



BRUTAL SECRETS

BJALPHA

BRUTAL SECRETS

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THE BRUTAL DUET PART ||

BOOK 1

B J ALPHA

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DEDICATION

To all my readers who crave more.

More Brutal.

More O'Connell's.

More story.

More filth.

I got you!

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AUTHORS NOTE

This book is a **Dark Romance** book. It contains an abundance of triggers.

(Please check my website!)

This is for all my readers who love those red flags.

My men are fierce, loyal and filthy to the bone. Their obsession for breeding has no bounds, and they thrive off new kinks.

Enjoy!

BJ

X

PS: Please do not complain about how unhygienic the bottle scene is, this is fiction, and if you choose to make it a reality, please use common sense with glass objects.

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BRUTAL SECRETS

Tia

So much has been left undiscovered, and when my past clashes with my future, the **brutal secrets** leave devastating consequences for not just my family, but hers too.

Can everyone survive the brutal **STORM** heading our way? Or will our lives remain forever **veiled** in secrets and lies.

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PROLOGUE



Previously...

Jace

I button Amelia's onesie back up after changing her diaper and giving her a pacifier to soothe her until Thalia can feed. I smile down at her with pride. She's perfect and content again for a short while.

I smooth over her soft, downy brown hair. Loving the feeling of her in my arms, I scoop her up and snuggle her against my chest.

"You forgot her blankie. She loves her blankie." Harper hands me the pink, fluffy rag with a giraffe on the end, and I chuckle at my little girl.

"You're the best big sister, Harps," I praise her, knowing how much she likes helping.

"I know." She grins back at me. Her two front teeth are missing, making her look cute as hell, and I take a mental snapshot of this moment, my two little girls together. We definitely need another boy to add to the mix. I smile to myself as I take hold of Harper's small hand.

"Dad? Why did Mrs. Lancaster come into school the other day but didn't come see me?" Her innocent question makes my blood still in my veins as I'm drawn to a halt by her words.

I glance down at my little girl holding my hand, trying to ignore the heavy pulsating thud of my heart. I clear my throat and try and keep my voice calm. "What day was it?"

"The other day."

"Which one?" Irritation bubbles inside me, but I tamp it down. Instead, I bend down to Harper so we're level with one another. "Try and

remember Harper.”

She presses a finger to her lip and taps it deep in thought. “It was the day I wore pigtails.”

“Wednesday? Are you sure?” I distinctively remember doing her pigtails Wednesday, because for the first time ever, I did them right and got them level. Even Cole can’t get them level.

Her bottom lip trembles, and she nods. “I know, because she doesn’t like pigtails.”

My jaw clenches, remembering how Mrs. Lancaster insisted on Harper looking a certain way, and she’s right, she sure as hell wouldn’t allow her to wear pigtails.

“Come on, Harps, let’s get you both fed.” We step out of her bedroom into the corridor just as Thalia and Lucas step out of ours. My eyes find Lucas’s, and he must see something in my expression, because his eyes dart quickly around the room as though trying to figure out what’s wrong.

I try to keep my voice low and my tone sweet, determined to not be the man I once was. To not be Rage again. “Harper, could you be a big girl and put the bread in the toaster?”

Harper gives me a shrug as I hand Mia over to Thalia for her morning feed; we recently began shortening Amelia’s name thanks to Harper and now Mia has kind of stuck. “Sure, I’m gonna have two slices today.” She holds up two fingers, and I give her a wide smile I don’t feel.

I hear Thalia cooing at Mia as Lucas and I turn and stride toward his office.

He spins on his heels as soon as the door closes. “What the hell happened?” His eyes search mine.

I can’t help but pick up the paperweight on his desk and launch it at the wall. Rage bubbles inside me. “Fuck!” I scream out.

Lucas stares at me as though I’m deranged, his eyes moving back and forth over my face.

My chest heaves. “I want her dead, Lucas. Mrs. Lancaster. She’s gone too fucking far. She’s been in Harper’s school.”

Lucas physically jolts and stumbles on his words. “W-What?”

I nod. “She was at her school on Wednesday.”

His glare turns menacing, and his hand twitches in his pocket. I can practically see him stroking his hand over his knife in the way that gives him comfort.

He drops his ass into his chair and scrapes his teeth on his lower lip as though deep in thought. All the while, my temper is building, my muscles tightening, the rage bubbling.

“Suggestions?” I spit out, pissed at his silence when I need this shit resolved. Now.

“We reach out to Thalia’s family.”

My eyes widen. Is he serious?

We recently discovered Thalia had a sister she knew nothing about. Sky. Sky is married to an Irish Mafia don we know as Bren.

Lucas nods to himself, before going on to explain. “We reach out to Bren O’Connell and ask for their families’ assistance.”

“Assistance in what? I can fucking kill the bitch,” I seethe.

Lucas shakes his head.

“Her husband was a senator, Jace. We can’t just bump off spouses of senators without repercussions. Besides, how are we even going to get close enough to do it?”

I scoff at his words but stop myself from going further when the office door opens and Cole walks in looking freshly showered and practically bouncing happily with each step.

The door clicks shut, and his eyes dart from mine to Lucas’s, his face falling with realization. He exhales heavily. “What did I miss?”

“We’re about to go to war, brother.” I smirk back at him.

COLE

I glance around the club again. I'm impressed with the layout; it's been well thought out with a classy vibe, not in the least bit sleazy like I expected, and the dancers don't look strung out, so that's a bonus for the paying customers. I take another swig of my beer. It feels like we've been here all night, when all I really want to do is be home with Tia and our girls.

Jace nudges me with his elbow, and when I turn my attention toward him, he nods at a guy with a toothpick hanging from his mouth. He's leaning against the wall, staring aimlessly into space, as though completely bored of the situation.

His hair is messy, and he wears a leather jacket and unlaced combat boots. As if sensing my gaze, his sharp blue eyes snap toward mine. A shudder washes over me, as though just from his stare alone I can see into

his soul. He has a sinister edge to him, that's for sure, into some fucked-up shit, yet he keeps it all tampered down.

I tilt my head to the side, surveying him as much as he is me. He reminds me of my brother before he found peace with his past. When he was Rage and not the Jace he is now. But I see the rage creeping back in. The anxiety to keep our family safe has him on edge, but I'm not prepared to let him give into his demon. So, here we are in a club owned by the O'Connell brothers. The Irish Mafia.

The guy I'm aware of is Finn O'Connell, one of Bren's younger brothers. He pushes off the wall and strides toward us with determination. His confident demeanor is impressive, considering he's about to sit down at a table with three equally deadly guys.

He spins a chair around, then he straddles it. "Talk."

I clear my throat to speak, but Lucas holds his hand up. "We want to speak to Bren."

The dude's lip slowly turns up at the side into a patronizing smile. "Sure you do." He raises his eyebrow mockingly.

I can feel the tension rolling off Jace. His body is coiled tight, and I can only hope he holds out long enough for us to get what we want. To get what we came for.

An alliance.

"He's here tonight," Lucas states, making the guy's eyes turn sharper, deadlier. He knows we've been watching, calculating the perfect time to approach him.

Jace's leg bounces beside me, and he stares at the table hard enough to drill holes through the damn thing.

But I'm proud of my brother for keeping it together, even though I can sense he's unraveling.

"If you want to walk out of here, you leave now." His voice is low and deadly, and his sharp glare penetrates into Lucas. But my brother is unperturbed. He's faced evil head-on, so this dude is a cakewalk for him.

"We have information."

The guy throws his head back on a condescending chuckle before he snaps his head back down with all signs of amusement wiped from his face. *Jesus, he's fucked up.*

"Don't you fucking all." He holds his hand up and snaps his fingers, and I watch on as what I can only describe as an army of men head toward us.

Panic bubbles inside me, and my heart races at the thought of us failing. “Wait. Fuck, just wait. It’s about Jenny Olska.” The guy doesn’t so much as flinch with recognition at the use of her name. “Y-You know her as Sky,” I stumble the words out, but it has the desired effect when he freezes and holds his hand in the air to stop his entourage.

His eyes snap toward mine. “What the fuck did you just say?” he asks, his voice somehow sounding even more sinister than before.

I swallow thickly but continue, relieved that I now at least have his attention. “Jenny, also known as Sky. We have information about her past.” It’s not a complete lie, but it is reason enough for us to be here and to grab both this dude and Bren’s attention.

The guy trails his tongue slowly along his lip, as though deep in thought. Then he gives a firm nod of his head. “Okay. You have my attention. If your information is no good, then I’ll fucking end you all for wasting my time.” He smirks and stands, motioning for us to follow him with a tilt of his head.

We walk toward the metal staircase at the back of the club, the one with three armed guards at the bottom. I try to tamper down the feeling of trepidation as we follow this guy up the staircase, each step increasing my feeling of dread.

I can only fucking pray Bren O’Connell is a man who values family as much as we do.

At least then, we’ll have a chance of getting out of here in one piece.

BREN

I stare down at my phone, trying to figure out what the hell just happened. Sky called me having some sort of bitch fit about Seb and Sammy emptying the contents of her toiletries into the bathtub. The little hellions switched the whirlpool jets on, and now our private bathroom resembles a foam party because they figured out how to put the damn speakers on too.

All this was happening while she was trying to feed Zachary, who is as clingy as a fucking koala. I don't so much as get a look in with Sky and her bulging rack. If I didn't enjoy getting her pregnant so much and get off on seeing her swell with what's mine, I'd tell her that's the last kid just so I can get her back to being just mine. Instead, I bite my fucking tongue and wait it out. Zachary is ten weeks now, so hopefully not too much longer. Isaac was way easier, that's for sure.

I scrub my hand over my head and sigh. How the fuck this is my fault when I'm in the office is beyond me, but she's like a wildcat when she gets stressed. So I told her I was sorry, and I'd send some guys over to sort the mess out, but when I suggested a nanny, she ended the damn call. I stare at the phone in shock.

Finn strolls through the door like he owns the room, and his presence alone makes my jaw clench because normally, following him is trouble.

My interest piques, and my shirt tightens across my back as my shoulders tense when three guys I've never seen before follow behind him.

"Sit," he barks out at them, barely sparing them a second glance.

The one in the suit takes a seat opposite me at my desk. He's well put together and looks like a businessman. The bigger-built one sits on the couch, and the one covered in tattoos glaring in my direction stands in the corner of the room, leaning against the wall. His jaw sharpens, and he pumps his hands into fists, making me aware he's gunning for a fight.

"I said sit!" Finn glares with fire burning from his eyes, making me wonder what the hell has been going off in my club. The tattooed guy glares back at him, equally enraged and not remotely fazed by Finn's outburst. Which is a rarity. My brother has a reputation giving him the moniker "Finn-finisher." His skills with a knife are next to none.

I don't know whether to be pissed at tattoo guy's nonchalance or applaud his gumption.

"Brother, please." The muscular one stares toward the tattooed guy. His eyes plead with him as though his life depends on it. I drag a finger over my lip and watch with intrigue as he pushes off the wall with a huff and plonks himself on the couch opposite, I guess . . . his brother?

They don't look alike, that's for sure.

Finn crosses his arms and leans against my desk, staring down at the suited one. "Apparently, they have information on Sky."

My spine snaps straight, and my hands ball into fists at the mere mention of my wife's name.

I grind my jaw. "Talk," I grit out, the anger evident in my tone.

"We need help with a situation," Muscled Guy starts talking. "Sky has a sister."

I try to fight the wince at the mention of Sky's sister. It's something I've failed to tell her, and I never intend on doing so either. Sky was separated from her younger sibling and sold to human traffickers. She has no

recollection of her birth family, and I keep quiet with what little knowledge I do have. Afraid to hurt her further, I made the decision to not mention what I know at all. Which wasn't a fucking lot, only that she has a younger sister, and she went missing too. I assumed something bad must have happened to her, and therefore, I chose to protect my wife from suffering further.

"Her name is now Thalia," Suit adds on.

I nod in understanding. Clearly, it's someone they care about. Maybe they grew up together?

His eyes narrow on me, his voice turning menacing. "But judging by your face, you knew about her already."

Clearly, I'm shit at hiding my expressions.

I shrug arrogantly. "I was protecting my woman; she knows nothing about her. Sky has been through enough. I assumed her sibling passed away." I sit back in my chair and exhale loudly, feigning boredom.

This pisses off Tattooed Guy, because he jumps to his feet and throws himself across the desk toward me, but his brother holds him back with his arms wrapped around him tightly. Tattooed Guy's face is red, his veins protrude on his neck, and his eyes bulge in hate as he struggles in the embrace to get to me.

"You steroid-built motherfucker! Been through enough? What the fuck do you think my girl has been through, huh?"

I should correct him and tell him I've never touched a damn drug in my life, but something tells me he wouldn't listen right now, and I'd be wasting my breath.

"We want your fucking help. She's fucking family!" His words sear under my skin, and I feel a prickle of guilt.

He continues his tussle. "Have you got kids?"

Finn moves in a flash at the mention of our children. He whips out his knife and holds it against his throat, making both him and his brother freeze.

Suit is still seated, and he ignores the outburst. "We don't want any trouble." I scoff at his words. "Thalia and our girls are in danger." I sit forward in my seat with sudden interest.

He goes on, saying, "The ex-senator, Lancaster . . ." I chuckle mockingly at the name I recognize. ". . . him and his wife have an interest in Thalia." I swallow hard, unsure where this is going, but I'm acutely

aware of what that scumbag has an interest in. Suit continues talking, “They’re plotting something regarding—”

“My little girl!” Tattooed Guy screeches out, blood now dripping from where Finn holds the knife against his neck. And for the first time since setting eyes on them, I realize where this guy’s anger is coming from. Someone is threatening his kid.

“Finn, back the fuck off!” I bark. He does so instantly but stands only a foot away from them.

“Sit.” I nod toward the chair at the guy buzzing with rage.

He pushes off the muscle guy in a huff and flops down in the chair. His jaw clenches as he tries to restrain himself.

I pinch between my eyes, already pissed at being dragged into something I have no time nor business being involved in.

“Back the fuck up and start again. Who are you?” I pose the question toward the one who seems to have his shit together the best, even though he looks like a sinister version of my brother, Oscar.

“I’m Lucas. This is Jace.” He throws his arm out toward Tattooed Guy. “And that’s Cole.” I nod at his words. “Thalia and Jace have a little girl, Harper. She was brought up by the Lancasters.”

“Why?” Finn chimes in before Lucas can even finish the sentence.

“Because some sick fuck raped Thalia when she was a teenager, and they tried to adopt Harper against Thalia’s wishes.” Jace glares in my direction, the hate behind the words aimed at me for insinuating Sky was the only one who had a troubled background.

“Jace and Thalia now have full custody over Harper. The Lancasters should be out of the picture, but Harper mentioned Mrs. Lancaster has been in her school. I checked it out.” He grimaces before continuing, “They’ve been following Thalia and Harper.”

Jace’s head snaps toward him accusingly, his body coiled tight. It’s obvious this information is new to him.

“I’ll fucking kill them myself.” I watch the dude unravel before me, his chest rising faster by the second.

I hold my hand up. “You do that, you’re gonna get caught. You wanna be there for your girls, right?”

His venomous glare shoots toward me, and he gives me a firm but reluctant nod.

“What about you?” I gesture toward the one called Cole.

“I’ll do it if I have to. We need to make it look like an accident, though. I have my girls waiting for me. I don’t want to do time unless I have to.”

“You married?” Finn raises an eyebrow at Cole.

Jace scoffs. “No, he’s not fucking married. If anyone’s going to marry her, it’ll be me.”

My mind takes a moment to go over what he just said.

“You both fuck her?” Finn questions before I can get the words out.

“The three of us, actually.” Lucas’s lip curls up at the side, a hint of pride behind his words.

Jesus fucking Christ, this girl has three men on the go. I blow out a heavy breath in shock. Holy shit, Sky’s little sister has three men and . . . “How many kids?”

“Two . . . For now,” Lucas tacks on at the end, and I don’t miss the insinuation. Actually, I recognize it well.

I try to pull my mind away from their private lives and deal with the actual problem.

I clear my throat. “So, you want us to end the Lancasters?” I query. “Then we’re done.” I look at them pointedly.

“You don’t want Sky to know her sister?” Cole asks, hurt mars his face. I chuckle at the thought of the big dude looking like someone kicked his puppy.

“She has all the family she needs.” I stare back at him heartlessly.

“Right. So, you finish the Lancasters and we keep our mouth shut about her sister?” Jace reiterates my insinuation with a tic in his jaw, obviously pissed with my proposal.

“Exactly that.” I tap on the desk, concluding this impromptu meeting is finished.

“You’re a fucking dick, man,” Cole spits out petulantly.

I gift him with a smug smile. “A huge fucking dick.” I give my business card over to Lucas. “It has a copy of Oscar’s, my brother, personal cell number on the back for you to use as a point of contact.”

The three of them rise from their seats.

“Oscar will be in contact tomorrow,” I speak to Lucas and ignore the death glares from the other two. He gives me a nod but nothing more, so I don’t offer my hand for him to shake.

Cole stops as he’s about to walk through the door. His eyes soften as he looks at me. “You know, our girls could use some cousins.”

It's an olive branch, but being the bastard that I am, I refuse to deal with any more dramas. We've had enough of those in our family to last us a lifetime.

"Mine have enough cousins." My eyes drill coldly into his, and his shoulders sag on my words.

"Not every fucker is lucky enough to have a family; some of us make our own," Jace snipes back before turning and walking out the door with the men he calls brothers.

I sigh in relief when they leave, but a niggle of guilt tears through me at both their words and the image of another woman looking so similar to Sky and the fucking hell she must have endured.

I swipe the contents of my desk onto the floor in frustration with myself, letting out a roar in the process.

With a heaving chest, I snap my eyes up toward Finn. "Find out every fucking thing you can about them."

He gives me a sharp nod and takes out his phone.

I sit back down in my chair with a sense of unease, a sickening feeling of dread lining my stomach, knowing this isn't the end.

Knowing it's only the beginning...

CHAPTER ONE



RAGE

I storm out of the club with fury flooding my veins. “Fuck!” I roar as my fist slams into my windshield, shattering it from the force, and the car alarm blares through the parking lot. My temple pulsates from anger toward Bren O’fucking Connell and his fucked-up attitude toward my family.

Lucas tsks under his breath at my reaction, but I choose to ignore him; not every fucker can be so controlled all the goddamn time. It’s not normal to not feel any-fucking-thing.

Cole glances my way with pity in his eyes, then opens the car door and slides into the driver’s seat—even though I drove here—taking the option to drive home away from me. Probably for the best.

My heart thunders against my chest as I breathe through flared nostrils.

Jesus, that Bren prick is an absolute piece of shit. The way he dismissed Thalia and our girls as if they were nothing. Well, fuck him. We’ll deal with the Lancasters ourselves.

We don’t need them.

We need no one.

“Get in the car.” I raise my head to find Lucas’s gray eyes staring at me, almost daring me to object—like he could do anything to stop me. The flash of worry in his eyes and the way he fidgets with the knife in his pocket, have my shoulders sagging in defeat, and I pull open the door to appease him, even though every cell in my body is telling me to fight back. To punish Bren O’Connell for casting us aside. Set his fucking club on fire with him and his shithead brother inside it.

My ass hits the passenger seat, and all fight leaves my body at the sight of Cole. His forehead is resting on the steering wheel and a sniffle escapes him. I glance over my shoulder, and Lucas’s jaw tics and his eyes sharpen while he watches himself flick his blade open and closed, open and closed. All signs he’s unraveling inside, losing control. My throat goes dry, and worry builds beneath my skin, itching to get out in some way. Any way.

Probably with rage.

“Cole, you heard him. He said he’d help with the Lancasters,” I murmur, unsure of what to say or do to comfort my brother other than repeat Bren’s words. Even I can hear the uncertainty and disbelief behind what I say.

He lifts his head and turns to face me, then his green eyes search mine, and he shakes his head, as if banishing my words. “He doesn’t want them.”

