

IN A LITTLE WHILE

BLURRED LINES SERIES

PENELOPE BLACK

Copyright © 2022 by Penelope Black

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

for everyone who loves a fast burn

CONTENTS

<u>Playlist</u>

- 1. Maura
- 2. Maura
- 3. Kellan
- 4. Maura
- 5. Maura
- 6. Maura
- 7. Maura
- 8. Maura
- 9. Maura
- 10. <u>Cash</u>

Afterword

Acknowledgments

Also by Penelope Black

PLAYLIST

"Guys My Age" by Hey Violet

That's it. That's the playlist.

MAURA

"I CAN'T BELIEVE you have to stay with your ex-boyfriend for a month."

I sigh. My best friend is well-versed in the art of the subtle whine. She's not mean, just incredibly dramatic. Though she's not entirely wrong in her incredulity. I love my dad, but I don't always understand his motivations.

Two years ago, he wouldn't let me spend an entire day here without checking in every four hours, and now he all but packed my bags for me and shipped me off.

Okay, so maybe Cassie's flair for the dramatic is rubbing off on me.

I squint through my dirty windshield and look at the monstrosity I'll be calling *home*. "I know, Cass, but it's only four weeks. Besides, it's been years since Owen and I dated."

I'm not sure who I'm reassuring more: her or me.

She smacks her tongue. "You know how I feel about Owen. That man is hot as hell but he was a total asshole to you."

The side of my mouth curls up involuntarily. We've had this same conversation a hundred times. There's never been any love lost between Cassie and Owen. And when he cheated on me, she wanted to tell our dads.

It's a scary thought for anyone, but for two sixteen-year-old girls with fathers in Chicago's Irish Syndicate? It'd be as good as signing his death certificate. And I couldn't do that to him. Even if he was an asshole.

We were kids then, so I've forgiven him for his transgressions. Mostly.

"It's been years, Cass. Give it up, already, yeah? I already have."

"You know, I've heard hate sex is even better than one-night-stand sex." She drops her voice, and if she were here with me, she'd be leaning in close with a twinkle of mischief in her eye.

Instead, she's tucked away in some small town in Wisconsin, and I'm a hundred miles away at the Hayes estate.

"Owen's just a friend. I don't look at him like that." I lift a shoulder as I pull around the semicircle driveway and park off to the side. "That was part of the problem."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Little Miss There Has To Be A Spark," she singsongs the words.

I shift the car into park and sit back for a second, shaking my head at her antics. "Is that really such a bad thing? I don't need proclamations of love, but that spark of mutual instalust where you want to rip each other's clothes off."

"You know," she says, dragging out the last word with a lengthy pause. "I overheard the Andrews sisters at Mocha Lisa a couple weeks ago. Elaine and Dorothy said Cash and Flynn are back living with Kellan. And Tracey said she got an invitation for some fancy pool party Owen was throwing this weekend."

There are so many things to unpack I don't know where to begin. I knew Owen lived with his uncle, Kellan. He moved in with him a few years ago when his dad had to go underground. But last I heard, the twins were out in California. For as closely intertwined the Hayes family is with the Syndicate, Owen's uncles are all firmly on the other side of the line.

They're the legal fixers, some of the most trustworthy people in the family business. It's the reason Dad sent me here instead of Cassie's. That and we impulsively died my hair vibrant pink two weeks ago.

I finger the soft xxxpink curl and mull over the possibility of living with all four Hayes men for the next few weeks. It's been a year since I saw any of Owen's uncles.

I'm not ashamed to say that all three had permanent roles in my dreams for weeks afterward. There was a particularly reoccurring dream where I had Cash and Flynn. *At the same time*. Something about the twins always captured my eye.

We did things in my dreams that I've only ever read about in my favorite romance books. Which isn't hard, considering I'm the most inexperienced nineteen-year-old on the South Side of Chicago.

Not that it matters anyway. Cash and Flynn are ten years older than me, and Kellan's three years older than them. There's no way any of them would look twice at me.

But a pool party with Owen's friends? My brows lift toward my hairline. "Maybe I'll find *a spark* with one of Owen's friends," I muse.

"You know what? Normally, I would remind you of how douchey Owen's friends are too, but honestly, I hope you do. I want you to be happy, and if hooking up with some frat boy asshole will do it? Then I'll be cheering you on from a state away, babe! Just remember, if he's a shitty kisser, he's probably shitty at *eating*. Wink, wink."

My cheeks blaze immediately, a coughing laugh taking me by surprise. "Oh my god. I can't believe you just said that! What if I was walking into the house?"

"Babe, I know you're still sitting in your car. And even if you weren't, so what? These are important things to talk about. I'm hoping you don't have to suffer like I did to learn these lessons."

"Jake Palmer," we both say at the same time, around a laugh.

"Poor Jake. He was so hot." I nod my head slowly.

"And I overlooked how bad he was at making out because he was so hot. And damn, did he continue that disappointment," she says with a little laugh. "But seriously, if you want to hook up with Owen or his friends or even his fuckhot uncles, then you should definitely do it." She pauses. "Then call me and give me all the dirty details."

I shake my head, amusementxxx making my heart feel light. "Alright. It's a deal. Though I'm not planning to hook up with Owen, and I seriously doubt his uncles will even be around. Let alone show the slightest bit of interest in me. Shit, they probably have girlfriends if they're not married already."

She whistles. "Damn, babe. Let a girl dream, yeah?"

"Whatever you say, Cass." Amusement colors my tone. "I should probably get my stuff and head in there. Owen texted me earlier and said he would be home the whole afternoon."

"Okay, call me tomorrow. I'll be manifesting sexy run-ins for you! Bye!" She rushes the words out, her consonants running together.

She really is lucky I love her like the sister I should've always had. "Talk tomorrow."

We end the call and I blow out a breath. I can see most of the house from this angle. Cream restored stone exterior with a cross-gabled and cross-hipped rooftop—plus a turret on one side—and big forward-looking windows.

The hedges look almost too green to be real, and expertly landscaped into squares and rectangles around the house. Big potted flowers bookend the five, wide half-round steps that lead to the front door.

It's been a while since I've been here, but it still looks as intimidating as ever. I never understood why one man needed seventeen-thousand square feet in a house. Even when his younger brothers lived with him, eight bathrooms, ten bedrooms, three offices, nine fireplaces, a theatre room, an impressive home gym, a full chef's kitchen, and several living spaces seems excessive.

All it's missing is a library, and it'd be the house from *Beauty and the Beast*. Hell, maybe it has a library but I've never seen it. It's not like I did much exploring the few times I was here. Though I suppose I'll have plenty of time to look around now.

I exhale, trying to shed my mixed feelings on the whole thing. I'm here now, I might as well make the best of it.

I open my car door, the sweltering heat slapping me in the face. It's oppressively hot this summer. The kind of weather that turns my nice curls into a frizzy mess. I bump the car door closed with my hip and tuck my phone in my back pocket of my jean shorts as I round the car to the trunk.

Sweat prickles against my neck as I open the truck and lean in to grab one of my four bags. I always overpack, but put me in an unfamiliar situation? I'm going to *overpack* my overpacked suitcase.

The only problem is I put the back seats of my SUV down to lay down my suitcases and bags, and they've shifted forward on the drive over.

I grab my weekender bag by the strap and tug it free, setting it on the concrete next to me. The bumper feels like it's burning the tops of my thighs as I lean in. I push onto my tiptoes and reach toward it, my fingertips just grazing the handle.

"Need some help?"

MAURA

THE DEEP, masculine voice surprises me. I let out an embarrassing squeak and a series of things that I've only ever read about happens.

I flinch, jerk forward in a startled surprise, and step on the toe of my white Vans. *Another* noise of surprise flies out of my mouth as I start to list to the side.

Warm palms land on my waist, right above my hips. "Whoa. Are you alright?"

I find my footing as he steadies me, my cheeks blazing with embarrassment. His voice is deep, rich and smooth like chocolate ganache on a summer day. And then I feel something that has my cheeks heating for an entirely different reason.

I'm not entirely sure how it happened, but my ass is pressed tightly against his front. And I can feel his cock between my ass cheeks.

