was in the room at all.

"You're mine now," he growled.

His cock throbbed inside me, pulsing until he rode out every wave of his orgasm. He

kissed me once more before pulling out of me. I collapsed in a sweaty mess on the sticky carpet. He tugged his boxers up and zipped up his pants. With a smug smile, he ripped the tape from Aaron's mouth.

"Fuck you!" Aaron cried out. "I hope you enjoyed that, because the moment you go to jail, she'll be crawling back to me, begging for the life she had."

Ryan rubbed his beard. "I thought you might say that." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a folded piece of paper. "It says here a withdrawal of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars came from none other than Aaron Peters." He held the unfolded paper to Aaron's face.

Mine and Aaron's mouths dropped open in unison.

"How?" Aaron asked, shaking his head.

"Remember when you called me the guy? Back in the military, I knew someone who makes me look like a toddler playing on an iPad. He's the guy, and you're the proud owner of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars stolen from your own company." A wide smile stretched across Ryan's face. "And just to be extra sure, all traces of me have been wiped from your company. I'm a ghost." He leaned over and hovered close to Aaron's ear. "Boo!"

For once, Aaron was speechless. For the first time since I met him, he had nothing to bargain with. He was as human as I was. He was made to feel lower than dirt. Like I was.

Aaron readied himself to start shouting again, which would have alerted the neighbors. A quick thump of the pistol against his forehead put him back to sleep. We left him tied up and helpless.

I stood on the front porch and let the fear finally wash over my face. I looked back at

the doorway. Aaron kept me trapped for years, like a fish on a fisherman's line. Even once the line snapped and I was free, the danger wasn't over. The hook was still embedded in my mouth. But Aaron would be stupid to come for Ryan. He would need a small army to take Ryan down, and even a pig-headed man like him had some semblance of self-preservation.

Ryan squeezed my shoulder reassuringly, as if he knew the thoughts plaguing my mind. He leaned in and kissed me. "Don't worry, Scarlett. No one will ever lay a hand on you again."

His words against my mouth read like a promise. And I believed him.

"But the way you fucked me..." I whispered.

"Like I owned you?" His hand brushed through my hair. "You being mine won't be how it was with him. Claiming you. Owning you. They're all words unless I show you how I treat what I own. I'd kill another man who touched you, not beg him to fuck you. I don't need someone to abuse you so I can step in and seem like your hero. I'm just going to be your goddamn hero."

I couldn't speak, but I drew up enough of what I wanted to say and used it to spill my thoughts into his mouth as I kissed him. I didn't need words to tell him he was my hero already.

I looked back at Aaron once more. The wolf had shed his skin, leaving a sad little dog in the heap of everything that once made him a predator. I closed the door on what was once my dark little fairytale.