My heart skips a beat. He’s upset that Bren refuses to acknowledge our girls. That’s who Cole is; the one who wears his heart on his sleeve, and the one who desperately wants family life and the security and love it brings.

Out of all of us, Thalia is the only one with a family, a sibling, and nephews, yet Bren wants to act like she doesn’t exist.

“He’s protecting his own,” Lucas mumbles. Cole and I spin in his direction, glaring at him, but Lucas stares straight past us. “He’s protecting his own.”

Why the fuck does he always do this? Talk in riddles? I pump my fists beside me. “Meaning?” I grit out.

His eyes finally meet mine. “Meaning his girl has a history too, and he thinks he’s protecting her. Give him time.” He glances at his watch. “We should get back. I don’t like us leaving them for so long.”

“Give him time?” I scoff, but when Lucas refuses to look at me again and instead gives that fucking tablet of his attention, I turn forward with a loud, petulant huff.

Cole starts the car, and I don't miss the shake in his hand as he shifts the stick into gear.

I stare out of the window as we drive home in silence, with one thing on my mind.

Bren O'Connell will fucking pay for this.

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CHAPTER TWO



TIA

The door clicks into place, and I turn my head over my shoulder to face my men.

When they left me earlier, it was weird to be on my own with Mia and Harper. I have spent every day with one of the guys by my side, but earlier, Lucas explained they had a meeting at the fight club and it was something they all needed to attend. He assured me they had adequate security in place for us, and I had to stifle a giggle at how overboard he's going just to leave us alone in the apartment for a couple of hours.

After Harper helped bathe Mia, I put her down for the night, then I read Harper a bedtime story while she ate a cookie dipped in a glass of milk; another trait she's picked up unknowingly from her father.

She made it known how much she prefers Jace to do the animal voices, and I giggled when she told me I made the animals sound like they're sick.

After, I showered, slipped into my sleep shorts and camisole, grabbed a blanket off the couch, and draped it over me. Then I turned on a movie and have been watching it ever since.

"Hey, the girls okay?" Jace pushes past Cole and Lucas, and I chuckle at the unnecessary worry in his tone.

“Yes, they’re fine. Both sound asleep.”

My gaze roams over his defined body—the numerous tattoos make him seem darker than he is—and his shoulders relax ever so slightly. The rest of his body is strung tight: his jaw clenched and the veins in his neck protruding as if he’s struggling to rein in his temper. Something he hasn’t struggled with in a while. I narrow my eyes on him, wondering what’s got him so riled, and swallow past the lump in my throat at the thought of Jace slipping into old habits. When I clock his bloodied knuckles, I can’t help the way my heart races.

“Hey, it’s okay, baby.” My eyes shoot open on his tender touch as he strokes his thumb down my cheek, the warmth of his hand seeps into my skin, and though I hadn’t realized I’d closed my eyes, I’m grateful for his reassurance.

“You’re safe,” he whispers so low I almost don’t hear him.

His words should warm me, but the way he delivers it in a soft, velvety tone, so unlike Jace, has my heart skipping a beat because I’m almost certain he whispered those words to reassure himself, and now I’m even more concerned.

My eyes dart toward Lucas, who rests against the wall, opening and closing his knife, tilting his head from side to side, and narrowing his eyes on us.

He’s watching us with intrigue. Cole walks back into the living area from the corridor that leads to the girls’ rooms—ever the loving protector. My heart swells. Often, when he thinks no one is aware, he sneaks into Mia’s room and sings a lullaby against her ear; his loving words of devotion soothe me, and I walk away feeling more in love with him every day. With all of them.

But with that love, comes terror and the worry that my happiness is only temporary and something sinister is brewing, about to destroy it all. I can’t seem to shake it, no matter how hard I try.

It’s a gut feeling I can’t seem to banish, and the thought petrifies me, sending a shudder through my body.

“Thalia, where’d you go?” Jace strokes my cheek once again, bringing me back to the present, and my gaze meets his.

“Where did you go, baby?” he repeats, his eyes searching mine.

Lucas pushes off the wall. “I think Tia needs a reminder that her men are here for her, don’t you, Tia?” He stands tall, the confidence oozing from

him, and his eyes darken further. This is where Lucas excels, being in control in our relationship.

My nipples peak under his scrutiny, and with Cole approaching me too, arousal spills between my thighs, flooding into my sleep shorts.

“Fuck yes she does.” Cole smirks, lifting his T-shirt over his head, throwing it to the floor, and exposing his solid, chiseled abs. While his gaze locks with mine, he licks his lips, and his eyes are full of hunger, need, and promise.

I’m about to get railed by three men, and I couldn’t be more desperate for it.

Three brutally devoted men.

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CHAPTER THREE



COLE

I step up behind Tia as she kneels on the couch, then leans over the back of it to face Jace, while Lucas moves toward the chair located beside the couch. He opens the top buttons on his collar, a sure sign he's unwinding and just as eager to unleash on Tia as we are.

He rests his elbows on his knees, and a thrill of excitement skitters up my spine at the intensity behind his gaze. I lock onto the bulge in his pants, which is becoming more familiar, and I find myself needing to see his hardness as a sign of him enjoying what I do as much as me. The thought gets me off and fills my body with so much expectancy that the pleasure is intensified to such a degree, it becomes euphoric.

He's only let our cocks touch once in Tia's mouth, and I'm eager to feel the same hunger and desperation again, feel more of him. Possession flows through my veins, and with every pump of my cock, liquid heat simmers my blood, and the fire and need to consume her burns at my skin. Then, coupled with the need to consume him too, I feel like I'm ready to erupt, and the aftermath will be pivotal in our dynamic.

"Take her shorts down and taste her." Lucas's demanding tone is filled with raw need and hunger.

“Fuck yes,” Rage pants as he slides his thumb into her mouth while stroking a hand over his jean-clad cock.

We need this tonight, we need her.

All of us.

To own and possess her, ensuring she’s ours.

I drop my jeans and kick them aside, then lower to my knees and slide her sleep shorts down over her ass, exposing her toned globes.

“Mmm, fuck. You suck good.” Rage’s hooded eyes remain locked on Tia’s face.

My body is aware of Lucas watching me closely, as I can feel the heat of his stare burning into me, and my cock leaps with excitement at the effect I have on him too. He likes the control, the domineering power he holds over us all. He gets off on it, and in turn, it heightens my already aroused state.

“Get her ready for my cock, Cole,” Lucas breathes out.

I part her ass cheeks and push my face into her, the smell of coconut on her smooth skin makes me groan in ecstasy as I flick my tongue over her asshole and toward her pussy hole.

“Oh fuck, Cole,” she pants. “More.” Then she pushes her ass back, causing precum to drip from the tip of my eager cock.

Curling two of my fingers, I thrust them into her pussy, and she winces. I chuckle. “Take my fingers, beauty. Take them in your tight little pussy while Daddy watches.”

Her body tightens at the use of Lucas’s moniker, and a gush of arousal floods my fingers, so I lick faster, greedy to consume every ounce of what she’s provided for us.

Lucas fumbles with his pants, and the clang of his belt has my cock jumping. My eyes barely register Rage dropping his jeans to pull his cock out.

It’s weird, the dynamic between us. I’m only aroused around Rage when it involves Tia, but whenever I see or imagine Lucas’s cock, mine aches for him.

“Stop fucking around. Fucking eat her!” Lucas barks from beside me, bringing me out of my thoughts.

A chuckle catches in my throat, but I do as he asks, flicking my tongue over her ass, relishing the whimpers escaping her lips, reveling in her desire.

When her body jolts, I know Rage has finally shoved his cock in her mouth. “That’s it, my fucking whore. Choke on it. Choke on my thick cock, you filthy little slut.” He sneers out in confirmation, and my eyes roll to the back of my head, because, fuck me, that’s hot.

The noises she makes when gagging around him has my cock dripping with desperation.

Jesus, the sound filling the room is so damn erotic, so fucking good, my balls draw up. My fingers continue pumping in and out of her slick pussy. “Fuck, you’re dripping for me, beauty,” I whisper into her parted ass.

“Mmm,” she moans.

I cast my gaze to the side, and Lucas ferociously fisting his cock and the delicious sight of his precum oozing onto his fingers has my mouth watering. The need to feel his tip on my tongue, to taste him, and to have him finally give in and feed me like he feeds her is almost too much to bear.

We glance at one another, and I can’t help but wonder if he is imagining the same thing as me. Then, as if an unseen influence holds us in place, our gazes lock on one another and remain frozen.

“Fuck, I’m going to come. I’m going to come down your pretty little throat, Thalia,” Rage hisses through gritted teeth, snapping me out of my thoughts.

“Fill her cunt with your cum!” Lucas barks, reinforcing the moment between us is broken and forcing me to spring into action. I withdraw my fingers with a squelch and jump to my feet, lining my cock up to her deliciously wet hole and slamming into her so hard she falls against the couch.

“Fuck yeah,” Rage groans, and his knuckles whiten with his grip on her hair.

My hips work at a rapid pace, thrusting in and out of her, using her for my pleasure and Lucas’s too. “That’s it, beauty, take both of our cocks. Give Daddy what he wants.” My mouth parts in awe when her pussy convulses.

“Mmm,” she garbles around Rage.

“Fuckkkk.” His words come out pained, proving how close he is to coming. “Fuckkkk,” he repeats, baring his teeth, his face twisted. “I’m . . .” His mouth falls open, and his shoulders tighten further. Tia chokes around his length, and I can imagine the exhilaration he feels as he fills her mouth with his cum.

“Fuck.” My hips work quicker. “Fuck, yes!” I chant as I slam into her relentlessly. One hand grips her hip, and the other moves to her throat while Rage eases out of her and steps back, his cock spent. I don’t give her time to catch her breath before I wrap my fingers around her throat and squeeze. Rage’s eyes flare, and he steps forward again. With my hand around her neck, Rage swipes the tip of his cock over her lips. “Slut,” he drawls.

Jesus, fuck, yes.

I quicken my pace with enthusiasm, determined to fuck my seed into her. “Fuck, yes you are, beauty. Our pretty little slut.”

“Ours!” Rage growls.

My balls draw up, and unadulterated pleasure slams into me. “Fuck.”

“Fill her, Cole. Fill her full of your cum,” Lucas instructs, and my name on his lips sends me spiraling in ecstasy, filling my girl.

Our girl.

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LUCAS

Watching my brothers fuck Tia ruthlessly, has my cock pained and dripping with need. Desperate to own her. Own him too.

As soon as Cole's head slumps forward from the force of his orgasm, I jump to my feet, ready to take position. Cole groans and holds still, taking too long.

"My turn," I bark.

He jumps but does as I command and slips from her cunt to move aside, allowing me access to what is mine.

His cum slips from her pussy and down her thighs, and I relish in it. Stepping up behind her, I give her ass a sharp slap. When she whimpers at my touch, I have to bite into my lip to stop myself from coming.

I wrap my hand around her hair and tug her head back, elongating her neck as I bring the tip of my knife to her throat in warning for her to comply. Arousal and sweat drip from her body, seeping from her in waves of erotic bliss, calling out to me like a predator, so I'll use her body and devour her whole like the prey she is—my prey.

Like she's always been, and yet totally unaware of it.

My cock has a mind of its own as I drive into her dripping hole with vigor. My body comes alive with each thrust, as the warmth of her pussy coupled with Cole's cum are an aphrodisiac to my heightened state. "Fuck, you're dripping in his cum, Tia. Fucking dripping in my brother's cum."

"Yes, oh god, yes." She groans and clenches my cock.

"Fucking filthy, baby girl."

"Yes, Daddy."

My hand grips her hair sharper, and I yank on it, reminding her who is in charge, and her pussy pulsates at my abuse. "That's right. I'm your fucking daddy. I own this cunt," I growl.

Rage scoffs, but I ignore my brother's outburst and concentrate on my mission to fill my girl with so much cum her body has no choice but to drown in it, settle in her womb, and gift me with another baby.

Our baby.

"Please, Daddy."

"That's it, beg for my cum, you beautiful little slut." My cock pumps into her, then the tip of my blade knicks her, and she groans in pleasure.

Fucking groans . . . Could she be any more perfect for me?

For us.

"Beg him, Tia. Beg him for it," Cole soothes, stroking a finger down the curve of her spine. His body is so close I feel his breath float over me, and that thought alone has my balls tightening. Then my body fills with anger. I wanted this to last. "Motherfucking slut," I spit out.

I wrench her back by her hair, slamming her against my body, and continue my assault on her pussy. My eyes roam over her perfect tits covered by the thin lace material. That won't fucking do! I want to see them, see what we've done to her.

I remove my hand from her hip and use my knife to slice her lace camisole from her, allowing her tits to fall free.

"Fuck!" Rage grunts.

Flicking my gaze over to Cole, I delight in the arousal swimming in his eyes; he wants her, he wants to use her while I do, and I couldn't be happier about it. I grab his head and push it against her tit, encouraging him to suck the milk from her nipples.

"Oh god, Cole," she whines while holding his head in place.

Pleasure surges through me. "That's it, feed him." I groan at the sight of Cole devouring her and his thick hand squeezing her tit as he sucks her into his mouth.

"Fuck, I'm going to come. I'm going to fill your cunt, little girl." My orgasm rockets through me, rope after rope of thick cum pulsates from my cock as my body embraces hers, and she convulses around me like a vise.

"Daddy!"

Her steely grip around my cock drains me of every drop, and finally, I feel complete—the tension subsided, the need to control dampened.

"I love you, little girl."

"I love you too, Daddy."

Brutally Devoted.

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CHAPTER
FOUR



TIA

Cole carries me to bed after Lucas finished fucking me so hard, I saw stars. Then he eases me onto my back and tends to the small cuts on my neck.

He places a gentle kiss on each cut before pulling the bed sheet over us and tugging me onto his chest.

His fingers graze up and down my spine, soothing me.

I lie against his chest, listening to the rhythmic beat of his heart, and the room is silent apart from it.

“What happened at the meeting?” I ask.

Cole tilts his head down to stare at me, and his Adam’s apple bobs, giving away that something did indeed happen at the meeting they all attended.

He swallows before gliding his tongue over his lip; the shimmer of his piercing illuminates with the action before he finally answers. “What makes you think something happened?”

I huff. “Seriously, Cole?” I raise an eyebrow—one he probably can’t see properly in the darkened room, but my tone leaves no room argument. “You came home on edge, Lucas looked like he was ready to slice someone up,

then used his knife to reassure him of the control he seeks. Oh, and Jace came home resembling his former self—Rage. The part of him I was hoping he'd forgotten. Hoping those demons were gone . . ." I'd hoped with Martin extinguished from our lives that Jace would have found peace and laid his demons to rest.

Cole drags a hand over his head. "Tia . . ."

I sit up, preparing for battle. He only wants to protect me, but I'm not a damsel in distress. I've been through hell, and I'm still standing. "Cole, whatever is about to come out of your mouth, don't you dare lie to me."

My eyes lock with his in a silent stare off as I sit up and cross my arms over my chest, and his eyes to dart toward my tits being thrust higher, which are swollen from needing to feed Mia. His head rises from the pillow, and his gaze turns ravenous, then heat floods my body at the intensity of his glare, but I refuse to give in to him. Refuse to let the hunger radiating from him distract me from our conversation.

"And don't even think about touching my tits if you're going to lie to me." I jut my chin out.

Cole gives a low awkward chuckle. "Jeez, Tia, bringing out the big guns now, huh?"

I narrow my eyes. He's trying to turn the conversation into something amusing and pull me away from what's happening with the guys—the truth.

"You've no idea what I'm prepared to do if you keep shit from me."

He swallows and turns away from me, as if attempting to mask his worry, and that action alone sends alarm bells ringing in my head. He's hiding something.

They're hiding something.

They're keeping secrets from me, and I hate it.

"It was just a meeting about a deal, one that didn't go as planned, that's all." Cole throws back the sheet and gets up from the bed. Then he tugs on his joggers. "It's nothing for you to worry about, Tia. It's nothing that we can't handle."

He keeps his back to me as he talks, and that speaks volumes in itself. Cole needs reassurance, and without it, he panics, blocks the world out, and unravels. Much like now.

"I'm going to go and blow off some steam in the gym. Don't wait up." He slips his feet into his sneakers while I lie in bed watching him head toward the door.

“Cole?”

He stops with his hand on the knob and turns his head over his shoulder. The light from the corridor allows me to see what I couldn't see in the dark. It allows me to witness the pained expression on his face, the worry marring his features, the lies clouding his judgment. I can see it all. And most prominently, I see the terror etched into each and every worry line, and each pore oozes with concern, and it's directed straight at me.

Fear turns my blood cold, my stomach rolls with nausea, and the threat of sickness wells deep inside me, threatening to expel at any second.

This look in his eyes, it's like nothing I've ever seen before, and I can't help the shudder taking over me, nor can I help the words that slice through the air toward him, no matter how much they cut me as I say them.

“Secrets have a way of coming out, Cole. And when they do, they can be brutal to everyone you love.”

His body jolts at my words, his shoulders tense, and then he does the inevitable and turns his back and walks through the door, taking my heart with him.

And a little of my trust too.

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CHAPTER FIVE



COLE

“I fucking lied to her, man! Me!” I slam my finger into my chest for emphasis, then clench my hand into a fist and punch the bag again and again. Then I run at the other punchbag, delivering a roundhouse kick that’s as savage and consuming as I feel.

My whole body is alive with anger, sheer terror, and despair. I hate feeling like this—fucking hate it. All I want to do is hold her, treasure her.

But how can I do that when I’m lying to her.

Sweat drips from my forehead onto the floor. “I fucking lied to her.” My shoulders deflate.

“Big fucking deal. I ate the last Captain Crunch and told her it was Harps, she’ll get over it.” Rage shrugs as if it’s nothing.

Narrowing my eyes, I glare at him. *Is he serious right now?*

“It’s hardly the fucking same!” I shout before taking a drink from my water bottle. Even as I gulp it down, my throat remains dry, and every swallow feels like knives cutting into my throat, severing my ability to breathe. “It’s called a fucking conscience,” I spit out in Rage’s direction.

He takes a menacing step forward, his dark stare murderous as he pumps his fists beside him. “You don’t think I have a conscience?” Every

one of his dark tattoos make him seem all the more deadly. They wrap around his body tauntingly, as if bleeding with vengeance for his pain.

“Calm fucking down.” Lucas huffs as if we’re petulant children, gets to his feet, and moves to stand beside Rage, almost as if ready to separate us.

The simmering fury rolls off Rage in waves, and the heat penetrating the air leaves behind a burning tension with a promise of violence.

“I have a fucking conscience. Every damn day I tell myself I should have seen, should have done more to stop that sick fuck. Then I upped and left her there”—he pokes his chest in anger—“left her to be fucking raped by him!” His voice ricochets off the walls of our home gym, and I silently thank Lucas for insisting it being soundproofed.

“I left her there, Cole.” His voice is low and gritty as if he’s struggling to hold himself together. “I knew he was capable of pain, but I never thought that.” He shakes his head. “I swear I never thought that.” His eyes meet mine, and the unshed tears in them make my heart stutter. “To be raped by a monster while she probably cried for me. Have you any idea how bad that makes me feel? Do you? It guts me. It makes me feel unfucking-deserving of her love.”

I wince at his words, the unyielding, heartfelt sincerity behind them and the trauma they’ve both endured, and now I can’t help but want to make things right for him too.

“Don’t give me those sympathetic puppy-dog eyes you give Thalia.” He mocks. “I don’t need your fucking sympathy, Cole.” Malice oozes from him.

I swallow past the lump in my throat, unable to comprehend how he must be feeling. Inside, I know I’d be dying; I’d drown in the guilt that haunts him.

“Stop being a goddamn dick,” Lucas grits out. “Both of you, keep your head in the fucking game. We’re protecting Tia and our girls. This is all for Tia and our girls.” He spreads his arms out for emphasis.