Holy hell. I can feel his cock between my ass cheeks.

"Oh my god." My voice comes out hushed and coated in embarrassment. I close my eyes tight but I don't move. I barely even chance a breath, mesmerized by the feeling of his cock getting harder with each pressing second.

His fingers flex around my hips, but he doesn't pull back right away either. We've surpassed the illusion of being helpful and now hover somewhere in unknown territory.

It feels like ages before the man behind me steps back. His fingers are slow to leave me. More than the mortification of yelping and slipping is the overwhelming curiosity to explore these lust-fueled feelings he elicited.

I straighten up and clear my throat, brushing my hands down my jean shorts and legs just to give them something to do. Turning around, I do my best to plaster on my most pleasant smile, my pageant smile as Cassie calls it.

"Hi, I'm . . ." My voice trails off when I get the full view of the man who helped me. "Jesus Christ," I murmur.

Easily six-foot-three with broad shoulders and muscles for days. His dark brown hair is cropped short on top and shaved on either side, giving him a sort of wind-swept casual look. Thick dark brows arch over eyes so blue they look fake. They're that kind of icy sky blue on a cloudless winter morning. High-cut cheekbones and a square jawline that looks almost classically masculine.

His lips are plump and pink and currently lifting on one side into a smirk. He drags the tip of his finger along the arch of his brow and looks at me from underneath his black lashes.

"Jesus Christ?"

"What?" I mumble.

He slips his hand into the pockets of his white and blue seersucker shorts. "You said, 'hi, I'm Jesus Christ.' But something tells me you're more of an Amelia."

I shake my head, still a little dazed by his proximity. "No."

"Madison?"

I bite the inside of my cheek and tilt my head a little. "Nope."

The smirk on his face grows into a small grin. "Alaina?"

"Not even close."

He lifts a shoulder. "I give up. What's your name, gorgeous?"

I don't even care that it's a line. "Maura."

He reaches forward, nabs my hand, and lifts it toward his face. He brushes his lips across my knuckles. "It's lovely to meet you, Maura. I'm Cash Hayes."

I almost choke on air as I look at him with an informed gaze. It's hard to believe that this man in front of me is one of Owen's uncles. He's too—too —too, I don't know, fucking hot. And young.

Though I suppose he is young. That's what happens when Grandpa Hayes has ten children over like twenty years.

"Not what you were expecting, hm?" Amusement shines from his eyes and his lips haven't left my knuckles yet.

"We've met before, you know," I murmur.

"Aye, we have. But it was years ago, and you were . . . "

"With Owen," I finish for him.

"Sure, we'll say that."

My brows draw in as I try to decipher what he meant, but before I can figure it out, we're interrupted.

"Oi. Get your filthy paws off my girl, Cash," Owen yells from behind me.

It's just a touch too possessive to be playful. And it irritates me for more than one reason. I'm not his girl. I haven't been in a long time—if ever.

Cash's fingers tighten on my hand, a brief flex. He holds my gaze as he drags his lips along the sensitive skin on my hand once more. "Until we meet again, Maura."

"I'm staying here, you know. For a month." I blurt it out quickly. I'm not going to examine my enthusiasm too closely.

He lowers my hand, taking his time to let go. "How . . . curious."

Owen's heavy arm lands on my shoulders, and I wince from the impact.

"Cash," Owen says, dragging out his name. "I've got it from here. Don't you have to, I don't know, go do something?"

I wiggle out from underneath Owen's arm, ignoring his huff of irritation. Instead, keeping my gaze on Cash in front of me.

Cash watches the whole exchange with the keen eye of a predator, never responding to Owen's shitty brushoff. Whatever conclusion he comes to has one side of his mouth hooking into a smile. "I'll be seeing you, Maura."

"Count on it." I look at him from underneath my lashes, dragging my teeth along the middle of my bottom lip.

It's an invitation. One I hope he accepts.

He slips his hands into his pockets and whistles something under his breath. I watch him stroll toward the front door, which is how I catch his second glance. It's just a moment where he looks over his shoulder, but our gazes connect and honest to god sparks sizzle across the courtyard. He turns around once more, breaking our connection.

"What the hell was that?" Owen asks.

"Nothing. He offered to help bring my bags in." It's not entirely the truth, but I'm still watching Cash. More specifically, his ass in those shorts as he jogs up the few steps to the entrance.

Owen grabs one of my suitcases out of my trunk and sets it on the concrete in front of me. "Hey, stay away from my uncles, okay? They're bad news, and you—you're a good girl, yeah?"

"Maybe," I muse.

I used to hate being called a good girl, especially from Owen and like this. But maybe, I wouldn't mind being someone *else*'s good girl.

Owen grabs my suitcases. "C'mon. I'll show you to your room."

I scoop my backpack and weekender bag up and toss them over my shoulders and follow him inside.

I look at Owen as objectively as possible. Six-feet tall with dark hair and dark eyes. He radiates that sort of magnetic charisma that has people eating out of his hands with barely a word. He was a football player in high school, and he's almost obsessive about his days at the gym. He's ripped and should check my boxes.

But he just . . . doesn't.

I don't even know if he ever did, or if I finally agreed to date him because I thought I should. I thought those sort of spark feelings would come. But it wasn't meant to be.

The fact remains that I've never felt for Owen what I felt in five seconds with his uncle.

KELLAN

MY YOUNGER BROTHER strolls into my office, shaking a handful of pistachios in his hand. He whistles something vaguely familiar, but I'm too preoccupied with the scene in the courtyard to pinpoint it.

"What's managed to steal you away from your precious oak?"

I roll my eyes, letting Flynn's ribbing roll off of me. He and Cash are always on me about being at my desk too often. It's not like they don't understand how fucking busy the Syndicate keeps us. Which reminds me.

"How was California? You two were there for a while," I ask without taking my gaze from the bombshell in my driveway.

"We handled it like always. But we charged them double because they weren't honest about how big the problem was," he says.

I nod, watching Cash crowd her against the trunk of her car. "I'll make sure it's the correct cut then."

He shuffles the nuts in his hand, stopping at the window next to me. "Ah, now I get it. A pair of legs that good would tempt me out of my desk too."

I side-eye, a quick glance with narrowed eyes before my gaze searches her out once more. "You don't even use your office."

"Aye, and if I had someone like her, I never would," he says.

My shoulders get tight with an unusual emotion. "What about Lisa?"

He scoffs. "Lisa chases anyone in the family, you know that better than anyone, brother."

Aye, I fucking know it. Lisa Humberton is a gold-digging barnacle, sinking her claws into any man who gives her an ounce of attention. She tried her hand with me years ago, and once I turned her down, she set her sights on my brothers.

It took her a couple years to even approach Cash and Flynn. And since my brothers have certain proclivities when it comes to women, I didn't think she'd go for it. She's been dying to cement her place at the side of any man in the Syndicate, and fucking the Hayes twins at the same time doesn't exactly scream *wife material*.

Not that I'm judging. I don't give a fuck what they do, or who she fucks.

But it's my responsibility to mitigate our risks. And Lisa Humberton is a risk waiting to happen.

"And Cash? He done too?"

"Aye, he's been done. Her shacking up with some soldier in the South Side was a blessing in disguise," he says.

I bet she's trying to settle down with a soldier she thinks is going to move up since none of the established men in the Syndicate have taken her special brand of bait. Though plenty have sampled it.

My brows dip together. "Do I need to be worried about her?"

"Nah, she won't be a problem, not ours at least."

Contingency plans are my specialty. I already know I'll be drafting up no less than three avenues we can take before the day ends. "We'll see."

Flynn jerks his head to the side. "Who's that? You didn't tell us someone was staying here."

"Maura McCarthy." I've done my best trying to reassociate her name with off-limits shit.

But the truth is, as soon as Edmond McCarthy approached me for a favor last month, I knew I would agree. Edmond is a high-ranking general in the Syndicate. He's on the other side of the river, literally and figuratively, but if he asks for a favor, especially one concerning his only daughter, then it'd be an insult for me to refuse.

And fucking stupid.

I keep my hands squeaky clean as part of my role in the Syndicate, but everyone knows Edmond's reputation. He's brutal and ruthless, and we're fucking lucky to have him at our backs.

And then I looked her up. Some might call it low-key stalking but I prefer to think of it as being prepared. This woman is staying in my house for a month, it's my responsibility to make sure I know who I invited in.

And if that means scrolling through Maura's Instagram and seeing photo after photo her and another woman in tiny triangle bikinis, then that was a hardship I weathered with fucking grace.

She's objectively beautiful with dark blonde hair hanging in waves to her shoulder blades. Five-five or so with hazel eyes that lean toward a mossy green. A heart-shaped face with pillowy pink lips that I've spent too much time thinking about.

I knew her and Owen had some history, but when I brought it up, he was more than on-board.

He didn't admit it, but I think he's trying to date her. Again, maybe. It's hard to say with him. Though he's technically my nephew, we're close enough in age where it feels more like a cousin-bond.

At least that's what I'm telling myself every time I feel shame start to creep up and curl around my throat over the fact that I've had many, many inappropriate thoughts about her.

She's too young, a colleague's daughter, my nephew's ex.

And the star of every fantasy I've had for the last three weeks.

"Kellan," Flynn calls out. There's enough exacerbation in his tone that I figure it's not the first or second time he called my name.

"What?" I snap, bristling more at the fact that he caught me.

"I asked if you were going to claim her," he drolls.

Heat flashes underneath my collar. "She's not a seat, you can't claim her."

"Of course not. I'm thinking she's going to sit on me. More specifically, my face," he says, sucking his teeth.

I scowl at him. "What the fuck kind of line is that anyway? I'll never understand how you get women."

"Cash charms their panties off, and by the time I come into the picture, they're enamored with the possibility of a twin experience." He lifts his shoulders, his gaze glued on her. "It's been a long time since we played that particular game though. Too long."

"No, absolutely not. No one is playing any kind of game with her unless we're talking about Monopoly. Did you forget who her father is?"

"Nah, but some things are worth the risk of possible wrath. And I'm betting every last dollar of yours that Maura McCarthy would be more than worth it."

I roll my shoulders back. "Well, we're not going to find out, yeah? I like my head attached to my shoulders."

Flynn doesn't comment, instead, we both watch Owen jog outside to interrupt Cash and Maura's conversation.

I have a feeling the next few weeks are going to be interesting.

MAURA

"HERE'S YOUR ROOM," Owen says, nudging open the first six-panel white door on the left. "I don't know why Kellan put you in this one, probably because it's the furthest away from mine."

I follow Owen into the room, spinning around a little to take it all in.

A platform King-sized bed in the middle of two huge windows. The fluted gray headboard comes to mid-window, with plush cream and navy throw pillows and a dove gray quilt. Rustic, bleached wood nightstands on either side of the bed, a huge TV across the room, an en-suite bathroom. Gauzy drapes frame a set of nine-pane glass French doors with a small balcony.

It's elegant comfort.

"Where's your room?" It's a curious question, polite even, and I regret it the moment I see his mouth twist into a grin.

"Last door on the right. Feel free to come in anytime."

I offer him a tight-lipped smile, desperately trying to rebuild those walls I installed between us. I have no intention of ever crossing that line again. Not with Owen.

"I'm sure I'll be fine."

He crosses the room to set my suitcases next to the doorway to the walk-in closet. "Cash is across the hall, Flynn's to the right of him, and

Kellan is across from me. The rest are guest rooms."

"I'll keep that in mind."

"The staff has dinner ready by five sharp, but you can eat at whatever time works for your schedule. Not that I guess you'll be holding much of a schedule." He pivots to face me. "Oh, hey, that reminds me. I'm having a pool party this weekend. Now you can come."

I arch a brow. "Oh, you mean now that I'm living here you'll actually invite me to your party?"

He slides his hands into his pockets. "Would you have come if you weren't living here?"

I lean my left shoulder forward in a wonky sort of shrug. "Probably not."

Owen smiles. It's a nice smile, I can admit that. But still, it does nothing for me. No stirring of lust or baby butterflies. It's like a barren quicksand there.

"I didn't think so. I guess it doesn't matter now though, since you're here. Point for me, yeah?"

I trap the sigh in my chest. "I'm going to get settled in."

"No problem," he says, taking the hint. "I've gotta do some shit for the party this weekend anyway. I'll see you later."

"Sure, thanks." I walk him out, closing the door and locking it for good measure.

It wasn't entirely a line. I do want to get settled in. The sooner I can unpack, the sooner I'll be able to relax a little.

It's late and I'm restless. I'm not used to such a quiet house. It only amplifies all the normal noises a house makes. If I were at home, it would be fine. I'm used to those sounds.

But the creaking and groaning and shuffling here are all foreign to me. I can't close my eyes and drift off to sleep, because I can't stop hearing them.

So I'm in the kitchen, looking for a snack. Owen mentioned that the chef on staff makes several snacks and desserts every week. I've got my fingers crossed for a chocolate chip cookie or a blueberry streusel muffin. I'd kill for a slice of banana cream pie.

I open both French doors on the biggest refrigerator I've ever seen. The thing is almost twice the width of your average French-door refrigerator, with a pull out freexer on the bottom and a flex drawer between the two.

I stand direct;y in the middle of the soft yellow glow from the refrigerator, letting the coolness waft over me. There's an enormous amount of food in here. Even with four men living here, there's no way they go through all of it. I hope the staff takes it home.

"What're you looking for?"

"Oh holy shit," I exclaim, jumping what feels like a mile in the air.

Deep, masculine chuckles hit my ears at the same time I spin around, my hand pressed tightly against my racing heart.

"What is with you guys sneaking up on me? You're eerily quiet," I accuse.

He cocks his head to the side and looks me over. "You must be Maura McCarthy."

"And you must be Flynn Hayes."

He flashes me a grin. "I see my reputation precedes me."

I tip my chin down and raise my brows. "I met Cash already and you two look almost exactly alike."

He looks nearly identical to Cash. Except for his eyes. Where Cash's eyes are that stark ice blue, Flynn's eyes are a rich, mossy green. A breathtaking color. I don't remember Owen's uncles looking so . . . delicious. Suddenly, my craving for chocolate chip cookies has been replaced by something much, much different.

He tsks. "Ah, c'mon now, Maura. Can't you humor me?"

"Sure," I say with a smirk, tipping my chin up and tapping my bottom lip.

He steps back, leaning back against the island, between two bar-height stools. He brings a lowball glass of something amber-colored to his lips. He holds my gaze as he takes a sip, and my body responds as if it were my skin his lips were on and not a glass.

It feels like a taunt. One I'm going to answer with my own.

I look at him from underneath my lashes, tilting my head to the side. "Ah, yes. Flynn Hayes, notorious fixer for the Syndicate, playboy extraordinaire and rumored master with his tongue."

Flynn chokes on his drink, sputtering and looking at me like he's never seen me before. Which isn't that far off, considering we haven't met too many times. And each one was in passing or surrounded by a hundred other people.

He reaches behind him and sets the glass on the counter without taking his eyes off of me. The air shifts between us, becoming heavier somehow. "What did you just say?"

I don't know him well enough to know if this is a game, but if he wants to play, then I'm going to play to win.

I shift a step forward, letting my hair fall over my shoulder. "Are you not one of the Syndicate's fixers?" I take another step, letting the cold from the kitchen tile ground me. "A playboy?" Another step, leaving just inches between us. "A man who excels at eating pussy?"

"Maura." He grits my name through his clenched jaw, a vein in his neck standing out. "What are you doing?"

I take that final step, reducing the space between us to an inch. I ghost my hand up the middle of his chest, never quite touching him, even though everything inside of me begs me to. I curl my fingers into a fist and drop my hand at my side. "Are you not those things, Flynn Hayes?"

I can almost hear the way his body vibrates as he holds himself stockstill.

"Aye, I am. But I'm also too old for you." His voice is deeper, a hushed admission like he's trying to convince both of us.

But he doesn't leave or shut the conversation down. Instead, he leans further against the counter, his legs widening in his stance.

"Says who? You?" I step between them, still careful not to touch him. Not yet.

I don't know who I am, who this version of me is, but I've never felt more powerful in my entire life. She's a fucking badass design, unrepentant in her desires.