Taking a deep breath, I step back, letting the tension slip away, then I sit on the edge of the bench press. “I think we should tell her,” I admit, even though I know they’ll deny me. “About the Lancasters, I mean.” We should tell her about us discovering she has a sister too, a whole fucking family that exists without either of their knowledge. Something Tia has craved for forever.

Worry gnaws away at me. She will hate that we kept this from her. What if she hates me? Us?

Rage scoffs. "Of course you fucking do." He shakes his head. "Always the fucking hero," he spits out with venom. "No, we don't tell her shit. She's had enough trauma; I don't want her worrying anymore." He brushes a hand over his messy hair. "Thalia's had enough worry to last her a lifetime. It's our job to protect her. Our fucking job to keep her safe, her and our girls." His teeth grind, reminding me he's angry, probably at the fact he didn't protect her, but it's not like it's his fault, he couldn't have done anything. He wasn't even there when she was hurt.

My mind won't stop creating conclusions of how Tia will feel if she ever finds out she has a family and we kept it from her. I swallow back my nerves. "I think we should tell her about—"

"No," Lucas snaps, and I jolt at the bite in his tone. Then his shoulders deflate when his eyes meet mine, as if witnessing the hurt behind them. "Think with your head, not your heart, Cole. Bren O'Connell holds all the cards here. If he doesn't want his wife to have a relationship with Tia, there's nothing we can do about it, and Tia will be heartbroken. Do you want that?"

My heart races, and my lips part to answer, to tell him that's not what I want, but nothing comes out, because I know he's right. Even if it doesn't feel like the right thing to do.

"We need Bren on our side. He knows people who can help us get rid of the Lancasters, and that's what's important right now. We don't want to make enemies. We need them as allies, and if that means abiding by Bren's rules, then so be it." Lucas reiterates what I already know.

"So, we don't tell her. Are we in agreement?" Jace's eyes are alight with retribution, he stands to his full height, and the darkness surrounding him makes me worry he's slipping. He's becoming the man we knew him to be, he's becoming Rage.

"Agreed," Lucas responds with a controlled ease.

My eyes flick back and forth between my brothers, and they watch me with expectancy as an underlying threat looms between us. Them against me.

When we should all stand together, be the family we were destined to be, I feel like this is tearing us apart, and I refuse to let it.

My heart hammers, and my mouth becomes painfully dry again.

“Agreed.” The word tastes like acid on my tongue, as it slips from my mouth reluctantly, and dread pools in my stomach at how we’re deceiving the girl we love.

The tension falls from Lucas’s shoulders while Jace’s lips tip up into a smile he normally reserves for Tia and the girls. “Good. I’m going to steal my girl from your bed.” He winks, turning on his heel, then saunters out the door as if the conversation never happened, taking the anger and threat of violence with him.

My eyes draw up to meet Lucas’s, and his bore down on me with such intensity I can’t help the words that spill from my lips.

“Secrets can destroy people, Lucas. They can rip through your heart and brutally devastate everyone involved. Keeping them hidden, we’re creating lies. And everyone knows there’s a fine line between secrets and lies. There’s a storm brewing, Lucas, and when it’s all unveiled, everything we built is going to be threatened and destroyed. I just hope we’re ready.” I drag a nervous hand over my head. “Something tells me we never will be.”

I stand while Lucas remains frozen on the spot, his face pale. Ignoring him, I bend down and lift my gym bag off the floor.

Agreeing to lie to our girl sits heavily inside me as I walk toward the door.

“Cole?”

I turn my head over my shoulder to face my brother, but his back is to me.

“I don’t think anyone’s ready for the secrets.” His solemn voice sends a shiver down my spine. His words have a meaning behind them, as always, and they’re laced in a veil only he hides behind, unwilling to lift it to reveal what lies beneath.

As I walk through the door, I do so with the knowledge his secrets are hidden, veiled in hate, they’re brutal, and they come with a storm.

But we’re stronger, our love is going to conquer each and every one of them.

CHAPTER

SIX



TIA

When I wake, I have my head resting against Jace's chest, the rhythmic sound of his heart beating has my lips curling into a smile. He must have taken me from Cole and Lucas's bed during the night, and not for the first time since we started sleeping in the same beds.

My fingers trail over the tattoos on his hips, up his stomach, and over the barbed wire surrounding his heart. My name sits safely within the wire, with roses surrounding it. It looks serene compared to the chaos his skin is littered with. Recently, he added Harper and Amelia too, and my heart swells with warmth each time I see it. I place a gentle kiss on it before scooting lower, inadvertently taking the bed sheet with me.

Jace's cock stands tall, resting against his abs, and my mouth waters to feel him inside me, to flick my tongue over his velvety skin, and hear him unravel with unadulterated need.

Lowering my head between his legs, I lick over his balls, and his cock twitches in response. Rousing him from his sleep, I decide not to toy with him any longer and instead drag my tongue swiftly over his cock and up toward the bulging head. Then I seal my lips over him, pushing his length

further into my mouth. I struggle to accept him but continue on, determined to open my throat for him.

“Oh fuck, Thalia.” His fingers tangle in my hair, holding my head in place. “Fuck, baby. That’s it.” He thrusts his hips up, and I gag at the strength behind his action. “Fuck. Yes.” He thrusts again harder, and tears pool in my eyes at the ferocious force as he continues his assault on my throat.

Then he stops. “Get your ass up here, Thalia. I want to taste you.” He pants heavily, and I moan at his words. “I want to taste your pussy so goddamn bad.” Wetness slips from me in approval, but I ignore him and continue on, swirling my tongue at every opportunity, in and out of his slit, dragging the salty precum with it.

“Fuck!” He yanks me by my hair roughly and tugs me off his cock, leaving a string of saliva in my wake.

“Get your ass up here, baby.” The desperation in his voice makes me whimper, and I rush to comply, then facing his cock, I straddle his torso. “That’s it, baby, let me fuck that face and eat your pussy at the same time.”

He pulls me into position so that I straddle his face, then presses down on my spine, encouraging me to bend over and accept his cock once again.

“Oh god.” I moan when his warm breath hits me, then he drags his tongue over my clit, down my slit, and dips it into my pussy hole. “Jace, more.” I grind my pussy down onto his face, earning a chuckle from him. Taking his thick cock in my hand, I give it a tight pump before sucking it into my mouth as far as I can until my face is against his balls, ensuring I have no choice but to breathe through my nose.

“Fuck. I’m in, baby. I’m all the way fucking in,” he grits out and thrusts his hips up and down. Up and down. I allow him to use my mouth while his thick hands push my thighs apart and he buries his face in my pussy. His tongue works from side to side, then he sucks my clit hard while lapping at my juices, eating me as if he’s starved and hungry for every part of me.

My body tightens, and he moves one of his hands from my thigh to my ass, where he gives it a sharp slap that forces me to jolt, and I choke around him.

“That’s it, little slut, choke on me.” Another slap. “Fuck, your ass is incredible.” *Slap.* The pleasure from the sting travels through my body at tremendous speed. “Fuck, I’m going to come down your fucking throat so hard, Thalia.” His hand splays out over my ass cheeks, he grips them with

bruising strength, then he pulls them apart. “Fuck yes. That little hole of yours is going to get filled, baby.” His spittle hits my ass, and I moan at the sensation, reveling in his filthy actions.

“Oh-h-h,” I garble at my building orgasm. He pushes his thumb into my asshole, not attempting to be gentle, and another whimper escapes me.

“Fuck, yes. Moan for me, baby. Moan. Fuck yourself on my thumb, Thalia. Be a dirty girl and fuck my thumb with your ass.”

My eyes roll with the pressure building, and my body becomes compliant under his touch. He drives inside me faster and faster, and his hold on my hip becomes painful, and the movement in my ass becomes rough while he loses his inhibitions. He grunts with each surge of his cock and sucks my clit hard, working his face from side to side. His tongue sweeps over my pussy like a man possessed. A wild animal devouring me.

My body stills from the force of my orgasm, and I’m rendered frozen while he violently surges his cock down my throat so hard my eyes bulge. “Fuckkkk, Thalia!” He pulsates deep in my throat, his cum shoots out and fills me, causing me to choke at the impact. His hand holds my head in place, forcing it down and giving me no choice but to take him. The assault on my throat is painful, but the pleasure from his desperate actions outweighs everything. “Fucking take it!” he demands. His heels dig into the mattress, his hips thrusting up, and his body tensing. “Take my fucking cum, little slut.”

Pleasure flows through me like a tidal wave, and I hold him deep, letting him spill every drop and use me like I’m using him.

His body relaxes as he withdraws from my mouth. “Fuck, Thalia. You’re incredible.” He drops his head against the pillow, then pulls his thumb from my ass, and my body sags with contentment. “Thalia, you’ve the best goddamn pussy there is. It’s my fucking kryptonite.”

I giggle while turning my body over so I’m straddling his waist and facing him.

Sweat coats my skin, and a combination of saliva and cum trails from my mouth. I move my hand to swipe it away, but Jace clutches my wrist. “Rub it over you. I like you covered in me.”

His black eyes bore into me with a glint of a challenge, and I comply. I gather the excess juices from my mouth, chin, and neck and use my palms to coat my chest, massaging his essence into my tits. The movement causes

my milk to flow from my nipples. “Fuck, yes.” Jace bucks beneath me and bites into his bottom lip.

A knock at the door sounds, and Cole’s voice filters through the sexual haze surrounding us. “Are you decent?”

“No, fuck off!” Jace grits out, raising his head from the pillow, making me chuckle.

“Mia is ready for her feed.”

Jace drops his head back dramatically. “Can you feed her one Thalia pumped? We’re busy.” He bucks beneath me again for emphasis, rubbing his hardening cock against my wetness.

“No can do. We’re all out. We’re all out of Mommy’s milk, aren’t we, little Mia,” he coos through the door.

“He’s all out?” Jace raises an eyebrow.

“Guess so.” I shrug.

He sighs. “Great, just fucking great,” he grumbles.

Chuckling, I throw my leg off him. “At least you came.” I shrug again as I head toward the bathroom for a quick shower.

I glance over my shoulder, and Jace rolls and faces me. “I wanted to fill you with my baby.” He pouts, and I choke at how adorable his expression is—a look reserved purely for me and the girls.

“Try again later?” I chew on my bottom lip.

“Nah, I think I’ll join you in the shower.”

I squeal when he untangles himself from the sheets and lunges forward, then lifts me around my waist and sinks his teeth into my neck as we move toward the shower.

Stepping into the shower, Jace flicks on the warm water. It runs between us, and I wrap my legs around him while he holds onto the tiled wall behind me, then he places his forehead against mine, and his cock rests at my hole. He presses his lips against mine, and our kiss is slow, passionate, and deliberate. Once I’m panting for breath, he pulls away and glides his lips down my neck, with small bursts of pain hitting me as he sinks his teeth into me. Marking me as his.

Each mark is a promise of things to come.

A brutal promise of more.

CHAPTER SEVEN



TIA

We walk the entire mall before we find a new pair of pink glitter cowboy boots for Harper. Of course she insists on wearing them straight away, and she looks cute as hell with her rainbow tutu and unicorn T-shirt on. I love that she can finally embrace a style suitable for her age now that she's not being suppressed by the Lancasters.

A shiver runs down my spine at the memory, but I shake it off and glance around at my family. The here and now.

Cole pushes Mia in her buggy while my fingers are entwined with Jace's, and Harper holds Lucas's hand while chattering away about becoming an artist like her mommy. I smile with pride as warmth spreads through me, and when Jace brings our entwined fingers to his lips and places a tender kiss to the back of my hand, I practically melt on the spot. He shoots me a wink, as if knowing how much his touch affects me.

"We should get some food," Cole suggests, breaking me out of our hypnotic stare.

"Sure," I agree, knowing Mia is due a feed soon anyway. Lucas's gray eyes scan the area calculatingly before landing back on me, and something

about the action makes my eyes narrow, as I realize this is something he has been doing all day.

My eyes examine the area, and as uncertainty creeps up my spine, the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end.

A loud squeal breaks me out of my thoughts. “There. Can we go there?” Harper points toward a diner while bouncing on the balls of her feet.

“We can go wherever you like, little T.” Cole tugs on her ponytail, and she giggles. “I bet they have big ice-cream sundaes in there too,” he tacks on with a panty-melting smile that makes me swoon no matter how many times he’s done it.

Her eyes light up as she tugs Lucas toward the diner. Cole follows behind, and I watch with intrigue as Lucas scans the mall again, then his eyes land on Jace, as if having a silent conversation with him. My body tenses, and I immediately regret not controlling my action. Even if Jace wasn’t holding my hand, he’s so in tune with my body, he probably would have noticed.

“What’s wrong?” he asks, and I lift my eyes toward his. I take in the concern etched on his face and the way his shoulders are bunched tight with awareness. He licks his lips while flicking his gaze over my shoulder, as if looking for something.

Someone.

I open my mouth to ask him why they’re acting so strange, but Lucas pokes his head out of the diner door, interrupting me. “We have a table.” He tilts his head toward the entrance.

Jace relaxes and opens the door to the diner for me. Just like that, my thoughts are preoccupied, because sitting at a table with a beaming, proud smile is Cole, with Mia on his lap and Harper placing a paper chef’s hat on his head. Her laughter permeates the air, and even Lucas can’t help but react to her infectious, bubbly personality. She’s everything I wanted to be as a child, and the fact that the Lancasters didn’t stifle her individuality like they tried has me counting my blessings once again.

Jace steps aside and lets me slide into the booth next to Lucas, and I take the opportunity to place my hand on his thigh and give his leg a gentle squeeze. Immediately, his body stills as a response to being touched in public, but then he eases beneath my touch, and when he places his hand over mine, I melt against the seat at the comfort.

I’m surrounded by three strong, loving men.

They're brutally devoted to me and our little family. What more could a girl want?

Cole feeds Mia her bottle, and Harper colors her menu while singing.

"Hi, my name is Candy, and I'm your server today. Are you guys ready to order?"

I lift my head from the menu, and my eyes latch on to Candy's. She's probably in her early to mid-thirties, and her white blouse is pulled tight and her apron even tighter, cinching in her narrow waist and emphasizing her bust. She drags her tongue over her bright-red lips in an action I can only imagine is trying to be seductive. With her eyes glancing over the table, I ignore her and clear my throat. "Can I get a classic burger with cheese and a Diet Coke, please?"

"Sure." She doesn't so much as give me eye contact as she notes my order down.

"Chicken Cesar salad, please." She gifts Lucas a swift nod and bright smile, but I don't miss the way her eyes travel over my guys again, and I hate her for it.

Jace drapes his arm over my shoulders, and I swear it's a territorial move, like he's letting her know I belong to him, or he belongs to me. I'm not quite sure, but either way, he's pitting us as a couple. Her eyebrows furrow as if she's trying to figure out the dynamic of our relationship. "Bacon cheeseburger with fries and a strawberry milkshake," he tells her without taking his eyes off me, then he places a slow kiss on my cheek, a deliberate move I can't help but smirk at.

Harper taps a crayon against her chin. "Can I have the same as my dad, please. A bacon cheeseburger and fries with a strawberry milkshake."

Candy shifts on her feet and her shoulders drop at the realization that Jace is in fact taken, and he has a child with me. She fakes a smile, then notes down the order.

"How about you, big guy?" She points her pencil toward Cole while her eyes travel leisurely over him, then she licks her lips, and my eyes widen at her blatant attraction toward him. Roaming my eyes over Cole, I take in what she's seeing, his broad shoulders straining against his signature white T-shirt, exposing the muscles beneath. His bright-green eyes dance with mirth as he continues smiling down toward Mia, completely in awe.

Lucas chuckles to himself as anger builds inside me. Every hair on my body stands on end as stars practically dance in her eyes and jealousy swirls

in mine.

His eyes snap up from being enthralled by Mia's face; he's completely oblivious to the fact the server is practically eating him with her eyes. "I'll have a triple cheeseburger with fries, a side of chicken tenders, and a triple-chocolate milkshake." He taps his stomach. "I'm a growing guy." He grins.

She licks her lips again, ensuring he sees the action. "I'm sure you are."

Lucas splutters his water, and I grab the napkins, thrusting them into his hands.

"So, who is this little cutie?" She leans toward Mia, and my entire body tenses at her proximity to my baby. Irrational jealousy coupled with a need to protect my babies courses through me, and I grit my teeth to keep from lashing out.

Cole's eyebrows furrow before he jolts, as though realizing something, then he shifts Mia and places her in his arm farthest from the server, and I swear I love him a little more for that move alone.

"She's my daughter." His large palm spans Mia's back as he pats her little butt.

"And he's one of my dads too," Harper chimes in, leaning over the table and giving Candy a proud smile I feel in my bones.

Candy's head rears back, and she laughs, then she shakes her head, as if dismissing Harper's words as nonsense.

"That's nice, honey." She turns her attention back to Cole. "So . . . you're the baby daddy. Is Mom not on the scene?" She thrusts her chest out, and I swear the buttons on her blouse are bursting to pop.

Okay, I want to rip her head off. I scrunch up the napkin in my lap, twisting it between my fingers until it tears.

"My girl and our girls' momma is sitting opposite me"—he nods in my direction—"and as you can see, she has three men completely devoted to her, so if this is an attempt to come onto me, I ain't interested." Cole's grin encompasses his face. "But it's sweet of you to try, sweetheart. Now, if you can hurry with that order, you already know I'm starving." Then he leans closer and lowers his voice. "For some action with my girl and my brothers too, you get me?" He winks, then meets my gaze.

Candy's eyes widen.

"Yeah. He ain't interested," Harper parrots, and I want to high-five our little girl.

Her mouth falls open like a gaping fish, and I'd love nothing more than to fill it with my fist. "I'll . . . I'll go put you order through." She stumbles backward, then darts away.

"She totally wanted me, beauty." Cole's toothy smile makes me exhale in relief on a chuckle.

Jace snorts and rolls his eyes.

"She did," I confirm.

"Wanted you for all her kids, I bet," Jace mocks.

"Hear that, Tia? She wanted me as a daddy." Mirth dances in Cole's eyes as his gaze darts between mine and Lucas's.

Lucas stares stoically back at Cole, unwilling to give in to our playful banter.

I turn toward Lucas and lean up to speak in his ear. "Aww, don't worry, there's only one daddy we want," I whisper and slip back into my seat, not missing the way his cock twitches in his pants.

"But you're taken. You got three guys who are completely devoted." Harper points her crayon to each of the guys, who burst out laughing.

"You're right, Harps. I do."

Completely and utterly devoted.

LUCAS

I stifle a smile as the server scurries away. Poor Cole was oblivious to the fact the server was eyeing him up like all her Christmases had come at once. She probably has a bunch of kids at home and was hoping to give them another new dad.

“But you’re taken. You got three guys who are completely devoted.” Harper snaps me out of my thoughts, and when she points her crayon to each one of us, I can’t help the laughter bubbling up inside me.

“You’re right, Harps. I do,” Tia confirms, and I place my hand over hers, giving it a gentle squeeze.

Harper nods her head exaggeratedly. “I might get three when I’m older too.”

Jace sits forward, her comment grabbing his attention. “No, you’re not.”

She rears back, eyebrows furrowed. “Why?”

Candy returns with not a seductive smile in sight, slamming the drinks down on the table, causing them to spill over.

“You get to have different bedrooms, and I like that because when Momma sleeps in Dad’s room, she gets black sheets, and then when she sleeps with Lucas and Cole, she gets the soft gray sheets, then when—”

Jace holds his hand up to stop Harper running her mouth any longer. “Okay. I get the point. You want more than one bedroom when you’re older.” He smiles at our daughter.

“I do.” She nods.

Candy leaves again after throwing down a bunch of straws and mumbling, “Food won’t be long.”

“Oh no. Someone did a poop. Did someone do a poop, Mia?” Cole’s voice transforms to the childish tone he reserves for the kids. Then he lifts Mia up and sniffs her butt, making me wince at the thought of the fumes leaving her diaper. “Come on, let Dada go change you.” He stands from the table and grabs the diaper bag before sliding out of the booth.

“Can I go potty too?”