"Society, Maura. You're what, eighteen? I'm a fucking old man."

I roll my eyes, but I don't shift away. Not yet. "You're twenty-eight, Flynn. I'd hardly call that old. And I'm nineteen. Old enough to know that I want you to eat my pussy with that famously talented tongue of yours."

I take a deliberate step back, giving him an out. If he tells me he's not interested, and not the weak age-gap card, then I'll back off without question. I'm not trying to force myself on anyone.

But I owe it to myself to at least try to experience the pleasure of Flynn Hayes. I wasn't exaggerating about the rumors of his skill either. Growing up in the Syndicate like Cassie and I did, we were privy to a lot of conversation simply because we became really good at blending in.

But I'm done blending in. Now I want to be seen, and I want my exboyfriend's uncles to be the ones who take notice.

I lift a shoulder, letting the fabric of my oversized tee slip down further. "If you're not interested, I understand."

"I'm already going to go to hell, so what's one more sin?"

My eyes go wide, my lips parting on an exhale. I'm on uncharted territory here, and part of me is nervous that if I move or blink, he's going to change his mind. I wait, unmoving.

His lids lower over his eyes, his white tee stretched tight across his chest. "I think the better question is: How good are you with *your* tongue, Maura McCarthy?"

MAURA

MY HEART BEATS IN DOUBLE-TIME, the first flashes of nervousness prickles in my fingertips. I swipe my tongue across my bottom lip, mentally preparing myself for him to change his mind once he hears my admission.

"I've never done it before—any of it."

He stills. Like someone pressed pause on a movie, motionless for three whole seconds. I almost crack a joke about him rebooting, but I'm anxious for his reply. I'm not ashamed of my inexperience, and I don't think he's the type of man who would make fun of me for it. But I don't want to go back to my room alone, left aching.

I want to float back to my room, high on orgasms.

"I'm going to ask you this one time, and then I'll never bring it up again."

I swallow roughly. "Okay."

"Were you with Owen?"

My brows dip low over my eyes. I don't understand what he's asking me at first, but like a lightbulb clicks on overhead, I suddenly get it. It's his subtle way of confirming what I did or didn't do with Owen.

"We dated. And that's it."

He nods, several slow tilts of his chin. "He never fucked you?"

My cheeks heat at his crass language. But I revel in the way his eyes light up as he says it, like he's envisioning himself fucking me. I should correct him to say *no one* has ever fucked me. But I don't.

I don't need to say anything, Flynn reads it—reads me—anyway.

His eyes narrow on me again. "Never fucked you and took your virginity."

The silence lingers between us, heavy with the question hanging in the air. My face is on fire, and I'm nearly positive I'm going to combust from a combination of embarrassment and anxiety.

Then he takes a step, putting himself in front of me. My head tips up to hold his gaze, like we're polar magnetics, drawn to one another on a molecular level.

The way his eyes lock on mine, burning me with his gaze, makes my heart race unlike anything I've ever experienced before. I'm half sure I'm going to pass out before this conversation is over.

"Never buried his cock so deep inside you that you saw fucking stars and lost all sense of gravity." His voice is like whiskey, somehow harsh and smooth at the same time.

He reaches behind his head, grasping the collar of his tee and pulling it off in that stupid hot move guys do.

My brain stutters at his bare chest. I follow the cut lines of his muscle down past his . . . holy shit, is that an eight-pack? I didn't think that happened in real life. I follow the ridges and dips with my gaze, landing on the impressive bulge in his athletic shorts.

Holy shit.

If he's trying to shock me into silence, he's succeeded. I'm panting, and I can't seem to drag my gaze from his. I've fantasized about this very moment for a long time, but this is better than anything my imagination can conjure. The anticipation is thick, ripe.

His hands find the hem of my shirt. The back of his fingers graze the tops of my thighs as he slowly drags my shirt up.

Another breath, and my shirt is gone.

His eyes fall to my pale pink lounge bra I sleep in, just a hint of cleavage peeking out.

He looks at me like I'm his favorite dessert and he's fucking starving.

I'm already wet, and he hasn't done more than whisper a few dirty words.

"I'm going to eat your cunt until you scream my name. And baby? You better get loud, because I won't stop until you wake up the entire house." His voice is rough, the intent agonizingly clear.

"But first, I gotta see these perfect tits." He steps forward without warning, his hands coming up to my breasts, thumbing my hard nipples through the thin fabric.

They feel heavy and sensitive, and I rub my thighs together to alleviate the ache between them.

I groan, my head falling back as my body floods with a pool of arousal. All the air has literally been sucked from my lungs, and I have to fight to drag oxygen into my body.

"You like that?"

"Yes," I breathe out.

He does it again, harder this time, his hands falling to the side of my breasts, cupping as much of them as he can.

"One day, I'm going to fuck these tits, yeah? But first, I'm going to taste you."

His lips press to the hollow between my neck and shoulder. He drags his mouth down, trailing hot, openmouthed kisses down my chest and over my stomach until he sinks to his knees in front of me.

He grips my hips, exhaling against the fabric of my panties. I almost wish I would've worn something besides my plain black panties with a

trimming of lace around the edges.

He bridges the gap, placing openmouthed kisses through the fabric.

It's torture. Pure torture to have him so damn close to my pussy, tormenting me with the knowledge that I'm just a thin layer of cotton away from ecstasy.

I flinch when his hands move to my ass, startling me. He curls his fingers in the hem above my ass and slowly peels it down my thighs.

Then his lips find the bare skin of my pussy, and my eyes slam shut.

He lifts my right leg and throws it over his shoulder, wedging himself between my legs. My hands fly to his head, my fingers tangling through his hair to hold onto something.

He inhales audibly, exhaling a groan. "I'm going to fucking enjoy this."

He spreads my pussy lips wide with his thumbs, growling as he looks at me. And then he feasts on me, licking and sucking and fucking me with his tongue. I almost wish I could slow it down, press pause and collect myself so I don't come too soon.

I can't believe this is happening. I'm so damn grateful for this moment. For a few minutes, I'm his entire focus. Fucking hell, I don't know if I'll ever get the nerve to come back here again.

It's exquisite torture, the sweetest pleasure. I already know I'm going to want it again and again.

I clutch his hair tightly as my hips rock against his face, his tongue absolutely wrecking me.

It starts in my toes and fingertips, the telltale tingling sensation. It rises quickly, too quickly for me to slow it down, and before I know it, I'm leaping off of that elusive cliff. I freefall into blissful oblivion.

He pulls away back after a few more kisses against the crease where my thigh meets my pussy. My eyes are half-open, and I feel drunk on lust.

Flynn's face is flushed, lips red and swollen from my pussy. It makes me feel bold. Bravery has gotten me everywhere today, so I'm not about to stop

now.

I sink to my knees and kiss him, tasting myself on his lips.

I can feel the rigid length of his erection pressing against my stomach, and I'm desperate to know what it feels like against my bare skin. I try to slip my hand down his shorts, but my fingers fumble in my haze of postorgasmic bliss.

He chuckles, reaching down to grab my hand. "This isn't about that."

"I know, but I want to."

He palms the side of my face, tilting my face toward his. "You want to get on your knees for me, baby?" His thumb drags against the corner of my lip. "You want me to take this perfect mouth?"

I gulp in a shallow breath, my pulse thundering in my ears and my arousal spiking. "Yes."

"Good girl." He presses a hard kiss to my lips before he stands up. He shucks his shorts and briefs in one motion. His cock springs free, and I have to bite my lip to resist the urge to comment about how fucking big he is.

His thumb finds my lips again, dragging across them. "Open up. I'll go slow."

Nerves dance in my belly and I look at him. "You'll teach me?"

His gaze darkens further. "Aye, I'll fucking teach you how to suck my dick."

His praise sends a flood of lust through my veins, and I squeeze my thighs together. I sit back on my heels and open my mouth, just like he asked.

His cock is hot and heavy against my tongue. I trace my tongue along the underside of his shaft, lightly flicking it against the vein that runs along the underside of his cock. I trace the vein to the tip of his cock, then dip the tip of my tongue into the little slit on his head.

He groans and flexes his hips toward me. "Fuck, that's good. I bet my cum would be fucking perfect on that tongue."

The thought of tasting his cum has me shivering.

He wraps his fist around his cock, sliding it through my wet lips. My pussy clenches, and I rock my hips forward, wishing he could somehow fuck me at the same time.

"You want this cock in your pussy, hm? You want to be fucked while you wrap those pretty lips around my cock?"

My eyes are wide and my breath is coming fast. I can't even remember when I last felt this turned on. The image he's painting has me fucked up, imagining someone else fucking me.

He threads his hands through my hair, gathering it at the top of my head so he can still watch me swallow his cock. I suck him again and again, taking every inch he gives me, working my jaw to accommodate him.

"That's a good fucking girl," he growls.

I've never felt more powerful in my entire life. I can feel it when he gets close, the subtle hardening and twitching of his cock on my tongue. His grip on my hair tightens but it's not painful as he thrusts once more, holding his cock inside my mouth as he comes down my throat.

He groans, and it's the most masculine sound I've ever heard in my entire life. I want to capture it and listen to it over and over again.

He pulls out of me slowly with an audible pop, his thumb finding my bottom lip once more.

Saliva dribbles down my chin and tears gather in the corner of my eyes from my gag reflex kicking in. But I've never felt more sexually beautiful in my entire life.

"You're fucking perfect, Maura McCarthy."

MAURA

"HEY, babe. How's it going at the chateau?"

I pause with my fists full of swimsuits and look at my best friend's beautiful face. "Doesn't it have to be a French style home to be a *chateau*?"

Both of us look at each other for a moment before she grins. "I have no idea, but those Hayes men are richie-riches, so I'm going to call it a chateau."

"Speaking of Hayes men," I hedge.

"Oh my fucking god." Her words come out quickly, and she leans closer to the camera. All I can see is half of her face now. "Spill. Right now."

I chuckle and sit down on the floor in front of my phone. It's propped up on a little travel stand at the end of the bed.

"Well." I drag the word out and look to the floor, a smirk tipping up the corners of my mouth.

"Oh, stop. We both know I'm the dramatic one in this friendship."

I glance at her and lift a brow in a haughty arch. "Maybe I'm taking over your role."

"No way. Nuh-uh. You're totally stalling. Which means you definitely hooked up with Owen." She points her finger at the camera. "You totally did, didn't you, you sneaky sneak!"

I laugh, amused at her blatant excitement for my sex life. Every girl needs a friend or two who champion her when she's feeling sexually adventurous.

"No, not Owen."

"His friends? But wait, the pool party is tonight, isn't it?" She interrupts me, her brows lowering over her eyes as she tries to connect the dots.

I lean in close and lower my voice. My door is closed and locked, but I've been here for less than a week. I have no idea how thin these walls could be.

"No. Better. *Flynn*."

Cassie sits back, a stunned sort of expression on her face. "Holy fuck, you fucked Flynn Hayes?"

I bite my lip and shake my head. "No, I didn't fuck him. Not yet."

"But you want to?"

"Yes. Hell yes. That man . . ." I trail off as visions from the other night assault my consciousness. It's something that's been happening with an almost alarming frequency lately. Especially when I'm in the shower or in bed or really anytime I've been alone.

Which has been a lot.

So, yeah, I guess I've made myself come with my hand imagining it was his mouth and his cock more times that I care to admit.

"Oh. My. God. I can't believe you hooked up with Flynn. Babe, please tell me it was good."

A goofy sort of grin spreads across my face. "Better than good. It was fucking amazing. Mind-blowingly amazing."

"Goddamn. I'm so proud of you. Look at you seeing something you want and just fucking snatching it. Hell yes."

She's practically cheering me on like a coach during a half-time break.

"I know you want all the details, and I promise to give them to you later. But I need your help deciding which swimsuit to wear." She's nodding before I finish talking. "You're going to hook up with him again, aren't you?"

I lift a shoulder and shake my head a little. "I wouldn't say no to round two. Or three. Or four." I trail off with a chuckle.

"Okay, I've got you. But you better call me with those details tomorrow."

"I will. I promise."

"Now show me what suits you brought. I know you probably packed ten of them," she says with a playful roll of her eyes.

I hold up the bundle of fabric in each hand.

Cassie sighs and sits back. "You're going to have to try them on. I can't tell when they're bunched up like that."

I laugh as I walk backward toward the bathroom. "I thought you'd say as much. Okay, hang on."

KELLAN

I WATCH with bated breath as Maura walks into her bedroom in the fifth bikini in the last fifteen minutes.

I suck in a breath at the sight of her. It feels wrong, lusting after her for a variety of reasons.

The least of which is because she's too young for me.

But that didn't stop me from watching her midnight escapades with Flynn. Over and over and over again. I've watched it so much that I can almost imagine it was me she was taking in her mouth.

I'm damn near salivating, and I don't give a fuck. I haven't been able to take my eyes off her since she got here earlier this week. I've been using our

extensive security system to essentially stalk her throughout the estate. I've been reduced to bargaining with myself: read this spreadsheet, go through these files, and you can have five minutes of unsolicited viewing footage of Maura.

I can't explain it, this intense pull toward her.

The bikini she has on now is black and skimpier than it has any right to be. It's more string than triangle on top, with three thin lines of fabric across the top of her tits. And the miniscule triangle of fabric barely covering her pussy has me imagining her laid out across my desk, legs spread and moaning as I sink my cock into her wet heat.

"I like this one, too," she says, adjusting the top a little.

"Damn, babe. You're a total smokeshow. You're going to have those boys eating out of the palm of your hand," her friend says.

"Yeah, maybe. I have one more to show you. Hang on," Maura says, walking back into the bathroom.

She emerges a moment later, another skimpy swimsuit on. It's a black crochet monokini, with a deep vee that cuts all the way down past her navel, stopping a few inches above her pussy. There's a little string across her tits, the thin swaths of fabric barely containing her tits. It's a thigh-high cut, running all the way above her hip bone.

"What about this one?" she asks.

And then she turns to the side, showing her friend her profile, and bends over. I nearly choke on my own tongue as her perfect round ass practically begs me to worship it.

If I didn't know any better, I would swear she was goading me, bending over in front of the camera like that.

"Yes, that's the one! You look amazing in it! I mean, honestly, you look amazing in all of them. But this one? You're going to have them eating out of the palm of your hands," her friend crows.

I close out of the feed, determined to dive headfirst back into my work and shove all thoughts of the tempting blonde out of my head. No matter how many times I reason with myself that it's for the best, I can't shake the bone-deep possession that settles over me when I think about her.

MAURA

TWO HOURS after Cassie helped me decide on which bikini to wear, I follow the sounds of the thumping bass into the backyard. Their yard is insane—honestly, their whole house is. But their yard is the stuff out of a movie.

A gigantic swimming pool is dead-ahead, with a grotto on the righthand side. I'm not sure what one is supposed to do in a grotto, but I'll find out eventually. A diving board on one end and a few different slides on the other end, the one with the grotto. I'm fairly certain that's a hot tub in one of those little alcoves too.

A substantial pool house takes up the left side of the yard, and a neat row of loungers surround the pool, blue and white striped towels rolled up on the end of each one.

A long, low stone wall surrounds what seems like endless filled-in grass and trees and flowers, and I know there's an even bigger fence somewhere beyond that. Something to deter people from wandering onto one of the fifteen acres.

Clusters of bar-height tables sprinkle the area and an actual bar on the far side of the pool area. A bartender is already hard at work, mixing drinks for the handful of people saddled up to the front.

I raise my brows and shake my head. This is kind of insane for a pool party. But I'm determined to have a good time, maybe chat up Flynn again if I see him, and let the monokini do the talking.

I'm not ashamed of what we did together, and my feelings aren't hurt that I haven't seen him in three days. If he has any regrets, those are his own.

He doesn't owe me anything, and I'm not trying to attach some emotion that isn't there.

I'm honestly just turned on and excited to *explore* a little, and I want to fuck around with someone.

Well, that's not true. Not just anyone. Flynn. Cash. Maybe even Owen's uncle Kellan, who's hot as fuck. I haven't seen him around much, just in passing a few different times. He always looks like he's busy, presumably rushing around to fix some mess the Syndicate made.