“Sure, come on, little T.” He nods toward the restrooms, and Harper scurries out of the booth to join him, lacing her hand with his.

No sooner are they out of earshot, Jace turns to face Tia. “You were jealous, baby.” It’s a statement not a question. He nuzzles into her neck, sliding her hair off her shoulder and exposing a bite mark he trails his tongue over.

The thought of Tia being jealous over us and the show of him lapping at her silky skin has my cock stiffening.

“Are you getting hard, Lucas?” He breathes into her neck without giving me eye contact.

“Yes,” I growl out as I drag a hand over my solid cock. I hate him taking control of situations, he knows this. My jaw tenses; I have to keep the control, it’s mine.

Without warning, I take back the control, control I crave, by moving my hand beneath her dress, up her thigh, then trailing it up toward her damp lace panties. My breath hitches at the moisture gathered there. She craves our touch as much as we crave hers, that’s for sure, and my chest puffs out at the thought.

“My little girl needs me. Don’t you, Tia?”

Her face flushes and her lips part when I slip my hand beneath the fabric of her panties, and she shuffles from side to side when my palm makes contact with her soaked pussy lips.

Placing a gentle kiss on the other side of her neck, I lick a path up toward her ear, then gift it with a gentle nip.

Her hands cling onto the table when Jace mimics my action and slides his hand beneath her panties. "Oh god." She squeezes her eyes closed, then opens them when my finger breaches her hole teasingly before withdrawing.

"Come on, Jace, let's fill her. Let's play."

Jace lifts his head from her neck, and his dark eyes lock with mine; he's just as determined to have control of Tia as I am, but recently, he's been more and more into sharing her. I'm starting to wonder if he finds the scenario as rewarding as we do.

I separate one of her folds while Jace separates the other. "Fuck, you're dripping, Thalia," he whispers against her neck again. Then he circles her clit while my finger pumps in and out of her pussy, and I revel in the change of her rapid breathing.

As his fingers graze mine, precum oozes from my cock, and at the sound of his zipper lowering, my eyes meet his. "I need to fucking come with her," he grits out, his voice strained, and the pulsating of the tattooed veins creeping up his neck are an indicator of how desperate he is.

His finger meets mine, and our eyes remain locked in a silent conversation. Fuck, that's hot. We will make her come together.

My eyes lock onto Jace's cock. The way the pearly precum drips from the tip and he swipes his thumb over the head, has my balls aching with a need for him to gift her his essence. *Fucking hell.* As if hearing my thoughts, he brushes his thumb over her bottom lip, coating it in his cum.

And when her tongue pokes out to draw in his taste, excitement boils in my veins as I fumble with my zipper and tug my cock from my boxers.

In a booth, in a diner, in a mall, we fist our cocks as we sit beside our woman, pumping our fingers roughly into her pussy. Jace's mouth crashes against her lips in a bloodthirsty kiss full of passion and possession. Our fists work faster and our fingers curl together until I feel her convulse, and finally, I can let go.

Jace's movements still inside of Tia, but my finger continues its onslaught, determined to drain her of every ounce of pleasure. When Jace's

tattooed hand becomes coated in his cum, my mouth drops open and my orgasm rockets through me, delivering me such rapture, my vision blurs, then my palm is covered in my thick warmth.

Tia sags against the booth as Jace and I remove our fingers in a synchronized movement unlike anything we've shared before. He lifts his mouth from Tia's swollen lips and narrows his eyes on me. "Don't try to control me again, fuckwit."

And just like that, I realize I never really had the control at all.

The only person who can control me is her.

It's always been her. For as long as I can remember.

I squeeze my eyes closed, unable to go there. Not yet, I'm not ready, and if truth be told, neither is she.

We may never be.

But the foreboding sense of dread that fills my bloodstream tells me I may have to be, much sooner than I'd like.

The truth will be brutal, but the strength it takes to hide it can be just as savage.

CHAPTER EIGHT



COLE

The moment I arrived back at the booth with the girls, I knew something had gone down between my brothers and Tia. The flush traveled up her neck and into her cheeks. Damn, even her ears were red. She looked thoroughly fucked, but that can't be right, right?

Jace wore a smirk on his face that told me he got lucky, and when I glanced toward Lucas, his eyes darted away from mine, as if feeling guilty. I'm not sure why. If I'd had a chance to fuck around with Tia, I would have. Just so happened I was on daddy duty, and not the kind Lucas enjoys.

Our meals were devoured along with desserts, and when we paid the bill, Jace called Candy over to the booth and told her it was the best meal he'd eaten. Then he leaned into her, and my ears pricked up. "Tasted even better with our girl's cum mixed with mine dripping from my fingers, and I'm sure my brother agrees too." Her eyes widened, and the smug tip of his lips made my cock throb against my jeans, practically weeping at missing out on the action.



GIGGLES FILL THE APARTMENT, and I smile to myself as I cut into the vegetables for the pasta sauce. Jace is bathing the girls tonight, and I can only imagine the mess they're creating with the animal noises he's been hollering. He gets louder with each giggle he creates. I shake my head when I remember how Harper insisted on him making a noise like a giraffe, and the dumbass spent countless hours on his phone trying to perfect it only for her to tell him she meant how they sounded when they ate. Which would have been so much easier.

For all of us.

"You're getting pretty damn good at this cooking thing." Lucas leans around me, stealing a carrot stick from the chopping board.

My eyes snap up to his. "I could have taken your fingers off."

He shrugs a shoulder and leans back against the counter, watching me closely.

My gaze travels over his toned body. His damp hair is messy, and he smells of the sandalwood bodywash I cover myself in when I shower. I narrow my eyes. *Did he do that on purpose?*

Did he want to smell like me? I shake my head to dismiss the thought.

Instead, I rake my eyes over his bare chest, following the defined V that slips into his joggers, and down to his cock that bulges against the material. My mouth waters as I consider how much I'd like to feel him. The real him.

Heat radiates off him, and when he clears his throat, I go back to chopping the vegetables as if I wasn't just eye-fucking the hell out of him.

"Did you finger-fuck her?" I ask while slicing into the pepper, trying to act nonchalant, but my tone comes off snappy.

"Yes," he replies with ease.

The sound of him chomping the carrot fills the room and rankles my nerves as I imagine what went down with Tia, Lucas, and more important, Jace too.

"What about Jace? What did he do?" I pay him no attention as I ask my question, but already I'm regretting it, knowing what his answer will be.

"He finger-fucked her too."

I grind my teeth before spitting "At the same time?" out.

Lucas sighs deeply as if I'm a nuisance. "Yes. At the same time. What does it matter?"

"It matters," I grit out, pissed I even have to explain my feelings to him. Sure, I'm jealous and a little unhinged over the fact that Jace, who isn't in

the least bit interested in Lucas, got to share something with him.

“You’re jealous.” It’s a statement that has me gritting my teeth at how well he knows me. I ignore Lucas’s glowering and continue chopping the vegetables into fucking smithereens. “You’ve nothing to be jealous of.”

My jaw clamps shut, determined not to tell him how I feel. How I hate the thought of him enjoying sexual experiences with another man without me, even if it is Jace.

I know it shouldn’t bother me but knowing it shouldn’t, makes me feel so much worse. Knowing he’s touching Jace without me involved and experiencing something I might not get to, has me wanting to destroy everything in my vicinity.

“You’re being ridiculous.” He eventually huffs, then pushes off the counter and storms away, taking a tiny bit of my heart with him.

Maybe I am being ridiculous, maybe it is too much to expect to keep that part of him to myself, but the overwhelming jealousy at him having interactions with Jace without me makes me feel murderous.

“Fuck!” I slam the knife down, my chest heaving.

“Is everything okay?” Her soft voice floats through the room, caressing my trembling body, but the violence welling inside me threatens to spill, and I don’t want to lash out at Tia, not like I have in the past. So, with that in mind, I spin on my heel and face her.

Her face falls in disappointment, and I can’t help the regret burning beneath my skin that I put that look there. She steps forward, no doubt to comfort me, but I lower my head and shake it in rejection.

“I’m going to the gym.”

Without giving Tia another glance, I grab my car keys off the counter and head out the door, knowing how fucked up this whole thing is. I need to let off some steam, to expel the loss of control I’m feeling regarding Lucas.

I walk out the door, wishing more than anything he could fight his demons.

For us.

For all of us.

Because Lucas Williams wants me. I know he does; he just needs to admit it.

CHAPTER
NINE



TIA

After dinner, Jace does the girls' evening routine and gets them to sleep while I take a shower. When I left the bathroom, Lucas was already in bed, and I could tell by his tense body he was riled up, and I hated it. It was clear he and Cole had a spat.

After I climb in bed beside him, I rest my head on his chest while he strokes my hair.

"He wants more, Tia." He sighs and drags a hand through his hair. I draw over his skin with my finger, knowing my touch calms him, and he presses a kiss against my head. "He's always going to want more." His voice is as low as a whisper, and the gravelly edge to it sends a shiver over my body, so I tighten my hold on him.

"And you don't think you can give him that?" I murmur.

His body tightens again before he sighs as if the weight of the world is on his shoulders. "I know I can't." I glance up at his handsome face to find it contorted in pain with his eyes squeezed shut.

"I believe in you, Lucas, and I believe in Cole too. He'd never do anything to hurt you."

His eyes flash open. “I know that.” Sincerity oozes from his words. “I know that.”

Leaning up, I place a kiss on his lips before resting my head back on his chest. “Our love is brutal, Lucas. But without the brutal, there’d be no love.” He nods.

It’s true, without the dark realities we’ve lived, our love would simply not exist. And who wants to live in a world where there’s no love, no matter how brutal your struggles are to get it.

My eyes grow heavy and close with the hypnotic motion of Lucas stroking my hair while whispering words of love. They float over me, creating a veil of protection. “Our love for you is brutal, it ripples our core. Filling us with the love and tranquillity, filling us with awe.”



THE MATTRESS DIPS, and I hum in approval when I smell Cole slide beneath the sheets. Lucas pulls my back toward his chest, then peppers kisses down the column of my neck, and my whole body comes alive beneath his touch. The way his firm hands feel against my skin has me moaning in his embrace.

Gently, he slides my camisole strap over my shoulder, then pushes the material down to expose me. “Feed from her,” he breathes in my ear toward Cole.

Cole moves closer, and my hands find him, and his nakedness pressing against me sends a swirl of excitement through my body. His solid muscles twitch on Lucas’s words. He loves how Lucas controls the narrative of our pleasure as much as I do, along with the blunt filthiness behind his words and the heavy desire in his gravelly voice.

Cole pushes the fabric further down, and I moan in delight when his wet tongue flicks over the bud of my nipple. He grasps my tit, and a dull ache pangs through me at his touch. It’s as though my milk throbs for release against him, so when his lips seal around my nipple, I whimper in ecstasy, allowing my head to fall back against Lucas’s shoulder.

“Hmm, you like that, don’t you? You like Cole feeding from you.”

“Mmm.” I can only mumble as my milk floods his mouth, words escaping me. He suckles hard against me, and my hips rock in a desperate

need to feel them stroke me, touch me, fill me. "Please," I beg them both.

"You need filled with our cum, don't you? Such a needy little slut for us." His deep voice fills my ears, and wetness floods between my legs at an embarrassing speed.

Dark, controlling, broody Lucas is enough to make my pussy combust. And controlled, desperate Cole is the one to lick it back together.

"Fuck, that's hot, Cole. Drain her tit. Take all her milk from her." Lucas rocks behind me, his solid length pushed into the crease of my ass while Cole squeezes me and mumbles groans of approval against me.

"Please," I beg again.

He yanks me by my hair so my eyes snap up toward his. "You want my cock?"

My lips part, and my gaze is hazy. "Yes." I somehow breathe out.

His dark eyes implore mine. "Then you'll take it how I give it. Understand?"

I nod. Jesus, I'd take him anyway he'd let me right now. And Cole would too, if only he'd allow it.

"Spit out some of her milk for me." Lucas holds his cupped hand out toward Cole, and my body heats with desire at the insinuation.

Oh, sweet Jesus. What the hell is he going to do?

Cole's mouth slowly releases my nipple, and I whimper at the loss of his touch. Then milk drips from Cole's chin as he spits it into Lucas's palm until it's overflowing, arousal surges through me when he makes no effort to swipe it away.

"Part your ass cheeks for me," Lucas grits out.

"Oh god," I cry.

I squirm beneath the sheets and pull my ass cheeks apart for him, then another wave of desire courses through me at the thought of what's to come.

A grunt escapes Lucas's lips and a shift of his hips makes me eager for him to fill me. Then his hand disappears behind my back, and when the warm milk drips from his hand and he spreads it around my asshole, my body burns with lust.

Cole maneuvers himself, then grips my tit and sucks like a man possessed, and when his cock nudges my entrance, I throw a leg over his hip, opening myself wider for him.

For them.

“Holy shit, that’s good,” I pant when Lucas presses the tip of his cock against my asshole, but he doesn’t breach my tight barrier.

“Cole, slam into her when I say.”

Oh Jesus, they’re going to destroy me.

“Fuck,” Cole groans, his cock jumps in excitement, and I push his head back against my tit, holding him firmly in place and willing him to shower me with an overload of sensations.

Behind me, Lucas pulls back slightly, and I wait on bated breath for them to surge inside me.

My fingertips dig into Cole’s scalp in encouragement.

“Now!”

The wind is knocked from my lungs as they both slam into me with no preparation other than the flow of my arousal and milk. Them filling me in sync so roughly has my body screaming in pain, but the pleasure overrides it, and my breathing escalates but, and more importantly, it makes my heart feel full. My body whole.

They power into me like animals, with such savagery, such intensity, I can only hold on for the ride. They nip, bite, and suck at my skin, ravishing me with fervor.

Both of their thick cocks fill me to the hilt as they power in and out of my holes, stretching me to capacity.

“Oh, Jesus,” I moan.

“That’s it, take our cocks, little cum slut. Take them both.” Lucas bites my shoulder, then licks away the sting and, no doubt, the blood too.

Cole releases my tit, and I watch in rapture as he squeezes my flesh, causing milk to squirt into his open mouth, gifting me and Lucas with a show. “Fuck, that’s it, Cole. Fuck yes.” Lucas groans as he slams into me so hard I’m forced to grip onto Cole’s shoulder for support.

“He’s putting a baby in you, Tia. He’s filling you with our child.”

“Oh god.” My eyes roll to the back of my head on his words. They’re feral beasts, and I’m a placid doll as they fill me with their pleasure—and ultimately their baby too.

“Fuck yes. Fill her ass, Lucas. Come in her fucking ass.” Cole grunts as his thrusts become reckless, no longer in time with Lucas’s as he chases his high. “I can feel you stretching her, feel your cock against mine. Holy fuck, I can feel you, Lucas.” Cole’s voice is full of awe.

My body tingles, and my pussy convulses around Cole. Knowing how much he desires Lucas and the fact he can feel Lucas through me, forces a wave of pure unadulterated desire flooding through me at a rapid speed.

Lucas's warm breath caresses my face as he rears back and powers inside me. "You feel that?" *Thrust*. "Feel my cock?" *Thrust*. I'm not sure who he's asking, me or Cole. Maybe both.

My body is too far gone in the realms of pleasure to care or ask as my orgasm shoots from the tips of my toes up my legs, and euphoria explodes inside me as my body clenches them both.

"Fuckkkk!" Cole grunts as his cock expands.

"Ahhhh, fuck." Lucas follows, biting into my skin, and his fingers find my mouth and he thrusts them inside me, causing me to choke. Always needing more.

I suck on his digits as his body slowly unfurls from its tight embrace and Cole sags against me, our chests rising in unison as I cling to him.

Lucas hums against my neck, then slowly licks the bite marks, soothing them after his merciless attack.

"Keep your cock inside her. I want her plugged. I don't want any of your cum leaking out of her."

Cole scoffs. "Yes, sir!" He snickers against my tit, making it jiggle.

Lucas freezes, then lifts his head from my neck. "Don't say that." His voice is cold and detached, void of emotion, and I hate it. Not just that, I hate what it means for him. It's a trigger, an instant reaction I know too well myself.

A tremble racks through Cole, and his eyes fill with remorse. "Of course." He nods toward Lucas. "I'm sorry."

I almost want to sigh when Lucas slips from my ass, but he gives my ass cheek a playful swat as he moves toward the bathroom, and when he returns with a warm washcloth, I melt against Cole from relief that he's not shutting us out.

As if knowing what Lucas wants, Cole rolls onto his back, taking me with him so I'm lying on top of him.

Lucas kneels between his legs, places a tender kiss on each of my ass cheeks, then parts them to wipe me clean. "I should just lick you clean, shouldn't I?" he mumbles. "Next time." He slaps my ass harder this time as he rises from the bed, throws the cloth into the laundry bin, and slides in beside us.

“I wonder if you’re pregnant now, Tia.” He pushes my hair from my shoulder, and I turn to face him. “I wonder if you’re so full our seed is taking form, creating a baby for us.” Cole’s cock swells inside me at his words, and as if knowing it, Lucas smirks.

“Be a good girl and take my brother’s cock for Daddy.” He licks his lips, and I whimper.

I’m done for.

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CHAPTER TEN



LUCAS

Knowing Cole left to go fight has me pissed. He acted like a jealous idiot, and as much as I want to give in and experience my needs freely with him, I'm not sure I'll ever be able to. Feeling his cock slide against mine inside Tia is probably as good as it will ever get. Truth be told, I'm okay with that because it's the most incredible feeling in the world, having them together like that. Owning them.

Both of them.

But when he called me "sir," it was like dousing me in a bucket of freezing cold water, chilling me to my core, which is why I am where I currently am.

Sifting through the piles of paperwork I keep hidden in my drawer.

Files of secrets.

Files of lies.

Every one of them as seedy and sordid as the next. So damn twisted, it tarnished each and every thing that it touched.

Until I reach her.

My hand trembles as I pick up the photo of her, and my heart flutters at her beauty. It's a photo of one of the occasions I broke into her apartment

and sat and watched her while she slept. I remember it like it was yesterday. Before both the guys had her, she was mine. Before she even realized it, she belonged to me.

Even before this photo. Before me stepping into her apartment.

She was always mine.

The softness of her breathing filled the room and, in turn, filled the void inside me. She'd mumble incoherent words in her sleep, and I'd step closer, trying to make them out but failing every damn time . . . I wanted so desperately to reassure her but couldn't. After all, I'd broken into her apartment, watched her every fucking move, and more importantly, nobody had a clue I was even there. Definitely not Tia.

Did she have nightmares like my own? Or were her nights filled with memories of Jace? Calming her.

Until that one night, the last night I broke in before sending Cole to her. I toyed with her hair as she slept, taking in the glow of the blonde beneath the light she left on in the small living space just outside her door. When her eyes fluttered open and she stared straight at me, I froze as time stood still. My body filled with panic, but just as my mouth opened to explain, she closed her heavy eyes and mumbled, "I hope you're safe."

Was she talking about me?

Now knowing about Harper, perhaps it was her she was dreaming about.

It's clear Tia doesn't hold some of her memories. I know too well what childhood trauma can do to you, and it pains me yet reassures me at the same time.

A loud pounding against my office door has me dropping the photograph and scrambling to shove the contents of the file back into the folder before dumping them in the drawer, then I slam it closed, lock it, and put the key in my pocket. Slowly, my breathing settles as another pound against the woodwork makes me wince.

"Lucas, open the fucking door!" Jace bellows. I inhale through my nose, trying to temper my bubbling temper. He's so damn aggressive lately, and it's bordering on unhinged again.

I press the small button beneath my desk, allowing him access to my office, and instantly regret it. His face is twisted in anger, a flush travels up his tattooed neck, and his hair is messy, telling me he's been tugging on the strands in frustration.

“What’s the problem?” I clip out as if I don’t already know.

He scoffs obnoxiously loud. “What’s the fucking problem?” He swipes the stacked paperwork from my desk onto the floor, and I sit back in my chair and let him have his tantrum. “What’s the fucking problem?” he bellows louder.

The office door flies open, and Cole walks in wide-eyed, then tugs his T-shirt over his wet head, as if he’s recently showered and the disturbance made him spring into action. His eyes volley from mine to Jace’s. “What’s happening?”

Jace scoffs again while glaring daggers at me, causing me to fidget in my chair.

“Nothing is fucking happening. That’s the problem!”

“Keep your voice down,” I say through gritted teeth.

His nostrils flare at my command, and he opens his mouth to no doubt rebut my words, but I hold my hand up. “If you’d calm down and sit your ass on the couch, I have news.”

His eyebrows spring up, and he turns to the couch before crossing his arms over his chest like a scorned child, and instead of sitting, he leans against the wall, raising his chin in defiance. “I’ll stand.” He glares back at me, and I roll my eyes.

Cole laughs awkwardly before throwing himself on the couch.

I open the encrypted email sent from Oscar O’Connell only an hour ago, scan over it once again, then explain in idiot talk what involvement Tia’s newfound, but very absent, family intends on having in bringing down the Lancasters.

“Oscar has reached out to someone who has a link within the FBI, apparently there’s a whole hidden dossier on Mr. Lancaster.” My stomach fills with a heavy foreboding of sickness at the implication. Clearing my throat, I continue on, “He’s hoping to have a full breakdown of Timothy Lancaster and those files within the next two weeks.”

“Two fucking weeks!” Jace spits, pushing off the wall.

I ignore his outburst and continue to explain, “He said that Mrs. Lancaster lied about her age; she’s older than she puts on her government documentation, and this has all been doctored by the Lancasters’ legal team. He’s working on an answer as to why.”

Jace drags a hand through his wayward hair and exhales loudly. For the first time since he stepped foot into the office, I realize how much this is

affecting him. The strain it's putting on his body, and clearly his mind too, is immense. He has dark circles under his eyes, and his shoulders sag. He drops his head and mumbles, "I just want to keep them safe, ya know."

"I know, Jace. We all do." My brother needs me to be the strong one right now. When I'm normally so weak and standoffish, he needs me to step up and take control—the only control he will ever allow me—and I intend to do it.

"Why do you think they need two weeks, though?" Cole asks, sitting forward with his elbows resting on his knees.

I turn and face him. "My guess is, he has someone on the inside and they've given them a time frame to get the information we need." He nods. "In the meantime, I got the girls trackers." I lift the box from under my desk, place them on the top, and both guys move in to take a closer look at the small capsules which house trackers, along with a needle to insert them.

"What the fuck?" Jace quizzes, raising his head from the contents, then glancing at Cole.

Cole smiles widely. "How the fuck are we going to get away with this?" He lifts the needle before giving me a pointed look, then says, "Are you fucking serious?"

"I have a plan."

"Of course you fucking do." Jace smirks. I feel like pointing out how only moments ago he doubted me, but I don't want to kill the buzz of the moment.

"Harper and Mia will receive theirs using a small anesthetic cream at the back of their necks. Tia's is larger, so she will need a mild sedative, then we won't have to explain what the fuck is happening. Assuming we still insist on keeping her in the dark about all of this?" I raise my eyes to look between my brothers, and they nod in agreement, Cole more reluctantly.

"Good. I will administer the girls' tonight once they settle for bed, and then I'll sedate Tia and administer hers." My cock throbs at the thought of watching Tia sleeping, completely at my mercy. My lips become dry, and I lick them as my mind races at all the positions I can have her in while she's unaware.

"Oh, Jesus, you're into necrophilia, aren't you?" Jace reels back on his heels, his eyes wide and mouth twisted in disgust.

Cole throws his head back on a loud chuckle. "Fuck, Jace. Necrophilia is when they're dead, dumbass."

I stare at Jace dumbfounded.

Jace winces at his mistake, then looks toward me for confirmation, so I gift him with a nod before he darts his eyes away. Not an apology in sight.

“So, we have two weeks of watching the girls until what exactly?” he asks without giving me or Cole any attention.

“Until Oscar gives us whatever intel he has on the Lancasters. He said he even knows someone who can take them out.” I tap my finger against the desk. “‘Remove the subject’ were his exact words.”

Jace chokes. “Sounds like he’s talking about removing a fucking pimple or something.”

My lip quirks up at his analogy; the fact he’s making light of the situation means he’s becoming more at ease with the plan.

“And we don’t have to watch the girls for two weeks because we have a security organization at our disposal. Owen, one of the co-owners of STORM Enterprises, sent over a bunch of resumes for us to go through. The girls will get their own personal security detail.”

Jace’s eyebrows shoot up.

“How much does he want for all of this?” Cole waves his hand toward the laptop.

“Not a damn thing.” My eyes lock with his, and his face falls solemn, knowing the implication behind it. The O’Connell family wants nothing from us.

Literally nothing to do with us.

With Tia and the girls.

Cole bites into his lip so hard I’m surprised it’s not bleeding. “Right, nothing. Fuckers,” he grits out.

“Probably for the best.” Jace shrugs. “I mean do we really want to get involved with a fucking Mafia?”

“No,” I reply with ease. As much as it would be nice for Tia and our girls to have an extended family, we’re all she needs. Besides, the security alone would be a logistics nightmare when we have fights taking place. Plus, I can control things right now. If we were heavily involved with the Mafia, our hands would be tied. No, I like things just the way they are. With that in mind, I delete the email from Cal O’Connell that told me to give Bren time to come around in being open to creating a relationship with us.

Jace drops the capsule back in the box, then turns to face Cole. “The only thing we need the O’Connell family for is this. After that, they can go

fuck themselves.” He stares at Cole a moment longer than necessary. Cole doesn’t argue—always the peacemaker.

“Right,” he quickly agrees. As if he had to think on it and then changed his mind. I shake my head, thinking about how easily he can be manipulated yet my cock thickens at the notion.

“Tonight?” Jace taps on the desk, then points toward the box.

“Tonight.” I nod with an expression of indifference, hoping I’m containing my excitement well. When inside, I feel like I will combust at the prospect of fucking Tia while she sleeps.

Jace turns on his heel and heads out the door while Cole lingers around my desk, so I snap my eyes up to his in annoyance.

“You need any help with those?” He points toward the box.

I sit back in my chair and widen my legs to allow my cock to grow in the tight constraints, and his eyes find my groin instantly before they dart away. He shifts from foot to foot, and I can’t help but toy with him. “I’m sure I can handle having Tia semiconscious.” I smirk back at him, the implication evident.

He licks his lips, and my gaze latches on to the piercing in his tongue, remembering the feel of it flicking over my balls as I entered our girl. *Fuck*. My pulse races at the memory I’ve fought so hard to suppress, as I am worried where my desires will take me.

“You can help, if you want?” I lift a shoulder, as if it’s nothing, but in reality, I’m offering him a lifeline to join me in my deviant sexual fantasies.

His lip twitches and his chest swells. “Yeah?” His voice is full of expectation, and it pisses me off that he might be expecting something more from me than what I have to offer.

I throw down the pen—I’m not sure when the hell I even picked it up—and lean back in my chair. “Jesus, Cole. You asked and I said fine. Either come, or don’t. I don’t care.”

My scowl sharpens, but his eyes fill with jest and his eyebrows wiggle. “Oh, I’ll be coming, and I’m pretty sure you will too.”

A laugh bubbles inside me, but somehow, I tamper it down, and just like that, not only has my night gotten a whole lot more promising, my mood has changed too.

I push back in my chair and stand. Dusting off the invisible lint from my shirt, I head toward the door.

“Lucas?”

My feet stop at my name, and my hand freezes on the door handle as I glance over my shoulder. “You might want to contain your boner.” He points toward my groin, and I grumble to myself as I adjust my raging cock into my waistband.

Tonight will be one to remember.

For some of us, at least.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN



LUCAS

Giving the girls their injections was easy despite Jace being difficult. He stood in front of their sleeping forms like a rabid guard dog until I insisted there was no other way and this was the safest option for the girls. Then he relented enough for me to step closer. Only to have a change of heart as I lowered myself onto the floor beside Harper's bed. It took Cole restraining him in a headlock while I quickly coated both girls with a numbing gel at the base of their necks, then inserted the tracker capsule. Neither of them made a murmur, completely unaware of their fathers battling with one another on the floor.

Cole released Jace, then he flung open the door to their rooms, stomped out, and headed toward our gym.

"I need to go and check in at the club. Jace should be doing it tonight but . . ." Cole doesn't finish speaking, but he doesn't need to, the disappointment is laced in his tone.

"Okay." My voice has a gravelly edge to it. I've been teetering on the edge of excitement all day, and if I had to be honest, part of it was the thought of Cole watching, participating even.

When our gazes finally meet, he drags a hand through his hair. “Guess I’ll see you later,” he mumbles.

I nod and push past him, not willing to let him see the disappointment clouding my every cell like a goddamn disease, but I don’t miss his deep exhale, as if pissed at my lack of reaction. What the fuck does he want? For me to wait another night? Not a prayer. I’ll fuck my little girl in her sleep, take over her nightmares, and fill her with dreams so beautiful, they’ll show my devotion to her, prove to her it was always her and me. When she opens her eyes, she will feel me everywhere, and I can’t wait a minute longer to make her dreams my reality.

Pushing down on the handle, I open the door softly and step into the room, her scent surrounds me, and every detail feels heightened with my expectation.

After checking that Tia had enough breastmilk stored in the fridge to manage the rest of the week and Mia had been breastfed, Cole laced her hot chocolate with a sedative and delivered it to her room, then she took a bath.

The same routine always soothes her, helps ease her ability to fall asleep. The safety and comfort of our home is like a force field of protection, and not just for her, but for all of us. The knowledge of something threatening that fierce protection forces my feet to drift toward her bed.

“Lucas?” Tia murmurs as I lower to sit on the bed beside her. “I need you,” she rasps.

My fingers push the golden tendrils of hair from her face. “Shh, go back to sleep, little girl. Daddy’s going to take care of you.” I drag my fingertip down the milky skin of her cheek and follow the line of her jaw, then push the hair from her shoulder, exposing where the needle needs to go. My mouth waters to bite into her skin, piercing it with my teeth instead of the needle, and mark her with my need to protect her.

My hand somehow finds the knife tucked away in my pocket, and a thought I hadn’t considered until now comes to me with such fervor I fumble from excitement to unbuckle my belt. I stand, tugging it from my waist, then I climb over Tia to straddle her delicate waist without so much as touching her.

Gripping her hips, I flip her over so she’s on her stomach with her head tilted to the side. Then I push her hair off her back, exposing her delicate skin peeking out of her sleepwear, begging to be marked. My cock leaks,

and it's painful to resist the urge to expose it and pump it for relief, but I ignore my desires and follow through with my plan. My hand slips into my pocket to take hold of the knife, and my thumb drags over the smoothness of the wood, giving me the familiar feel of comfort I've become accustomed to. The feel of her.

I flick it open, and the light from the bathroom catches on the blade, then excitement floods my veins and eagerness shoots up my spine. Licking my lips, I glide the knife through her sleep shorts and camisole top, and the material pools on either side of her compliant body, baring her for the taking.

Then, leaning over her, I drag the blade from the bottom of her neck, down her spine, and my gaze zeroes in on the tip, careful not to cut her precious skin. When I reach our engraved names on her ass, the overwhelming need to dominate and use her slams me in the chest. Then my balls tighten, and I've no choice but to leap up from the bed, dispose of my clothes, then kick them to the side.

Then I take hold of the belt, pull her arms behind her back, and tie her wrists, careful not to mark them; as much as I'd like to, I don't want our daughter asking questions we're unprepared to answer.

Shoving a pillow beneath her stomach, I step back and pump my cock at my restrained girl. Her ass is thrust up in the air—begging for the taking—and her skin is exposed, ready to be painted with my marks. spurts of precum cover my fist as I pump harder at the sight of her.

Moving onto the bed, I bend over and part her ass cheeks, then drag my tongue down the crook of her ass, circling her hole before dragging it lower toward her pussy. My mouth covers her pussy hole as I nuzzle into her flesh. Eating her from the inside out, I suck greedily on her folds, lavish her clit, and grind my face against her, determined to draw every ounce of her taste from her body and leave her wet while at my mercy.

"Mm, Daddy loves tasting you," I whisper while greedily licking her pleasure from her body.

Knowing she's unable to hear me, I allow myself to go further. "Daddy's always been obsessed with you, little girl. For so long." I push two fingers into her pussy, plunging them as far in as possible, then I curl them, stroking her G-spot. "So fucking long." I groan when she whimpers, and her pussy tightens on my fingers, encouraging me to pump faster, to lick her quicker, suck harder. I want to taste her, every fucking part of her; I

want to swim in her pleasure. A gush of wetness flows from her, and my cock spurts as her warm cum floods my mouth. She squirted, and I fucking revel in it.

Achieving what I planned, I sit up, uncaring to wipe away the cum dripping from my face, down my chin, and onto my chest. I'm happy to bathe in her desire. I take hold of the knife again while positioning my cock at her pussy hole. "You're going to give Daddy a baby. I'm going to force a baby inside you while you sleep, little girl." Her body tightens, and I smile to myself. She may very well be able to hear my words but is unable to react to them.

"Daddy's giving you no choice. His little slut is going to be pregnant for him." I thrust inside her, the tight hold on her hip bruising. Thrusting my hips back and forth, I relish in the tightness of her pussy. I love to fuck her after she's come, she's always so much more swollen and tighter for me. My cock continues its assault on her hole while I bend over her restrained body, shove her hair out of the way, then press the knife to her neck, carving out the word "love" right above where I will insert the tracker.

After all, my dark brutality is my love for her.

She flinches when I press down harder, desperate to see the blood flow down her milky body, and my cock hardens to the point of pain knowing she can feel me, even in her sedated sleep, she can feel me. We were always meant to be together, even if our love was born from brutality.

I slam inside her, harder and harder, determined to plant my seed. Determined to be the one to gift her with our next child.

My fingers tangle in her hair as I hold her head against the pillow, fucking her like an animal. My eyes latch on to the blood trickling down her spine, and I can't help but use my tongue to spread it. "Fuck, that's good. Bleed for Daddy."

The copper hits my tongue, and I become wild; her pain mixed with my pleasure is the ultimate blend of possession.

My body coils tight with anticipation, and my balls draw up as I smear her blood over her shoulder blades, delighting in the canvas I'm creating.

"What a pretty little girl, painted in blood for Daddy."

My cock swells, and I grit my teeth, pissed I'm going to come. My head falls back as the euphoria slams through me with such vigor I'm paralyzed to move any further. Cum shoots from my cock, spurt after spurt buries itself deep inside her slick cunt. "That's it, breed for Daddy. Be a good girl

and give me a baby.” My eyes fall closed with the final spurt, and I grind my hips against her, hoping to push my cum deeper into her womb.

The door opens behind me as my body sags in relief at unloading myself inside her.

“Fuck me, what the hell did you do?” I turn my head over my shoulders and snap my eyes open.

“I brutalized her with my love.”

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CHAPTER TWELVE



COLE

After quickly checking that the fight is setup for this weekend and Gavin, one of my trainers, has everything handled, I rush back to the apartment, determined to get in on some of the action that Lucas has planned for him and Tia.

My cock has been in a perpetual state of hardness since I recognized the gleam in his eye at slipping Tia a sedative. There's no fucking way I'm missing out.

I step into the bedroom, and it takes my eyes a moment to adjust to the low lighting, with only the bathroom light illuminating the room.

Making my way toward the bed, my steps falter when I lock onto Tia's wrists restrained behind her back, her ass thrust up in the air, while Lucas grinds his hips against her. His body drips in sweat, and when my gaze snaps up to his face, my mouth falls open, my body freezes, and a heavy thud of pain hits me square in the chest, forcing my hand to rub over my heart.

Blood drips from his mouth onto her ass.

"Fuck me, what the hell did you do?"

He turns his head over his shoulder, and his eyes snap open. "I brutalized her with my love," he confesses with a bloody smile. It would seem sinister to anyone else, but to me, it's genuine, caring even. Without the blood between his teeth, I'd say he looks at peace.

My cock jumps, and his eyes roam over my body, taking in my T-shirt stretching over my muscular form and my gray joggers leaving nothing to the imagination, my solid cock is begging to be released.

"Would you like to taste my little girl, Cole?"

Holy shittt. My mouth goes dry, and I can only nod in response. The thought of his cum on my tongue has the blood pumping so fast through my body I hear whooshing in my ears.

"Lose your clothes, then."

I nod, making quick work of discarding my clothes. When I lift my head, Lucas has flipped Tia over, his cock still buried deep inside her.

He lifts her with ease, like a doll. Then he sits on the edge of the bed with her sitting on his lap, her legs open over his own outstretched legs. Her pussy is swollen and glistening with their arousal. Her head lolls against his shoulder, and his cheek is pressed to hers to hold her in place.

"Taste her, Cole." His voice comes out gravelly, a sharp edge to it, as if daring me.

The thought of tasting them together again makes my cock jump, and when Lucas's eyes latch onto it, my hand pumps it, giving him a show. I swipe the end, rubbing over the tip with my thumb on each upward stroke, taunting him.

His hips thrust in rhythm with the pumping of my fist while his hand toys with Tia's nipple. She smiles sleepily, and when she mumbles, "More," Lucas fucks her faster. Even in her sleep she commands us both.

My fist becomes aggressive under his piercing stare.

"Taste us," he spits out. Each vein and muscle on his body protrudes as he fucks her with fervor, and his mouth opens in ecstasy as I lower to the floor.

"Is this what you want, Lucas?" I flick my piercing over his balls, up his cock, and then lap her pussy, circling her clit, and our eyes remain locked.

My adrenaline spikes at the heavy lust dripping from his eyes, and then he hisses between his teeth when my tongue travels back down, rounding his balls one by one.

“Fuckkkk.” He slams up into Tia, gripping her tits in the palms of his thick hands, and I revel in each movement. My cock drips precum onto the floor, my balls ache so badly at the thought of him allowing me to do this to them, to him, that it almost feels surreal. When I move my tongue lower, he stills, and I wait for him to push me away, but he doesn’t. My piercing circles his asshole, and I watch through my heavy eyelids at the sheer euphoria on his face. His head is now thrown back, his eyes squeezed shut, and his lips parted. “I’m coming,” he pants out in warning.

Then he shocks the hell out of me and holds my head in place as he aggressively fucks Tia, shoving my lips into his cock and balls. Then the combination of their cum slips from her pussy onto my tongue, and my cock pulsates eagerly.

“Shit, Lucas.” I glance up at him, desperate for him to take pity on me in some way or another, but he’s lost in his own pleasure, and I couldn’t be happier about it, so I wrap my fist around my cock and fuck myself with as much aggression as he’s fucking into Tia. I erupt within seconds, my lips parting in awe.

Only our heavy breaths can be heard in the room as we both slowly come down from our releases.

“I love you both so much,” Tia mumbles, causing my lips to twitch and Lucas to drop a kiss onto the top of her head.

“We need to get her cleaned up,” he breathes out. His cock is still tucked into her tight pussy, still stretching her as if he doesn’t intend on moving, but his words say something different, his mind at war with his body. The silence hangs between us, an air of daringness to it. Who will move first? Who will break the connection we just had?

On a heavy sigh, I push back on my heels, avoiding the rejection in his eyes, and grimace when my cum coats my thighs. Then I head toward the bathroom, ignoring the awkwardness building between us.

I turn on the taps to the bathtub and throw in some sweet-smelling oil I know Lucas likes Tia to bathe in, and when I turn around, Lucas is watching me, leaning against the counter with Tia cradled in his arms. He presses another kiss to her temple, and I smile at how he transforms from such a controlling aggressor to the compassionate caregiver after he’s fucked her into oblivion.

“She’s going to be pissed she missed it all.” I point toward her.

His eyes snap up to meet mine. “Do you think she’ll be mad with me?” The panic is clear in his words, and I rush to reassure him.

“Of course not. She knows we’re all desperate to get her pregnant. The only thing she would be mad about is missing out on what I did. We’ll just have to do it again.” I shrug with a smirk and wiggle my eyebrows, trying to lighten the mood.