And I suppose I could be open to one of Owen's friends here. I use the term friends loosely here. Owen has lots of hangarounds—people who want to get close to him for a variety of reasons—a few handfuls of acquaintances, and even fewer real friends.

Someone turns the music up, the familiar rhythmic thumping bass loud enough to feel in my bones.

"Love, you look gorgeous."

I turn at the sound of his voice, a scowl marring my face when I recognize the familiar pet name Owen used to call me. It's one of those throwaway ones I've heard him use on girls before me—and after.

It's bullshit any way you look at it. He didn't love me then, and he doesn't love me now. And I'm entirely over all of it—including him.

I arch a brow and dodge his arm as he tries to hug me. "I thought we talked about that."

His mouth tips down in a frown. "What? I can't hug you now?"

I shake my head and look out at all the people, gearing up to party the night away. "You have plenty of people who would like to be on the receiving end of your hugs and your nicknames."

He sucks his teeth. "Damn, Maura. When did you get so cold?"

I look over at him and keep my expression neutral. "I guess you don't know me as well as you think you do. Besides, I'm not cold, Owen. I'm just over your bullshit."

I leave him standing there and beeline for the bar. If I have to get through a party with him, then I'm going to need a drink. Something to help curb the impulse to blurt out how Flynn definitely didn't think I was cold.

I can't imagine that going well at all.

I SLURP the last few sips of my extra-tall rum punch and look at the guy next to me. He's been flirting with me since the moment he sat down a half hour ago.

His name is George and he knows Owen from the gym they both go to. He's attractive with black hair cropped short and muscles for days. He's wearing a backwards baseball hat, black board shorts, and a black tee.

He's funny and charming and excellent at flirting. I've already decided that I'm not going to wait around for Flynn to show up. If he doesn't, then he doesn't. But I'm definitely going to make out with George.

You can tell a lot about a guy by the way he kisses. Depending on George's ability determines if I'm going to round another base tonight.

"So, Maura, want to go swimming? Or maybe the grotto? I'm pretty sure there's a hot tub in there," George says, leaning in close.

I offer him a smile and push my glass to the center of the little table. "Sure."

His face lights up and he stands up, offering me his hand. I slip my hand into his and let him pull me to my feet.

"George, my man, I see you've met my girl," Owen says, his voice booming from twenty feet away. He appears a moment later, like a ghost popping up out of nowhere.

George drops my hand like it's burning and looks at Owen, his face pinched. "Oh, shit. I'm sorry, Hayes. I didn't know."

"What?" I look from George to Owen and back to George. "I'm not his girl."

George glances at me before refocusing on Owen. "Sorry, man. She didn't tell me."

I fold my arms across my chest, annoyance prickling my scalp. "That's because there's nothing to tell. I'm not his fucking girl."

Owen smiles, it's too wide to be anything friendly. "No worries, man. Now you know, yeah?" He takes a step toward him. "Hey, do me a favor, yeah? Spread the word. We don't want any more mixups, yeah?"

George tips his head back a few times, a strange sort of strangled nod. "Yeah, man, sure thing."

George turns around and leaves without so much as a glance in my direction, and I can't accurately describe the amount of indignation and rage that course through my body.

"What the fuck was that?" I whisper.

He tosses his arm across my shoulders and leans in to press a kiss to my hair. Owen sighs, this happy sort of relieved noise. "Don't worry, love, you don't have to thank me now. I can think of another way you can show me your appreciation later."

And it tips me over the edge.

"You don't get to come in here and act like a possessive asshole over someone who isn't even yours."

"Bullshit. You're mine, Maura McCarthy. You always have been and you always will be." He's so vehement, his body nearly vibrating with righteousness that if I didn't know any better, I might think he actually believed the shit coming out of his mouth.

I tip my head back and laugh. I can't help it. It's the kind of disbelieving laugh that has a touch of incredulity. I shake my head, my laugh tapering down and look at him. "That's where you're wrong. I was never yours. And if you really thought I was, you never would've fucked all those girls while you were supposed to be faithful to me."

His eyes widen briefly before they narrow on me. "Who told you?"

My lips twist into a nasty sort of smile. "You did. When you were drunk last year. Remember?"

He shifts his weight from one foot to the other and back again. A couple more people slowly stopping their conversations to look at us. All of the attention makes my skin crawl a little bit, but I'm determined now.

Owen looks from left to right before adopting this stupid cocky grin. He shrugs, all faux calm. "It was a mistake."

I shake my head a few times, my fingers curling around the neck of the fancy wine cooler. "Nah, a mistake is forgetting the bread at the grocery. A mistake is getting the wrong coffee. Fucking ten girls while you have a girlfriend is *not* a mistake."

"It didn't mean anything. None of them did," he says, his chin tipped back in arrogance.

My face screws up in confusion. "Is that supposed to make me feel better? You fucked a bunch of girls, but don't worry, you didn't even like them or remember their names like a decent man?"

His face gets red and he stands up taller. "What do you want me to do, Maura? Beg? Ha! I'm a motherfucking Hayes, and Hayes men don't bend the fucking knee."

He's so self-important, really hamming it up for his little *buddies* hanging around. I can't stop myself from knocking him back down to earth.

"Fuck you, Owen *Hayes*. You were a cheat and a liar and a poor excuse as a boyfriend. And you *never* made me come."

MAURA

MY FINGERNAILS BITE into my palms as I curl my hands into fists. My chest heaves with labored breaths, anger warming me up from my inside.

There's a collective silence. The kind of weighted absence of noise that precedes a superstorm. I don't regret it though. It feels good to stand up for myself and to let Owen know how I really feel.

I've tiptoed around the truth for too long, and clearly, it did neither one of us any good.

Telling anyone within hearing distance that he never made me come was probably a bit too much, but I refuse to feel shame for that. And for someone cheating on me, like somehow I wasn't enough.

Well fuck him and anyone else who gaslights the people they cheat on with their lies.

An arm lands on my shoulders, the scent of sandalwood and vanilla surrounding me in an instant.

Cash.

My body relaxes on instinct before my brain catches up. Oh shit. How much did he hear?

He leans into me, dropping his lips to my hair right above my ear. "Why don't we take a breather, yeah?"

I hold Owen's gaze as I nod. "Yeah, I'm done here anyway."

I let Cash turn us around and walk us over to the pool house on the other side of the backyard. Their pool is so gigantic that it takes a couple of minutes to walk around it.

Cash maneuvers us around the loungers, most of them occupied by people hooking up. He doesn't say anything, and neither do I. I don't even know what to say. The silence is awkward though. More like expectant.

We step into the pool house, the breeze from the ceiling fan in the living room cooling the last vestiges of my anger. The pool house is probably the place I'm most familiar with here, since Owen and I spent some time here when he first moved in.

It's decorated in shades of blue with three bedrooms on one end, and a giant living room that opens up into a kitchen and dining area.

I let him corral me to the big U-shaped sectional in the center of the living room. He slides his arm free when he sits down directly in the middle.

"Want a drink?"

I sit down next to him, making sure to keep several inches of space between us. Not enough to make it weird, but enough to still be able to smell him when I inhale.

"Sure."

He leans forward and snags a bottle of water out of an ice bucket chilling in another bucket in the middle of the glass coffee table. He cracks the lid and hands it to me.

I arch a brow. "Water? Really."

A grin hooks the side of his mouth upward. "I think you've had enough to drink for now, yeah? Wouldn't want you to get sick."

I snatch the water from him and take a drink. Not because I need him to police my alcohol but because giving Owen that verbal slap left me parched.

"I've had exactly one drink, so I'm nowhere near drunk if that's what you're really worried about."

"Ah, so your little performance for Owen?"

I twist the cap back on the water and shift to look at him better. "How much did you hear?"

He cocks his head to the side, regarding me. "Enough to know my nephew's an idiot."

The implication is clear, and it makes my cheeks heat. That same dangerous thrill zips through my veins again.

I shift further, tucking my right leg underneath so I'm facing him on the couch. "Oh yeah? And why's that?"

Say it, Cash. Tell me what you would do if you were him.