His eyes narrow and he huffs, pushing off the counter and walking past me, as if dismissing my suggestion all together, dismissing me.

He turns his back and steps into the tub without giving me a backward glance, pissing me off that he’s shutting me out.

My teeth grind, I pump my fists, trying to avoid saying something I know will have him wishing he hadn’t crossed the line he insists on making.

He lowers himself into the water and holds Tia in his arms. “Are you just going to stand there pouting or are you going to help clean her. I need to get a dressing on her neck after I put the tracker in.” He snaps his eyes up toward mine, holding them hostage with his deathly stare.

My heart skips a beat at the olive branch he’s gifting me.

So I grab a wash cloth and soap and clean Tia, all the while wishing I could clean him too, yet relieved I’m not being shut out.

“Daddy’s cleaning you up, little girl. We’re going to take such good care of you.” He nuzzles into her neck.

“We’ll never let anything hurt you, you’re ours to keep safe, we’re devoted to you all.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



JACE

My eyes lock on to the movement in the corridor, and I watch in delight as Thalia stretches her arms above her head, exposing her stomach. I rest my head on my elbow, taking her in from the floor where I play with the girls.

Mia makes a soft cooing noise that draws my attention back toward her, and I chuckle when she tries to shove her sock into her mouth.

“Ewww, Mia. Those are stinky.” Harper gently takes the sock away from Mia. My lips tilt up in a smile at Harper’s interaction with her baby sister. They’re adorable together; the love that flows from them is nothing compared to the love I feel toward them.

“Dad, pass her the giraffe rattle, she likes that one best.”

I do as my little girl asks and hand her the giraffe, squeaking it to see her gummy mouth widen in awe. The cute action makes my heart warm and my mind drift, wondering what Harper was like as a baby.

The familiar anger rushes through me, but then Harper throws herself onto my back, and I grunt louder than necessary when she hits her heels into my sides. “Giddy up. I’m a cowgirl.”

I raise up onto my knees and hold her legs in place as I move away from Mia to do the horse ride around the apartment furniture. “Yeehaw!” Harper singsongs as we go.

Tia chuckles in our direction, and I roll my eyes, smiling. Truth be told, I love every minute of this. Our little family.

Moving quicker, I make my way over toward Tia, then stand, causing our chests to rub together. Then I let Harper slowly slide down my back before I crouch to let her feet fall to the floor, and she runs off toward her bedroom without giving a backward glance.

My lips find Thalia’s, and she opens her mouth, expecting my tongue to fill it, but I shock her by taking a step back. “I’m taking you out, go get ready,” I whisper against her soft lips.

Her eyes widen. “I only just woke, Jace. What time is it?” She glances around the room, as if the time will spring out at her.

“Five thirty.” I grin when her eyes widen further. She doesn’t realize she was essentially drugged last night.

“Huh?”

I lower my voice. “You slept through. Cole and Lucas fucked you into a stupor.”

She fidgets from foot to foot and looks around the room again with narrowed eyes. “Five thirty?”

“Yep. So, go get ready.” I bop her nose.

I’ve been in a good fucking mood ever since the guys woke and suggested a date night for me and Thalia. I finally get her to myself without having to fight for her attention.

Her hand goes behind her head. “Why does my neck hurt?”

I choke on a laugh. Cole took great delight in explaining what he walked in on yesterday. “Apparently Lucas took it upon himself to mark you. Again.”

She huffs and turns on her heel. “Fuck me while I sleep, it’s all good.” She waves her hand over her shoulder, then turns to face me. “Mark me with your knife? No worries.” She continues to walk toward the bedroom, then stops again. “Oh, breed me as I sleep, do that too.” She turns to me, her eyes alight with sarcasm and jest, before rolling back on her heel as if a thought hit her. “I should just get a tattoo.”

My grin widens, and I chuckle at her attitude. She’s pissed but playful too, and I fucking love her all the more for it. “I like that idea. Let’s make

sure all our names are on there, though.” I nod as my mind wanders at the type of tattoo we can all get to honor our love.

“Oh yes, the names. Let’s make sure you’re at the top, though!” she shouts as she slams the door shut.

“Damn right!” I shout back with a knowing smirk.

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TIA

“Where exactly are we going?” I turn in the car seat to face Jace, his carefree smile makes my stomach flutter with excitement. I love this side of him. Beneath the abundance of tattoos and rough exterior is the caring part of him reserved only for our little family. The tenderness he shows us is a reminder of the boy I fell in love with when I was a child, and he’s still there, and the fact he’s only there for us has my veins filling with the elation of his love.

“I told you it’s a surprise.” His boyish smile encompasses his face.

I squirm in my seat, and he chokes on a laugh. “Have you figured out what they did yet?”

The sigh that escapes me is exaggerated, then I rest my head against the car seat, blow out a breath, and roll my head to face him. “Nope. All I know

is I woke up feeling thoroughly fucked.”

He snorts. “You’re always thoroughly fucked.”

“And you wouldn’t have it any other way.” I lean over the center console and nip at his ear flirtatiously.

His lip quirks up at the side, and he looks at me with a raised brow. “You’re in my room tonight.”

“I figured.” I grin back at him.

He turns the car into a parking lot, and I frown at the building in front of us. “A skating rink?”

“How hard can it be?” He shrugs, and I can’t help the laughter that spills from my lips.

“I guess we’re about to find out.” I grin back at him.

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JACE

My hand tightens on the railing as I cling for dear life. “Okay, I might have misjudged the activity.”

Thalia grins as she skates backward toward me, and when my legs go in opposite directions, she bursts into fits of laughter. I grind my jaw. This isn’t going as I’d hoped.

When I booked the skating rink for us, I had a grand plan in place, but all that has been fucked up now that I can barely move on the damn ice.

“Would you like me to help you?” She beams.

Jesus fucking Christ, my girl wants to help me skate, how fucking ridiculous. I scrub a hand over my head.

“Nope. I’m good.” I shake my head and refuse to look at her when she giggles.

Slowly bringing my feet together, I take a deep breath, then I let go of the railing and push one foot out. My ass hits the ice with a painful thud, and Thalia bends over, laughing.

“You find this fucking funny?” I throw my glove in her direction like a petulant child.

“I do,” she admits, her blue eyes twinkling.

“Try holding onto the railing, Jace. You have to learn to walk before you can run.”

I glare at her. *Is she fucking serious?* “You have to learn to walk before you can run.” I mimic her in a childish tone that has her throwing her head back and chuckling.

The way her hair blows in the breeze and the way her breath comes out into the icy air is captivating, she’s so goddamn beautiful, so goddamn mine.

“How the hell are you so good at this?”

“I used to roller skate up and down the sidewalk with Dougie Schooler while you were mowing lawns.” My lip turns up in a sneer; that little prick was trying to make a move on my girl.

“Great, another guy on my hit list. I’ll break his fucking legs; see how good he is at skating then.”

Thalia chokes on a laugh like I’m kidding. I’m not.

Then her face turns serious. “I’ve taken Harper skating a few times. We could take her together?”

My chest bursts with pride at the mere mention of our daughter, and with a steely determination, I grip hold of the banister with both hands, dig my toes into the ice, and pull myself up to my feet.

“You’re doing it, Jace,” Thalia hollers, and I’m about to open my mouth again to tell her to chill the fuck out, I’m only standing, but the lights dim as planned, and I huff as a solo light illuminates the center of the ice rink. Thalia turns her head over her shoulder, and her eyebrows rise.

“We’re supposed to be over there right now.” I throw my hand out toward the light and wobble in the process.

“Well, what are you waiting for?” She turns and glides over toward the center of the rink.

After a few failed attempts at pushing myself forward, I give up, and like a fucking loser, I shuffle my ass over to the center of the rink while she stands biting into her lip to refrain from laughing. When I finally reach her,

she holds out her hand for me, and as we connect, I pull her down on top of me, causing the laughter to bubble over into me too. Her face is so close to mine I feel the heat from her breath, and when our gazes meet, the music kicks in.

“Die For You” by The Weekend begins to play, and my lips move with every lyric of the song. I tell her how much I love her, how I would die for her and kill for her because I could never take being apart from her again.

Her eyes fill with unshed tears. Tears for our past, what could have been, what should have been, and, more importantly, tears for what we’ve accomplished—what we have now.

My fingers caress her cheek, and the chill sends a shiver through me, but when her lips find mine through the coldness, warmth spreads over my body like a wildfire, heating me with the reassurance I always so desperately need.

Filling me with her devotion.

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CHAPTER
FOURTEEN



JACE

The guys make themselves scarce for when we return home, so I pick Thalia up bridal-style and walk us through the apartment toward our bedroom.

I let her slip from my arms when the door closes behind us, and the gasp of surprise that escapes her is like music to my ears.

My bed is covered in fresh red rose petals, and candles light the room. She turns to face me with tears in her eyes. “Jace?”

“I’ve so many regrets, Tia. Too fucking many to list. But my biggest regret is not taking you to college with me and not giving you any other option than to come with me.” I tell her how I feel, the thoughts that have plagued me for years. How many times I wish I’d have given her no other option but to run away with me. I’d have looked after her. I’d have protected her like I should have.

“I was too young,” she adds with tears in her eyes, touching my face. “Please don’t turn tonight into something sad, into regrets.”

She’s right, and with that thought in mind, I step back from her and turn to face the bed. Then I scrub a hand through my hair and chuckle.

Everything I've done tonight has been out of character for me, but I simply wanted to be everything she could ever want.

I turn my head away from her. "You are everything I could ever want. You all are."

I hadn't realized I'd voiced my words, and now my cheeks heat with embarrassment at exposing how I feel. "Jace Matthews, are you blushing?"

"Shut the fuck up, Thalia." I pinch at her hips playfully. "We never got to have a proper date, or prom, or graduation. I wanted to do something special for you. Something you should have had."

"You always do special things for me. The way you take care of me and our girls. The way you give me foot massages, plait Harper's hair better than me." She rolls her eyes. Harper always insists I style her hair. "You're special, Jace. You always have been." She glances round the room again. "Is this the moment you kiss me?"

I step forward, forcing her to spin and our chests to clash. Then I drag my finger down her cheek. "This is the moment I make love to you, all over again, Thalia."

Her breath hitches and her pupils dilate. "Please." Our mouths collide messily, then our tongues glide with a rhythm much slower than the rapid beat of my heart. Of her heart too.

My cock nudges against her waist in approval, and she pulls back from our kiss with a flush in her cheeks.

"Strip," I command.

Following, I drop my clothes in a heap on the floor. "On the bed, Thalia, open yourself up to me."

"Oh god." The flush travels down her chest, and I smile at the thought of it deepening the pink of her nipples.

When she lies on the bed, I swear I've never witnessed anything so beautiful in my entire life. Her milky skin and blonde hair a contrast to the deep-red petals covering the sheets. It's not lost on me that it looks like she's floating on a crimson sea of blood.

With one hand, her fingers create a V and separate her folds, and my tongue grazes over my top lip as saliva fills my mouth at a rapid speed. I'm literally salivating for her.

Stepping forward, I kneel onto the bed with my cock in hand, pumping it to relieve the pain building in my balls. Precum leaks from the tip in long

strings, but I pay it no attention and spit at her open pussy. “Rub it in, baby.”

Her breath stutters, and she raises her head, our eyes lock, then my gaze tracks her free hand as it moves. Her fingers gather my spit, which she then uses to circle her swollen clit, swirling it around her pussy hole and back again. “Good girl,” I praise, pumping my cock faster and harder.

“Please, Jace.”

I move over her, positioning my cock at her entrance, then rest on my forearms until our faces are so close, I see the blue of her eyes is darkened with lust.

She strokes my face. “I love you.”

“I love you too, baby.”

Her smile brightens her face as she hooks her hand around my neck and pulls me down so our lips meet. Our hearts beat in time with one another, our kiss is sensual, meaningful, and so full of love my heart twangs with awareness at this all-consuming moment.

Thrusting my hips forward, my cock slides into her pussy, and her nails dig into my flesh with the action. She wraps her legs around my waist in encouragement, and I slide back out, then push back in at a sensual pace that shows her I want this to last forever.

I want us to last forever.

Small moans escape her lips between our kisses, but I swallow them down. I crave each and every one of her actions. I take them all, own them all.

My hips grind against hers on every thrust, hitting her clit at the perfect angle, while her warm, wet pussy molds around my cock.

“Sooo good,” she pants, throwing her head back against the pillow, allowing me to pepper kisses over her neck. “More, Jace.” She breathes out heavily. “I need more.”

The pulse in her throat races against my tongue, and when my teeth graze her skin, her pussy flutters around me, making me smile. I sink my teeth into her neck, tugging at the flesh, then release it just as quickly. “Oh god, Jace.” Her pussy pulsates, and I’ve no choice but to move quicker, harder, powering into her. The petals float to the floor as the mattress squeaks beneath us, and the headboard pounds against the wall as I chase my orgasm and hers too. I grind myself deeper and deeper with each pump of my hips.

“Jace,” she cries out as her body wrings tight, and when I pinch her nipple, causing it to leak between us, she explodes. I follow behind, slamming as deep as possible into her, determined to have her carry my baby again.

My mouth falls open as my cum shoots from the tip of my cock, my jaw sets, and my body stills at the power behind my orgasm while her pussy continues to milk every drop from me. “Take it all,” I beg.

I glance up to watch her face contorted in pleasure, her head thrown back, and her neck littered in my marks. “All of it. I want all of it. I want you,” she pants in admittance, and my chest swells with the knowledge of our devotion to each other.

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CHAPTER
FIFTEEN



TIA

Lucas twirls my hair between his fingers as I rest my head in his lap. I sigh in contentment, and I sense his smile with each gentle stroke over my head.

We're watching a movie after putting the girls to bed, but in all honesty, I have watched none of it. Being in his embrace clouds me in a way that leaves me fulfilled, like there's only him and me. A connection on a deeper level, a level I can hardly understand myself, and the only thing I know is that it's something so solid it binds us.

Maybe it's the knowledge of our history of trauma?

The door to the apartment swings open, and I sit up, peering over the back of the couch to see Jace and Cole throw their gym bags to the floor.

They've been training Stone again, determined to make sure he's ready for the fight in a little over a month.

Jace heads straight to the refrigerator, grabbing a beer, while Cole saunters toward us with a smirk full of promise on his face.

He throws himself down on the couch beside me, and I turn toward him, and the scent of his sandalwood shower wash oozes from him. He rolls his head to face me with a cocky smile that makes his green eyes sparkle with

mirth. Before I know it, I'm running my fingers through his short damp hair, noting how fresh he is after showering before returning home. I can't help but lick my lips as I imagine straddling him. Lucas's fingers dig into my hips, as if keeping me from my wayward thoughts.

"You look like you want to eat me alive, beauty." Cole grins with pride while raising an eyebrow suggestively.

My tongue darts out over my top lip. "Maybe I do." A zing of excitement rushes down my spine, and my sleep shorts dampen.

Lucas shuffles beside me, and I envisage his thick cock hardening beneath his joggers.

Jace throws himself onto the one-seater opposite us, diverting my attention toward him, and takes a swig from his bottle of beer, his eyes trained on us.

"Tia likes bottles of beer, don't you, Tia?" Lucas breathes out, his voice gravelly and filled with a knowing taunt that has heat rushing to my face.

Jace's stare doesn't miss the redness flushing over me, then his eyes travel down my neck into my camisole. I feel transparent beneath his stare, like he sees every sordid action I've ever encountered and every filthy thought that enters my mind. The way he holds himself with such confidence, eyes locked on me as he takes another sip, has me squirming under his scrutiny.

His eyes snap toward Lucas. "Care to elaborate on that little innuendo of yours, Lucas?" He holds Lucas's stare daringly and I watch on with bated breath, but I don't miss the way Cole is leaning toward me, pushing my hair off my shoulder. Then his lips leave a trail of kisses down my neck as he cups the back of my head, holding me in place. It's like he's oblivious to the conversation and lost in his own mind.

"Have you been a dirty girl, beauty?" he whispers into my ear, and I can't help the gasp of need that escapes me. I'm unable to function, unable to articulate a single word. I'm putty in his hands while waiting for Lucas to elaborate.

Will he tell them?

Tell them how he pushed a beer bottle inside of me while bringing me to orgasm, then my juices flowed into the bottle before he brought the bottle to his lips and drank from it, telling me how much he was savoring my taste.

I push my ass back toward Lucas, and he releases a dark chuckle, and the sound sends a shiver through me.

Lucas sits forward, resting his elbows on his knees, his gaze fixed onto Jace's. "I fucked her pussy with a bottle. One just like that." He points toward the bottle Jace holds. His knuckles whiten with his grip.

"That so?" Jace raises an eyebrow toward me, and my lips part at the darkness in his tone, unable to construct a single thought as Cole slips my camisole down, tucking it beneath my tits to give his soft lips access to my nipple.

My body is wrung tight as he suckles from me, kneading my breast to encourage the milk to flow.

"She came inside the bottle, then I drank down her cum while she drank down mine," Lucas explains with glee in his voice, as if reveling in the experience while taunting Jace.

Jace slowly takes another sip of the beer, his gaze now holding mine hostage. "That so?"

Unable to move, I watch as he swallows the beer, his Adam's apple bobs, and my fingernails dig into Cole. "Ye . . .yes," I admit when Lucas slips my sleep shorts down.

His firm hands knead my ass cheeks, and I close my eyes at the overwhelming sensation rolling over me. My clit throbs with desire, my heart races at the promise clouding the room, and my pussy drips with expectation.

My eyes snap open when Jace moves, and I stare at him as he kicks off his sneakers, drops his joggers, and lifts his T-shirt over his head, all while holding the beer bottle that shines back at me with promise.

My mouth waters as Jace steps forward, and his solid cock has a drop of precum on the tip begging to be swiped away with my tongue.

Lucas moves behind me, and my hands tighten on Cole's shoulders to stabilize me. I'm partially bent over, with my ass positioned high, yet am still able to accept Cole's mouth sucking on my nipple. When he moves one of his hands, I glance down to see his cock springing free from his gym shorts as he fists himself.

"Fuck," Jace grunts as he watches from above, and before I know what's happening, he grips my head, tugging me by my hair to face him. "Suck," he bites out, pushing my head toward his waiting cock.

"Cole, push the bottle in her pussy."

Cole detaches from my nipple, a trail of milk flows down, running between us. A heavy groan of approval leaves Jace's throat before he thrusts

the bottle into Cole's hand.

Cole shuffles into position, dipping low, and I hold onto his head. "Fuck, beauty, you're drenched." He places a kiss over my clit, and my eyes roll back at the touch.

The cold glass is slowly pushed inside me, and, at the same time, Lucas positions the tip of his cock at my ass.

He spits, and the warmth of his saliva coats my puckered hole, then he repeats the action before rubbing it around. "I'm going to fuck your ass, little girl." His deep voice sends a wave of arousal through me. A promise of his darkness unleashing into me.

This time for us all to share.

A perfectly brutal family.

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COLE

I wait with bated breath as Lucas positions his cock against her tight hole. The bottle head is about an inch inside her, and my balls ache with a need to be satiated.

The room is filled with an erotic sense of promise, and when Lucas pushes forward with a grunt, causing Tia to wince at his rough impact, I push the bottle higher, feeling a tight resistance, no doubt his cock through the thin wall separating her pussy from her ass. “Fuck yes,” he groans, confirming my assumption a second later.

His hands grip onto her hips so hard I know bruises will be left behind, but I will kiss every one of them, smothering them with my love and affection for her. For them.

Using the piercing in my tongue, I lap over her pussy folds while fucking her with the bottle. “Oh god. More, Cole,” she begs, causing my cock to jump at the want in her tone.

“Fuck, take all my cock, you little slut.” Jace pushes inside her mouth so ferociously her body jolts, but I quickly take hold of her thigh to hold her in place, to ensure she feels us all together.

Her fingernails claw into my scalp as I nuzzle, lick, and grind my mouth against her clit. “Mm,” I moan as her essence coats my tongue, filling my mouth with her desire while I lick around the bottle pleasuring her.

“Jesus.” Lucas powers into her, thrust after thrust, each movement more savage than the last.

“Daddy’s little girl likes getting her ass fucked, don’t you?” he drawls through gritted teeth.

His words make my cock weep in approval, then it drips down my thigh, and not for the first time, I wish he would act on the reaction my body has toward his.

Casting my eyes up toward Jace, his free hand snaps out, holding the back of her head in position, then he wraps his other hand around her neck, and my mouth waters at the memory of me feeling Lucas’s cock deep in Tia’s throat.

“That’s a good little whore. So pretty, taking a beer bottle like a filthy little slut.” He tsks with his eyes transfixed on Tia’s face twisted in need, her eyes squeezed closed, as if trying to ward off her release.

Then he leans forward and spits on her face. “Open your eyes, Thalia. Open your eyes like a good little slut while we fuck you like a whore.”

Her eyes snap open, her pupils swimming with desire that makes pleasure surge into my balls. “Fuck, I need to come so bad.” I chuckle against her pussy lips as I lean back in to devour her.

JACE

My fingers press into her throat, clasp it so tight I feel my cock slamming in and out. I don't allow time for her to catch her breath, as her choking around me is an aphrodisiac to my tortured soul. The raging inferno that builds inside me with each day that goes by with unanswered questions, I have a pent up need to expel my demons, a need only Thalia can temper.

Her touch alone sets me free, her mere existence in my vicinity simmers the burning need for vengeance, just enough to keep me sane. Keep me from being the man I once was.

Rage.

I once looked up my moniker in a dictionary: violent and uncontrolled anger. A fit of violent wrath.

Truth be told, I feel every part of him. Every cell in my body has sold itself to the devil, but my heart is the one place I keep protected from Rage, a place solely for my girls.

So, as I plow into Thalia's willing mouth, knowing the girl I love has given something to someone else, I do so with anger filling my veins, with power, jealousy, and more importantly, love too.

The one thing so strong, it keeps me from destroying everything around me.

Lucas slams inside her again, and my cock slides deeper into her mouth, making my eyes roll to the back of my head and causing my balls to draw up, but I bite into my cheek, determined to ward off my impending orgasm.

No, I want to come with my cock shoved deep down her throat and the taste of her arousal on my tongue.

Thalia's body tenses, and I feel the eruption that flows through her body like molten lava.

I throw my head back, struggling to rein in my orgasm, until I feel Cole push the bottle into my hip. I slip from Tia's mouth, allowing her to breathe freely again, and my hand snaps out to grab the bottle from him, desperate to slide back into her mouth. Cole maneuvers himself into a position so he's able to pull Tia onto his waiting cock, now lying with Lucas still her ass, and I move to join their new position.

Tia's eyes roll, and she jolts when Cole spears into her with such vigor her hands snap out to hold onto his shoulders. I waste no time in grabbing her blonde locks between my fingers, giving her no choice but to choke on my cock, delighting in the splutter falling from her mouth.

We're all fucking her like wild animals feral for their prey.

She moans around my cock, and I groan at the vibrations sending spasms through my cock.

Bringing the bottle to my mouth, the flavor of her cum mixed with the blend of beer has my balls drawing up, my need to come spiking.

"Fuck me, that's good."

"Drink her down, Jace. Drink down her pleasure." Lucas watches me with his lips parted and his eyes darkened as I swallow her essence.

"Fuck, beauty. He's tasting you while we fuck you," Cole says through gritted teeth.

"You taste like a sinner's dream. You taste like our possession." My cock swells with one hand wrapped around her throat and the taste of her

cum on my tongue, and I allow my body to finally give in.

Give in to the euphoria only she can bring.

Rope upon rope of cum flows down her throat as I stare down at the most beautiful girl ever to walk the earth.

“I’m coming. Fuck, I’m coming, beauty,” Cole rasps.

“Fuck, yes,” Lucas grits out as he slams inside her before stilling, his jaw falls lax, and his eyes close in a serene pleasure only she can bring.

Lucas falls forward, taking Tia with him, then his eyes snap open, and I withdraw from Tia’s mouth, wiping the cum from her lips before feeding it to her.

Lucas sits back on his heels, then stares down at Tia with such awe, a lump clogs my throat. How the hell I could ever suggest taking her from them sends a rush of guilt through me, and his next words reinforce how we feel toward her.

All of us.

“Devotion is just another word for possession, Tia. And we possess every part of you.”

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CHAPTER
SIXTEEN



BREN O'CONNELL

“Let me get this straight.” My brother Con shifts from side to side in his chair. “You discovered Sky’s sister, but you don’t want to tell her?” His jaw is locked tight, and his tone is pissed.

I grind my teeth. Why is he even questioning me, his Don? “Right,” I growl, the bite evidence of my annoyance.

“Why?” His gaze flicks around our brothers, who all stare back at me, unwilling to give their opinion. Not that I need it; I am in charge.

“Because he’s protecting his family,” Cal, my second-in-command, grits out, clearly as annoyed as me at our younger brother’s questions. “Who knows what he’d be exposing the family to. Besides, we have enough going on without adding more shit.”

“Have you heard back from Lorenzo?” My gaze finds Oscar.

When we approached Lorenzo Varros for information about the Lancasters, we discovered there are files about them locked in an FBI vault. Lorenzo has someone on the inside, and we need them to uncover whatever the Lancasters are hiding before we finish them. If we don’t get the information first, we risk creating a complete shitstorm, because clearly this is something more than just a foster family with allegations of an abuse.

There's a reason I refuse to allow Sky knowledge of her sister's existence; she's been through hell, and my woman is in a good place. I won't allow some screwed-up girl ruining the good thing we have going. No, we'll gather the information, pop the Lancasters off, and hand over their remains to the three guys she's fucking so that we can be done once and for all with them.

I brush a hand through my hair; three fucking guys? Yeah, she's fucked up alright. Her kids probably are too, and I don't want to deal with someone else's baggage. God knows I have enough of my own.

Oscar glances at his watch. "Only two hours, twenty-eight minutes, and three seconds since the last time you asked."

"Very fucking funny." I sneer at him. "You got me answers?" I bang my fist on the table, and it shakes beneath my heavy-handedness.

"Not yet." He glares back at me with equal anger.

"Fucking kiddie fiddler needs slaughtering," Finn seethes. His leg bounces, and the damn toothpick he chomps on looks fit to snap.

His woman, Angel, was raped by a gang and gave birth to our uncle's child, a product of the assault, but that little girl is the apple of Finn's eye. He's the best damn daddy any kid could wish for. His protectiveness knows no bounds, but the guilt at what happened to Angel constantly eats away at him.

"You'll get your chance to deal with him." My eyes meet Finn's, and he gives me an abrupt nod.

"Have you told them about what we discovered?" Finn queries, lifting his eyebrow toward me.

When I asked Oscar to look into the Lancasters for me, he came back with information proving Timothy Lancaster has a thing for young boys. He also discovered there were numerous files locked away, and I want that information before we end him. Oscar agreed if we make a move on him that information could simply disappear, and something tells me there's so much more to this than meets the eye, and I want to make sure none of that shit involves my woman.

"Ain't told them shit yet," I respond while sitting back in my chair.

He sighs heavily. "I don't like the thoughts of that piece of shit out on the streets, he must know it's them who drained his accounts, and that fucking wife of his going to the kid's school?"

I sigh and drop my head, feeling the weight of the world on my shoulders, because deep down, I know Finn is right, and this whole situation makes me antsy.

“You need to tell her, brother,” he implores, the conviction behind his words makes my head rise to face him.

Finn never questions me, ever. But the way he’s looking at me now has me reconsidering my reasoning for keeping Sky in the dark.

“Not your fucking business,” I snap out and push away from the table, done with this goddam conversation, then make my way toward the door.

“Too many secrets, too many lies. Ain’t no good gonna come from it, brother.” Finn’s words send a chill through my body. They slice through me, causing my heart to constrict at the memories of the secrets that were kept hidden within our own family, secrets and lies that destroyed us one by one, all unnecessary, each as brutal as the last.

His words haunt me as I stride toward my car with a new purpose in mind. I need to tell my woman she has a family.

But how?



I OPEN the door to my home, and straight away, the smell of paint assaults me. Jesus fucking Christ it smells like a workshop in my goddamn foyer.

“Da!!!” Seb runs toward me, and I bend down, scooping him into my arms while gifting him with a kiss to his warm cheek. A whack in the gut has me glancing down to Sam using a lightsaber to attack my stomach. “Take that, you stiff!” He hits me again, and my eyes bug out at the pain radiating in my stomach.

“Sam, knock it off.” I push him away, but he comes at me again with a new determination.

“You ordered the wrong paint.” Her sweet voice wraps around me as I take hold of the damn lightsaber and launch it to the other side of the room.

“Huh?”

“The paint, you ordered the wrong one. You ordered industrial paint, not the one I chose for the nursery.”

“I didn’t order shit.” I place Seb down, and he runs off with Sam.

“He’s green, Bren.”

My head hurts with the racket the boys are making, and now my woman is talking in riddles.

I pinch the bridge of my nose and take a deep breath before meeting her sparkling blue eyes; the ones that hit me in the chest every time I look at her.

“Sweetheart, you’re gonna have to help me out here, been a long ass day.” I sigh.

“Isaac got into the paint somehow. It’s industrial, Bren.” Her eyes implore mine with an urgency I don’t yet feel. I mean, how bad can it be?

Zachary starts with his wailing, adding to the throbbing at my temple. The kid is in the downstairs nursery at the back of the house, and I can still hear him. Probably wants his momma’s tit again.

I open my mouth to ask her how bad Isaac is, but when he shuffles his diaper-clad butt into view, I get to see for myself. The little man has a bright-green face, painted hands, and, fuck me, even his feet are green.

My body jerks, and I roll back on my heels. “Fuck, he looks like an alien.”

“Hence the lightsabers.” She waves her hand toward the boys now bouncing on the furniture with their lightsabers swinging in the air.

“At least they’re protecting him.” I shrug, trying to see the positive in the shitty green chaos that is my life.

“It’s industrial,” she repeats.

“Meaning?” I ask with a raised brow.

“Meaning it’s not going to come off for a while.” Her bottom lip trembles, and my heart freefalls, so without thinking, I tug her toward me.

“It’s okay, sweetheart, just a bit of fucking paint.”

She clings to my shirt as sobs rack through her, and all the while, I stroke her silky blonde locks in a motion that comforts me as much as her. “I’m pregnant,” she blurts out, making my body still.

Oh shit.

And just like that, her sister is pushed to the back of my mind. I’m determined to not let a damn thing upset our perfect life.

CHAPTER
SEVENTEEN



COLE

Tia was desperate to get out of the apartment while Harper is at school, so she joined Jace and me at the gym. We have Mia with us, who was asleep in the office with Lucas until she started fussing, so much so that Jace became angsty. It took his mind off the ball, and Stone, the fighter we're training, did a roundhouse kick on the side of his face and sent him to the ground with a crack I felt in my gut.

Luckily, Jace is a powerhouse in his own right, and it takes more than a swollen jaw and a fall to knock him out. He batted away Tia's attempts to stick an ice pack on the side of his face and stomped into the office, returning a few minutes later with Mia in her buggy, announcing he was taking her home for her afternoon nap.

Tia narrowed her eyes at Jace, but he shook his head and told her to stay, so she kicked her legs up onto the chair with a grin and began reading TL Swan's *The Takeover*, a book she's been enthralled in ever since.

Stone lands a series of solid punches to the boxing pads I'm holding, the force so strong I stumble. Jesus, the man is one hell of a built motherfucker with a punch so tough I swear he could break steel. My lip quirks up at my own analogy.

“Should have called you Steel. Stone is too pussy for you.” I laugh toward him.

Sweat oozes from the dude, and his blue eyes narrow toward me. “Pussy, huh?”

I already regret my words but don’t have time to rethink it. He takes one step back, and before I can even calculate his next move, he lands a solid punch to my gut, and the pain sears through me and I choke on thin air. The son of a bitch laughs, swiping away the sweat from his forehead.

“Fucker,” I grunt out, trying to straighten without wincing, and drop the gloves to the floor while I bend over to catch my breath.

My stare locks onto Tia, and a sliver of unease creeps down my spine when I watch her eyes roam over Stone’s solid form.

The guy is built as wide as he is tall and is covered in tattoos he got in an attempt to cover a multitude of scars. I’ve often wondered what happened to the man for him to have received such torture but never dared to question it.

But right now, I couldn’t give a shit less about his scars, what I care about is my girl’s eyes are on another man.

What the actual fuck?

Without giving it another thought, I surge forward, slamming my fist into his chuckling mouth, catching him off guard.

He stares back at me unmoving and eyes wide, then he glances over his shoulder toward Tia, and every muscle in my body locks up tight at the fact he’s giving her attention, but only for a few seconds before his stare freezes over my shoulder. I sense Lucas watching us, and his eyes drill into the back of my head, the heat from his judging stare has my jaw clenching. Jealousy is rife in my bloodstream and boils so furiously I feel like I’m becoming unhinged, and my chest heaves.

Was he eyeing up Stone too?

Do they both want him?

My feet remain frozen, unable to move, and an atmosphere of uncertainty ripples through the air as none of us make a sound. No one acknowledging the fact I struck one of our fighters when I shouldn’t have. And worse, it was done out of sheer jealousy.

Stone moves first, unwrapping the bindings on his hands as if he’s about to leave. And with that thought, I spring forward. “Stone, dude I shouldn’t have—”

He holds his hand up and looks up from his hands to face me. "I got it, man." A low strangled chuckle escapes him, a sound I've never heard from him before. "We're all good. I have somewhere to be, but we can do another session on Thursday, yeah?"

He disregards what took place, and my shoulders relax. "Of course."

"Good. Don't bring the girl." He tilts his head in Tia's direction, and I nod, unable to look toward her right now.

Stone jumps out of the ring, grabs his bag from the floor, and walks out the door without so much as a shirt on.

As soon as the door closes behind him, I spin and face Lucas, and his eyes drill into me with such intensity my mouth goes dry.

He leans against the doorframe with his arms crossed over his chest, the top button of his shirt is open, and his sleeves rolled up to his elbows.

"Get a good show?" I spit out, annoyed with myself for letting my jealousy affect my behavior. I allowed my emotions to spill over into my work, and I hate that.

Lucas takes a while to respond, calculating his response, but when he does, I wish he wouldn't have bothered. "Impressive."

My spine snaps straight.

He's into him?

A pain stabs into my chest, making it difficult for me to breathe, so instead of acknowledging his words and the effects they have on me, I shake my head, push through the ropes of the ring, and storm toward the changing rooms, slamming the door behind me.

"Motherfucker!" I roar as I crash my fist into the metal locker, leaving behind a dent that doesn't give me any consolation as to how wound up and furious I feel inside.

I'm riddled with anger, jealousy, and frustration.

But worst of all, I'm riddled with fear of losing them both when I never really had him at all.

LUCAS

I sigh, rolling my eyes, as Cole stomps toward the changing rooms like a petulant child.

“What happened?” Tia asks as she closes her book and heads toward me.

“He got jealous.” I reach out, and she allows me to pull her by her waist into my chest.

Her eyebrows rise. “Jealous?”

I can’t help the laugh that spills from my mouth. “Yes, Tia. Jealous.”

Her bright-blue eyes widen. “Why?”

“Because you were practically eye-fucking, Stone.” I lift my eyebrow at her.

“I was not!” She steps away, disconnecting herself from me, and I clamp my teeth together.

“I was trying to make out the tattoo on Stone’s arm. It looked like it has something else beneath it.”

“He has a lot of scars.”

She shakes her head. “No. It looks like another tattoo. I was trying to figure it out.”

“Not your business to figure out.” My tone is monotone as always.

“I’m going to go speak with him.” She spins away from me, and her tight ass sways in her jean shorts. My gaze travels down her sleek legs, then back up again, drinking in every inch of her edible body. I waste no time in following her, and the door barely shuts before I push through.

Cole has his head resting against the locker with his hands braced on either side, his chest heaving, and I want to roll my eyes at his exaggeration.

“You’re being pathetic,” I spit out.

His spine straightens, and his shoulders lock tight, and I know Tia is glaring at my lack of consideration. I can feel the disgust rolling off her.

Cole slowly turns to face us, and his green eyes, which normally sparkle, are full of malice, his expression cold. “Pathetic?” he grinds out, his jaw so tight I’m surprised he hasn’t caused damage.

He steps forward, his whole demeanor screaming fury, but I refuse to back down. I know he won’t hurt me, and I wonder his intentions. Maybe that’s why I continue to goad him.

“Exactly that. Pathetic.” I lift my chin.

“Me, pathetic? You’re the ones eye-fucking him.”

Tia gasps, then I glance in her direction, and the hurt swimming in her eyes sends a tsunami of fury through my veins.

Without thinking, I surge toward him, slamming his head into the lockers. He doesn’t even try to fight me when my fingers dig into his face, holding him in place by his cheeks.

“Maybe he wasn’t the one we were eye-fucking,” I admit.

His body jolts. I feel my words sink into his soul as the room surrounding us becomes heightened with a budding tension, no longer filled with fury.

“Did you ever think of that?” I press his head back harder; the tips of my fingers whiten at the aggression in my touch.

“No,” he breathes out on a heavy exhale.

Yet his admittance does nothing to dampen my anger, it only fuels it.

How can he not see? How could he possibly think we could ever want anyone else? I could ever want anyone else but him.

I breathe through flared nostrils, enraged at the fact he fails to see how I feel.

How we feel.

My cock is stiff in my pants, and that only adds to my pissed-off state.

Is his cock hard from my proximity?

“Are you hard, Cole?”

His throat works, and I follow the motion as his Adam’s apple slides up and down slowly.

“Yeah,” he says through my hold.

“Take his cock out, Tia. Let’s see how hard he is.”

His chest rises rapidly, and his pulse picks up.

My gaze locks onto Tia as she lowers his shorts enough for his cock to spring free, and I lick my lips when her small hand pumps him without instruction. The piercing is wet and shiny, and her thumb spreads his precum over the tip, forcing Cole to thrust his hips toward her in encouragement.

“Good girl,” I praise, my focus now back on Cole. He watches me closely with hooded eyes, full of arousal and expectation. Full of need. “Take me out, Tia.”

Cole’s pupils widen, and he attempts to lick his lips through my fingers, grazing his barbell over my palm. That action alone sends a spurt of precum into my boxers, and I grit my teeth to deny myself the need to slam my mouth against his, punishing his tongue.

“Fuck,” he groans.

Tia’s hand works my belt buckle, then she quickly shoves my pants and boxers down enough to take my cock in her hand, and begins working us at the same time.

Her touch is delicate, soft, and controlled, but right now, I want different, I want him.

I want his rough hand, his feral need, and his dangerous obsession—I want him.

Shifting forward, I grit out into his ear, “Do it, Cole, fist my cock, show her how you like it.” I taunt.

He gulps, the tension between us mounting. It's daring and filled with expectation, a taunt between us. Will he do it? Will he take what he offers?

Heat radiates from his body, and when his thick hand closes around Tia's, my eyes fall closed and my head drops back, unable to focus on anything but the occasional brush of his skin as he guides Tia's hand up and down my shaft.

"Fuck," I breathe out, my voice pained in need.

My hand slips from his face, allowing him to move freely while he works my cock up and down, every stroke better than the last.

"Lucas, please." Longing oozes from each syllable, and I shock myself by wanting to give into him, to allow him my touch.

My hand moves between us while the other rests on the locker beside him, where he remains flush against it. My fingers graze over the tip of his pierced cock, and arousal leaks from me when he moans at the simple touch. Then my palm encompasses Tia's hand, and I pump in time with her.

Electricity flows through me as Cole loses control, and each pump of my cock becomes more erratic, encouraging my hand to do the same.

Ecstasy fills my balls as they draw up, threatening to burst with sheer pleasure.