He lets his gaze roam over me leisurely. His left arm rests along the back of the couch, his fingertips playing with the ends of my hair. "Is that what you want, Maura? You want me to tell you all the ways I would've made sure you never left me if you were mine?"

My breath hitches in my chest, and I'm leaning toward him without conscious thought. "Yes," I breathe out.

He nods slowly, as if this is a forgone conclusion. As if he has the answers to every question I'm going to ask him.

"You want to hear how I'd make sure you never left my bed until you were "You want to hear how I'd make sure you never left my bed until I stole every last vestige of your pleasure?"

Fuck.

I shift again, my thighs squeezing together. My nipples harden beneath my dress, begging for attention.

"Yes." I'm so grateful for the dim lighting in the room, so he can't see how flushed my skin is. How my breath is coming faster, stuttering in and out of my chest. "You want to hear how I'd make sure you were so wet that all I had to do was slide a finger inside you, and you'd come on my hand?"

I shift to my knees and crowd him. I pause, one hand on the back of the couch next to his head. I'm giving him an out. One word or a sign that he's not into it.

His hand grips my hip, the tip of his thumb dipping down below my sarong to press against my skin. It's my sign, my green light.

I swing my leg over and straddle him, resting my forearms on his shoulders. "Tell me more."

"Aye, you want to hear all the dirty details, yeah?" He slides his hands up my ribs, his calloused fingers sending a trail of goosebumps down my spine.

"Yes," I say, tipping my chin down so my lips hover just in front of his.

"I would spend entire *days* eating this sweet pussy, only stopping when you were going to pass out from pleasure."

My lids lower in response, and I scoot closer to him, sinking further onto his hard cock. Only two layers of swimsuits separate us, and it's taking everything inside of me not to rip them off just so I can feel him.

"I'd map every single one of your curves with my tongue, carving a path with my name on it." His hands leave my ribs to cradle my face. He threads his fingers into my hair, tilting my mouth closer. "And when my tongue gets tired, I'd tag my brother in and watch as he devoured your pussy like it's his favorite meal. Because it would be. I heard it's the sweetest ambrosia."

My head spins and my chest heaves with deep inhales. My tits feel heavy, my hips rolling slightly on instinct. I'm turned on and feeling ravenous, desperately craving the actions of his promised words.

I don't know what to focus on. The fact that Cash actually outlined how he was going to spend his days eating me out or the fact that he would let his brother do the same thing. And why the hell does it all sound so appealing?

"Is that it, Em? You want me to eat your pussy," he says it against my mouth, our lips brushing against each other with every letter. His hand slips between us, covering my pussy through my bikini.

I nod, and if I'm too eager, I honestly don't care right now.

"I'm going to need your words, baby. Tell me if you want this, and it's okay if you don't. We only do what you want to, yeah?"

"I want this, Cash. I want you to eat me out until I come all over your face," I say, my chest feeling tingly at his reassurance. "*After* I fuck you."

He lets out this sort of groaned growl and I capture his lips completely. He lets me take control for about twenty seconds before he claims it for himself. I don't mind giving up control, not right now.

Because even though he's fucking my mouth with his tongue, his hands holding my face exactly where he wants it, I still feel like I'm the one ultimately in control. And that's a euphoric feeling.

I grind against his cock, relishing in the way my clit pulses with every roll and dip of my hips. I pull away from his lips, panting. "I want you to fuck me, Cash."

I watch as his eyes darken and his mouth curls up into this cocky grin. "Oh is that all?"

I nod, breathless as I grind against his cock. "Yes. And I want you to make me come all over your cock."

"My brother was right, you're going to be our downfall. But I can't imagine a sweeter way to die." He groans before he captures my mouth with his own.

I fall into his kiss, rolling my hips against his, desperate for the sweet friction between us. His hands never stop roaming my skin, his calloused hands scraping against my skin as he maps my body with his fingerprints.

He pulls back, dragging his mouth along my collarbone. "You're going to get your wish, Em, but I'm going to need some help, yeah? We don't want

you to get hurt during your first time."

I arch my neck to the side. "What?"

"My brother and I are close. The kind of brothers who tell each other everything," he murmurs.

I gasp in understanding. "Flynn told you?"

I don't feel betrayed or even upset. No, I feel lightheaded with lust.

"Aye, he told me how he's never felt a better mouth or tasted a sweeter pussy. So he's going to help you, yeah? He'll make sure you feel nothing but pleasure as I sink into that perfect little pussy." He reaches between us and palms my pussy, the heat of his hand making me feel warm with arousal.

"H-how?" I stutter out. It's like all my fantasies are coming to life. I half wonder if I'm dreaming and tucked into bed somewhere. If so, I don't want to wake up until I've come at least twice. This is the hottest goddamn dream of my life.

He places open-mouthed kisses along my skin, scraping his teeth along my neck. "My brother and I are excellent at sharing. We share secrets, cars . . . you, if you want us to. There's no pressure from either one of us, this is your choice, yeah?"

"Yes," I rush out. "Yes, I want both of you."

"There's our good girl," he praises me. "But first, let's get you warmed up for us."

MAURA

CASH PUSHES my bikini bottoms to the side, his fingers skating over the seam of my pussy.

He dips the tip of his finger inside me, and I whimper, grinding into his hand. I'm so desperately turned on that it feels like a lifetime since I've gotten any relief. Even though I know I made myself come in the shower earlier today to thoughts of his brother.

Why does that turn me on more?

I buck into him, and he pushes his thumb against my clit. Bright sparks of pleasure erupt from behind my closed lids. I don't even remember closing them.

"Goddamn, you're already so fucking wet for us. I can feel your pussy dripping onto my fingers. You're going to be so perfect for us, baby."

He skates his thumb over my clit as his fingers slide in and out of me. I moan and writhe above him. His other hand tangles in my hair and pulls me down until our lips brush against each other.

"Tell me what you need. You want to come, yeah?"

"Yes, please," I beg.

"You want my brother to lick this sweet pussy until you're swollen and aching for me?"

"Yes," I whimper. "Yes, please, I need to come."

He pushes his fingers in deeper and nudges my bikini top to the side and sucks my nipple into his mouth. I cry out, the pleasure and pain of both combining into a heady concoction. A drug that I'm quickly becoming addicted to.

I arch my back, pushing my nipple deeper into his mouth. He growls, pulling my nipple almost to the point of pain. Just before I can process the confusing mix of pain and pleasure, his fingers withdraw from my pussy, leaving me sighing and desperate for more.

They slide along my slit, spreading my juices over my aching clit. I whimper, and he cups my pussy, sliding three two fingers inside with almost lazy strokes.

"This is my pussy, Em," he says possessively. "Only I can fuck my pussy like this. Only I can make you come this hard."

It's like he timed it just perfectly, because he does this thing with his fingers, curling them just the right way, and I come instantly.

I come so hard, I don't think I'll ever find my way back down. I'm sweaty and babbling incoherent things that mostly include his name and god and a variety of swear words.

"You started the fun without me, I see."

I hear Flynn behind me, but I can't open my eyes yet. My head hangs low, resting against Cash's shoulder and my eyelids feel glued shut.

Warm palms slide up and down my back, both soothing me and untying my bikini. I feel a little boneless, but not so knocked out that I'm not ready for more. Eager, even.

"Easy there, baby," Cash whispers. "My brother's going to take care of you, yeah? Come on, let's get on the other end of the couch."

I feel his fingers slip out of me, and I whimper.

He helps me to my feet and reaches behind me, untying my bikini bottoms. Flynn walks around me, and I hear the fabric rustling before it hits the floor. He curls an arm around my waist from behind, and I lean in against his hard chest.

"I've been thinking about you," he murmurs into the side of my neck.

I'm naked, bared before two men I didn't know from Adam a month ago. By all accounts, I should feel shy or nervous, but I don't. I don't feel anything except the sweet tang of anticipation. I'm going to lose my virginity tonight, and I know they're going to take care of me.

Flynn's erection presses against my ass, and I can't stop myself from grinding back into it. I literally just came and yet, I still want more. I feel greedy.

"How did she feel, brother?" Flynn asks.

Cash's gaze stays on me as he answers his brother. "Just like you promised: heaven."

"I told you, brother. She's fucking exquisite," Flynn groans, thrusting his cock against my backside.

It's a tease and maybe a promise. One I'm not sure if I'm ready for today, but I know I will be one day. Maybe soon.

Flynn smoothes his hand over my tits, stopping to roll and lightly pinch my nipples. His hand settles in the hollow of my throat. "Bend over, baby. Let me see my pussy."

I moan and let Flynn guide me forward until I'm bent over the arm of the couch. My nipples brushing against the soft velvet fabric. Flynn brushes his hand down my spine and stops to cup my pussy from behind. I almost come again from the juxtaposition of his gentle touch and the dirty talk.

"So fucking wet already, baby. Are you dying to come again? Are you dying to have my brother's cock buried inside your tight little pussy?"

I nod, wiggling my ass.

He chuckles and rubs his cock along my ass. "And one day, we're going to take this sweet ass, too."

I whimper, and he drags my bikini bottoms off of me. "There's a condom and lube on the table," Flynn says. "Get it ready while I get our girl ready."

He spreads my asscheeks wide, exposing my pussy to his gaze. I moan at the first touch of his expert tongue against my most sensitive flesh.

"Oh, fuck," I whimper, my fingers curling into the couch cushions.

He groans and flicks his tongue over my clit before licking his way back down. I'm dimly aware of Cash moving around behind me, but all my attention is on Flynn. He pushes one finger inside my pussy, and I moan, rolling my hips to meet his face. He slides another finger inside of me, teasing me with these curling sort of thrusts as his tongue laps at my clit.

CASH

I SIT on the edge of the couch, torn between watching my brother eat our girl out and taking her myself. She's absolutely beautiful as Flynn licks and nips at her swollen pussy.

I'm tempted to shove a couple fingers into my mouth, just to gather enough saliva to ease my cock into her tight little pussy. But I resist.

I'm fucking feral that I get to claim that first little bit of resistance as her pussy swallows my cock. I get to see her face as she adjusts to the feeling of being filled for the first time. And I want to feel the puffs of air against my chest as she inhales and exhales through small bite of pain. Though hopefully Flynn has done his job, and our girl only feels a moment of discomfort.

"That's my girl," I murmur, running my hand up the length of her back.

Flynn's lips move down from her clit, and her little mewls turn into pants of pleasure. His tongue licks and laps at her pussy, urging her to come once more.

I feel her shudder, and she shakes her head back and forth. "No, no, no, no," she murmurs.

Flynn nips her thigh. "We'll show mercy for now, but the next time you come is around my brother's cock, yeah?"

I feel her shudder again, and then a moan that almost sounds pained. "Yes, yes, yes," she practically chants.

"You ready to feel my cock stretch you wide?" I groan.

"Yes," she moans, thrusting her ass back toward Flynn.

He slides off the end of the couch and turns Maura over, so she's on her back. He kneels next to her, claiming her lips as he holds her leg open.

My mouth fucking waters as I get a good look at her quivering, glistening pussy. I roll the condom on, stroking myself a couple times before lining my cock up with her opening.

"Ready, baby? Tell me if it hurts, and I'll stop."

I don't tell her about my piercing, that's a story for another time. She's already doing so well tonight. She probably won't even notice the metal lining the bottom of my cock, but she'll just appreciate the way it feels inside.

She looks at me, all doe-eyed with flushed cheeks and parted lips. "Fuck me, Cash."

I thrust slowly, only feeding her pussy my cock inch by inch, giving her plenty of time to adjust.

By the time I bottom out inside of her, her mouth is open and she's nearly panting.

Flynn snakes his hand between us, and I arch backward to give him room to play with her clit. He rubs small circles around it, plucking and teasing her. It doesn't take long before her hips shift, subtly rolling and seeking out my cock.

"I'm okay, I'm ready for more," she mumbles, and I can see her mouth fluttering as she tries to smile.

"Are you ready for me to fuck you now?" I groan, using my grip on her thigh to push her leg toward her chest, opening her up to my further.

"Yes, please," she whispers.

I pull out slowly before thrusting all the way inside of her again, slowly but deep. She's so fucking tight, so hot. It's like her pussy was made for my cock, like this is how sex was always supposed to feel. Like I'm somehow losing oxygen and feeling more alive than I've ever felt.

"Oh, please, fuck me harder, please," she begs.

Flynn runs his fingers back down to her pussy, and I feel the vibrations of her moans against my chest as he pinches her clit.

His other hand works his cock, his hips driving into the side of the couch with small thrusts. I bet he's imagining he's the one inside her cunt right now.

The two of us work in tandem, driving our girl crazy with pleasure. I kiss every bit of her body I can reach, even her calves and ankles.

I've never felt so connected to another human being. Or so fucking possessive. Now that I've had her, I don't know that I couldn't not have her.

She wraps her leg around me, pulling me deep inside. "I'm going to come again. Oh holy fuck, I'm going to come again."

"Open up, baby," Flynn says, dragging his thumb across her bottom lip.

Her lips part in an instant, and he slides his cock deep inside her mouth. He doesn't thrust hard or deep, mostly just rocks his hips against her face as his hand still toys with her clit.

"Goddamn," I groan out. "I can feel her cunt strangling my cock. Whatever you're doing, brother, she fucking loves it."

Flynn groans, thrusting in her mouth once more, coming down her throat.

Her pussy contracts around my cock as she comes, her moans muffled by Flynn's dick. It's enough to send me over the edge.

I groan, burying my cock deep inside her as her juices coat my balls. "Good girl," I murmur. "Such a good girl."

AFTERWORD

I hope you enjoyed In A Little While!

I had the best time writing it and throwing my slow-burn-loving heart to the side and sinking into the steam with this one!

And if you feel so compelled, slide into my DMs or my FB group, <u>Penelope's Black Hearts</u> and tell me your favorite scene or character! Those kinds of messages are like fuel to my little author heart. Plus, I love seeing people's favorites in the harem!

As always, my DMs are always open if you need to slide in there and chat—or proverbially throw your kindle at me!;)

I would be honored if you had the time to leave a brief review of this book! Reviews are the lifeblood of a book, and I would appreciate it so much.

xoxo —pen

Stay in the loop!

Join my <u>newsletter</u>

Join my Facebook group, Penelope's Black Hearts

Follow me on Instagram @authorpenelopeblack

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my readers! Thank you for hanging in there with me on all those cliffs on just about every book I write, sending all of you air hugs for that!

Thank you to my husband who's always the first one to champion me. And I love that you're always shouting, "My wife's a romance author!" with pride to anyone you pass on the street. You're the best, and I love you so much.

To my tiny humans: I love you both more than all the stars in the sky. And you have to wait until you're older to read Mommy's books.

To all the bookstagrammers and bloggers and readers that send me messages and create beautiful edits for my books—I'm still in awe. Thank you so, so much. On my most insecure days, I pull up your edits and kind words and never fails to reignite my spark.

To my wonderful family who's encouraged and supported me—thank you, thank you! And thank you to each and every one of you who read my books.

To my gals Erica + Jen! I'm so grateful to have you both on my team. Thank you for all your help and kindness!

To my beta besties: Tracey, Dorothy, Elaine—I'm so thankful for each of you. Your kindness and support mean the world to me.

To Christine for always being so incredibly kind and helpful.

Thank you to the amazing babes on my ARC team! I'm so grateful to have you in my corner!

To my Songbirds—I'm so lucky to have you all with me on this journey! Thank you for being a safe space!

And finally, I want to thank my author besties! I found y'all this past year, and trust me when I say, I'm never letting you go! I'm forever grateful for the ease in which you fix crowns, champion one another, and become a safe haven for me.

ALSO BY PENELOPE BLACK

THE BROTHERHOOD SERIES

Wolf

Rush

<u>Sully</u>

THE FIVE FAMILIES SERIES

Gilded Princess

Twisted Queen

Vicious Reign

<u>Fractured Dynasty</u>

THE BLUE KNIGHTS MC SERIES

Coming Spring 2023!

<u>OceanofPDF.com</u>

STANDALONES

When It Ends:

A Dark Apocalyptic Romance

THE KING SISTERS WORLD

The Wren

The Wild