"That's it, let Tia show you how I like my cock fisted. Fist it like a good boy, Cole."

My eyes snap open to gaze down between us and to witness the moment I allow him to please me.

"Holy shit." His body tenses. "Jesus, Lucas." His mouth falls open, and his cum spurts over my hand, spurt after hot spurt splashing over me.

My own cock erupts, and I revel in the fact that I controlled his orgasm, that I control every-fucking-thing about them both.

"Sooo fucking good," I admit as my eyes roll.

Our chests heave as our orgasms dissipate into oblivion, along with the pleasure I felt only moments ago.

As his cum cools against my skin, I'm hit with a desperate need to banish the feeling.

To pretend I didn't just cum on my brother's hand, even if the evidence proves otherwise.

The walls feel like they're closing in on me, my past coming back in the blink of an eye. Pain in my chest makes it difficult for me to breathe, so I exhale through my nose.

I step back, disconnecting from them and from what we just did.

My fingers fumble to rearrange myself in my boxers, buckling up the zipper. I remain focused on getting out of the changing room as soon as possible.

Spinning on my heels, I ignore them both, grabbing the gym towel off the bench, then wipe away his cum and throw it to the floor.

“Lucas?” Tia starts, but I shake my head, refusing to give her eye contact, refusing to see the disappointment coating her pretty features.

Straightening my shoulders, I march toward the door. I can never let that happen again. I refuse to go back there.

No matter how much I want him.

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CHAPTER
EIGHTEEN



TIA

I rock Mia in my arms. “She has enough milk for the rest of the week, right?” I glance up toward Lucas and smile when his eyes latch onto my chest. He knows he gets more milk from me when I have enough stocked away for Mia.

“Yes, almost a week’s worth.”

He nods. “I need to go over to the club for a meeting about the next fight. Are you sure you’ll be okay here?”

There’s been an odd tension between Cole and him since yesterday, and as much as I’d like to address it, I don’t want to seem like I’m forcing the issue. Lucas needs to realize in his own time how much he wants Cole. We both know he does, hell, we all do. But he can’t continue the push-pull he allows to happen because it’s hurting Cole. It’s hurting us.

Shaking my head to banish the thought, I concentrate on the here and now. “Why do you always ask me that?” I smile back at him and his overprotectiveness. “We have security, which I’m pretty sure is unnecessary, and if I go out, I go with one of you. Mia and I are going to have some tummy time, aren’t we, sweet pea.” I tickle Mia’s tummy, and she gifts me with a soft gurgle.

Lucas's lips quirk. "Okay." He slams his laptop shut, places it in his bag, and moves around the table, dropping a kiss on both of our heads before heading toward the door. As soon as the door closes, I lift Mia into my arms. "We're going to have the best day together, just you and me, sweet pea." She coos, then shoves her fist in her mouth.

Jace took Harper to school this morning, then joined Cole at the gym. They have a big fight coming up, and the sponsors are people they're wanting to impress, so both guys have taken to training Stone. They say it's because he's built so solid there's no shifting him. If you touch him, you crumble, and his face is always so stone-faced. That made me giggle coming from someone as serious as Lucas.

But when I saw him for myself, I knew there was so much more to him than the façade he maintains.

The man has scars, deep scars. And each one of them tells a story.

One I'm intrigued to hear.



MIA WHINES AGAIN, and I pick her up to rub her back; she's been restless all morning, and I swear it's because she's a daddy's girl.

My phone vibrates, and when I reach over the couch to grab it and discover the school calling me, my heart sinks with a feeling of dread as anxiety ripples through me. The last time I received a call about Harper, she had been struck by a car after a disagreement with Mrs. Lancaster.

"Hel-llo?" I hate how panicked I get with anything important to do with Harper. The insecurity is still there, even months after gaining full custody of her. I feel like at any minute it could all be cruelly taken away.

"Miss Jones?"

"Yes. This is she." My heart races, and I struggle to breathe as air lodges in my throat.

"Oh, please don't worry, Miss Jones. I'm just calling to inform you that Harper has been sick during class; is it possible for you to collect her from school?"

I'm already moving around the apartment, gathering the keys and my purse while juggling Mia and slipping my feet into my sneakers.

“Of course. I’ll be right there.” I nod, even though I know she can’t see me.

“Thank you. See you soon.”

Taking a deep breath to collect myself, I end the call and head toward the door while dialing Jace. Opening the door, I gesture for Kem to step inside. His eyebrows furrow as I thrust Mia into his arms. The call rings out, and I sigh before dialing Lucas. With my phone tucked into my neck, I fix the straps to Mia’s baby carrier.

“What’s wrong?” he asks, but I ignore him as I listen for Lucas to pick up.

“Great, no answer,” I grumble while calling Cole.

“They’re in a meeting,” Kem responds. My shoulders drop, but I shake my head; I’m acting irrationally.

“Harper is sick, she threw up in class.”

My eyes meet Kem’s, and he gifts me with a nod, his lip quirks up at the side, and I narrow my eyes. “Jesus, Tia. My kid gets sick all the time. Trust me, it’s fine. I’ll drive you over to the school, we’ll pick her up. She’ll be settled in her own bed within the hour.” He shrugs like it’s nothing.

But in reality, this is the first time I’ve ever had to deal with my daughter being ill. It’s so far out of my comfort zone, which is ridiculous, given I’m her mother. “What if she has a fever?” I ask while chewing on my fingernail.

“Then we give her some Tylenol, or we call the doctor,” Kem throws over his shoulder as he bends down to assist with Mia.

“I’d prefer the doctor.” I nod as he expertly straps Mia into her car seat. The guy is happily married and has two small daughters of his own, it’s what won Jace over to him when STORM Enterprise sent a bunch of security details for them to meet. Why the guys feel the need to give me a security detail, I’ll never know, but I will not lie and say the extra reassurance and set of hands when the guys aren’t around isn’t a bonus when I have two little ones to deal with.

“There, all set.” Kem clicks the buckles in place, then lifts Mia’s car seat as we head out the door.



KEM PULLS into the parking lot, and I glance over my shoulder toward Mia, then scan the baby mirror and sag into my chair. Great, she's asleep.

"Can you watch her?"

Kem's hands tighten on the steering wheel, and his lips pull into a thin line, his usual carefree expression gone and replaced with a stoic commanding one. "You know I'm meant to go everywhere with you, Tia." His sharp eyes meet mine.

I look to Mia again, and she's blowing bubbles through her plump lips, in a deep slumber. The moment I move her, all hell will break loose. My temple throbs, and anger builds inside me, this is ridiculous. I glare at him. "You do realize the moment I move her she's not going back to sleep until tonight, right?" He winces, knowing I'm telling the truth with how unsettled she's been lately. "Seriously, Kem, I'm calling into the nurse's office, through that door right there"—I point to the door that takes you to the school office—"then I'm grabbing Harper and coming straight back out. What could go wrong?"

He drags a hand through his unruly hair, looking completely flustered. "Fine. But hurry." He nods toward the school, and I grin triumphantly as I swing open the car door and rush toward the school.

Stepping into the office, I brush my hands down Cole's oversized T-shirt and cringe. I look like a train wreck. My hair is in a messy ponytail, then throw in my ripped jeans and sneakers, I look like a messy mom who doesn't have her shit together. Self-doubt rises in my chest as I glance around at the immaculate receptionist glaring up at me like I'm trash, and all the insecurities that reside inside me, placed there by Mrs. Lancaster, reemerge tenfold, always made to feel not good enough.

"Can I help you?"

My palms become sweaty as my pulse races, and I drag my hands over the thin T-shirt once again. She scrunches her nose, and a sneer curls her enhanced lips.

No doubt the Lancasters have given her the lowdown on what a bad mom I am, not to mention a bunch of lies thrown in for good measure.

Jace wanted her to move schools and start afresh, but I didn't want to upset her by taking her away from her friends. She's been through enough change. I need to accept the circumstances for what they are because, at the end of the day, the education the Lancasters were providing for Harper is incredible, moving her really isn't an option.

Nope, I've got to suck it up and deal with the pumped-up assholes who think they're better than me.

I straighten my shoulders, raise my chin, and glare back at her. "I'm Harper Matthews's mom. I'm here to collect her."

Her lip twitches, making her look like a weird villain from a horror movie.

"I thought you had a baby too?" Her sharp eyes drill into me, making it difficult for me to swallow, but as I replay her question, I feel something is off.

"She's in the car sleeping." I glance over my shoulder, then meet her glaring eyes that cause me to panic at how she must have interpreted my response. "With her dad. He's in the car too." She doesn't need to know it's Kem in the car, only that I'm not the mom she thinks I am. A reckless, careless mom who abandons her kids. I'm a good mom.

"Of course," her voice drawls out in feigned nicety, and the hairs on my arms stand up. "Follow me." She steps out from behind the counter and gestures toward the corridor. I follow behind her until we reach the principal's office, and she gifts the door with a simple knock before opening it, stepping aside, and sweeping her hand to wave me in.

I step into the office, and the window opposite me is wide open, the cool air hits my face, and I break out in a chill at the coldness filling the room.

When the door clicks shut, my eyes drop to the floor where my little girl's sneaker pokes out from behind the principal's desk. Rushing to the side, I drop to my knees, and Harper lies motionless on the carpet.

My little girl is unconscious. Panic spreads through me, and as I touch her face, a familiar feeling of being watched sweeps over me and sickness rolls in my stomach as I turn in time to see Mrs. Lancaster push a needle into my neck.

My vision blurs, and I gasp for air, my body wobbles, and my chest tightens. Dread ripples through me at her sinister smile. "I'm about to take back what belongs to me," she sneers.

Slowly, ever so slowly, my world tilts on its axis before everything goes black.

CHAPTER
NINETEEN



TIA

My neck stings, my wrists burn, my mouth is dry, and a throbbing pain lances through the base of my skull, making my memory hazy as I try to recall why I feel so odd.

Like a lightning bolt, Harper's lifeless body flashes to the forefront of my mind, and I bolt upright from the awkward position I was lying in on the floor. My vision takes a moment to focus, then fear grips my chest, constricting it tighter and tighter with each second ticking by.

I'm in a dark basement with cement walls and floor, and there's a lone window so high I won't be able to reach it. Plus, it has a padlock on the latch. Then my eyes dart toward the heavy-looking door, and I know, without a shadow of a doubt, there's no escape. I'm meant to be in here, shackled by cable ties, with my wrists thrust behind my back.

Panic squeezes my chest when I don't see Harper, and tears spill down my face. "Harps?" My voice is gruff, and I clear my throat to speak louder. "Harper!" My eyes flick around the damp, dark room, searching each corner for her, but there's only the echo of my voice.

Fear takes over, and I suck in a sharp breath. The violent beat of my heart fills my ears as I struggle to comprehend the terror washing over me.

It's so strong, so overwhelmingly powerful, that I feel like someone has ripped open my chest and torn out my heart.
It's brutal.

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JACE

“I want fucking answers! You said you had a tracker on them, a tracker, Lucas. Fucking track them!” I stab my finger in my brother’s direction as I unravel.

When our clerk interrupted our meeting, we all knew it had to be because of something serious, something had happened to Thalia. Truth be told, I knew something had happened to Harper too, I could feel it in my gut.

Something was seriously wrong.

Like, right now, I can feel that my little girl is scared. I can feel her fear deep inside me; it clings to me in a form of pain so strong I suspect my legs will buckle at any second and my heart will give out, but I refuse to give in to the fear taking over me. Not when they need me.

“The tracker isn’t working, I don’t understand it.” Lucas shakes his head again. His hair is a frantic mess, his shirt sleeves are rolled high, his collar is wide open, and pain is etched on his face as his fingers scramble over the keys of his computer.

“You think they know we have trackers in them?” Cole asks. His fingers are steepled with his elbows resting on his knees. Out of the three of us, he’s the most controlled. Of course he is, his baby girl didn’t get taken. As soon as the thought enters my head, I regret it and guilt slices through me as I glance down toward Mia squirming in her bouncer. Jesus, this is fucked up. They’re both our babies, and I’d give anything for them.

Any-fucking-thing.

A sudden need to reassure her floods me, so I go over and lift her from the seat. At her little heart beating against mine and the scent of Thalia on her clothes, I nuzzle into her, then she pulls my hair in her fist and gurgles. Maybe it’s me who needed the reassurance.

“I’ve contacted STORM Enterprises; Owen is on his way.” Lucas’s voice floats around me in the haze of my rage and my devastation while Mia clings to me, grounding me and keeping all my frustrations locked down tight.

COLE

Jace holds Mia close to his chest. He's one step away from exploding, I can feel it in the hostile electricity that runs through the room at warp speed. Glancing up when Mia makes a soft cooing noise, I can't help but be grateful my daughter has the ability to transform the man I know he can be. Our family is the key to tying us all together, to creating a peace among us that none of us thought was possible. Nor could live without.

A devotion so strong we're drowning in its darkness.

"Screw Owen. We need the O'Connells, it's about fucking time they stepped up," Jace clips out, but his voice remains low, as if to save Mia from his bite.

Adrenaline pumps through me with renewed vigor, and I jump to my feet, quick to support my brother. "He's right. They're the fucking Mafia!"

Lucas's eyes snap up from over the top of the computer screen to meet mine. He gives me a sharp nod before pushing back on his chair to stand, then grabs his car keys. "Let's go."

"Can I come?" Our eyes all snap to Kem's. If I wasn't so angry with him for letting Tia go into school alone, I'd actually feel sorry for the guy. He's been sitting in the corner of the room, his leg bouncing so much so I wanted to snap the fucker off. Besides tapping on his phone and chewing his fingernails, the worry lining his features showed his concern. Jace insisted on him not being part of our discussion, but Lucas wanted him onboard since he's part of STORM.

My eyes lock onto his swollen jaw, where Jace dislocated it after finding out about Tia and Harper's disappearance, and I can't help wanting to mirror his action but cause him more permanent damage, something more deserving for our missing girls. If they're hurt, I'll . . .

"Do it." He stands and stretches his arms out. "Please, do it. I know you want to. I deserve it, I fucked up." Anger percolates in my bloodstream, the fury I feel toward him unheard of in me. I want him to pay. I want to punish him for his shitty choices and our girls suffering the consequences of those choices. Suffering. The sickening thought rolls my stomach.

Something snaps inside me, and a foreign sound leaves my chest. A roar so loud I barely register Jace leaving the room with a startled and shrieking Mia.

My fists pummel into him, one after the other, and every part of my anger, frustration, and aggression unleashes on the man we trusted to protect our girls.

He falls to the floor too easily, giving himself over to my pain and allowing me to expel my rage onto him. As I land blow after blow, the fear oozes from me and bleeds into his eyes, as if he knows I'm capable of killing him.

A warmth heats my shoulder, and in that split second, my anger is dissipated by a simple touch. "Enough. He's had enough." Lucas's smooth, controlled voice filters through my senses, and as always, he infiltrates my bloodstream, a bond like no other.

Apart from her.

Our girl.

"Enough," he repeats before stepping back, taking the connection with him.

I drop my fist and swipe the splattering of his blood from my face.
If there was ever any doubt of our devotion to our family, it's clear now.
We're drowning in a sea of darkness, but our darkness binds us. It
shows our devotion, it makes us complete.

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CHAPTER
TWENTY



TIA

The locks sliding open have me startling and shuffling back on my ass until my wrists are pressed against the wall.

My head swims, and my breasts ache to release milk, and the soul-destroying feeling of not knowing where my daughter is has panic crippling my ability to breathe.

Heels click against the cement, along with a thud of heavy boots as the room closes in around me. When I finally gather the courage to look up and face my captors, I'm not surprised to see the sheer glee on Mrs. Lancaster's face. She always was a joyous bitch in my misery.

"Where's Harper?" I snap out, raising my chin with a confidence I don't feel. "If you hurt her—" A sharp slap across my face forces my head to snap to the side.

"Shut your filthy mouth. I refuse to allow you to speak her name any longer."

My heart hammers, tears spring to my eyes, and copper fills my mouth, but I swallow it down, determined not to give her the satisfaction of knowing my pain.

"Is she okay?" I mumble, unable to help myself.

“My granddaughter is fine. Away from the likes of you and those sick bastards.” The spite and hate in her voice are clear.

I jolt on her words; this is the first time she’s referred to Harper as anything but her charge. I’d always been conscious of the fact that Mrs. Lancaster was trying to replace me as a mother, but she never mentioned wanting to be a grandmother. Let’s face it, the woman does everything in her power to seem younger than she is.

“Granddaughter?” My mouth runs away with me as I ignore the sting of my lip and seek answers.

Her lip curls up in a sneer. “That’s right, granddaughter. Of course, to have the courts grant me custody I would have had to make that known, and that’s not something my husband or I wanted, given the circumstances.”

My mind races with possibilities. She’s Jace’s mom? She can’t be. Jace’s mom was a crackhead; he found her overdosed body. He had one small photo of them both together, and Mrs. Lancaster does not resemble the petite blonde in his photo, not in the least.

“I can see the confusion on your face. You never were the sharpest tool in the box, Thalia.” The use of my full name has me flinching. Only Jace uses that name on me.

“That’s right. My son, Martin, disappeared,” she spits out with vitriol.

Holy shit, she’s Martin’s mom?

“And I’m convinced that you had something to do with it.” Her tone is laced with so much bitterness and promise, I tremble.

My lips part and air whooshes from my lungs at knowing Martin has met his demise. I quickly try to school my reaction to her bombshell, but the eagle-eyed prissy bitch didn’t miss it. She never misses a damn thing.

“You took something that belonged to me, now I take something that belongs to you.”

Terror floods me at her words, and tremors take over my body. “Please,” I beg.

Her hand snaps out, yanking my head back by my hair. “I’m going to make you pay, you little slut. Then I’m going to destroy you and those screwups you call family.” I whimper at the venom in her tone. She hates me, she actually hates me.

A tear falls down my face, and she smirks at the reaction I have to her words.

One small glimmer of hope remains inside me when she turns her back. She wants Harper, and she believes she's her granddaughter, and the longer she believes that, the better.

I can only hope she doesn't discover the truth.

She releases my hair, then digs her fingers into my face so deep I wince at the sharp pain her nails create, she presses them deeper, grinning like an evil Cheshire cat at the whimper that clogs in my throat. Then she shoves me back so hard my head bounces off the wall, causing stars to gather before my eyes.

Right before she steps through the door, her clicking heels come to a halt.

"Oh, and Thalia?" My head falls forward to face her. "You remember Viggo." She smirks as she breezes past the guard holding the door open.

As my eyes connect with the man glaring back at me, memories assault me. Memories I pushed so far into the recesses of my mind I'd hoped they were lost forever.

My ability to breathe is stolen from me, and his menacing, piercing stare locks me in place as flashback after flashback send me reeling back in time, causing my throat to constrict in utter terror.

All has been kept hidden in the back of my mind so deep, I was sure it would never surface again, had hoped it would never surface again.

Lost for an eternity.

My eyes close on their own accord, trying to block out his face, the face I never wanted to see again. But when darkness encompasses me, all I see is him—the little boy with the lost eyes—and then I'm catapulted back to a time when I was witness to his inhumane suffering at the hands of numerous men. Including the one he trusted the most.

A harsh slap to my face causes the split on my lip to tear open further and tears to flow down my face.

The sound of his zipper makes me want to vomit.

"Open," he demands, his voice deep and twisted. Knowing too well what happens when I don't listen, my robotic mouth falls open like it was only yesterday he pushed his dick into my small mouth, while the sound of skin slapping against the boy began.

Time after time they took from him, rendering him powerless to their sick actions.

Until I gave him the power back.

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-ONE



LUCAS

We stride toward Bren's office in a dark warehouse about an hour away from our home.

My skin crawls with a need to find them, knowing too well that nothing good has come from their absence. I blame myself because I've been withholding information that would leave me too transparent and not in control, and I need the control.

My hand finds the knife in my pocket, and I graze my thumb over the smooth wood again and again. It's my protection, always my protection, when I need it the most.

One of Bren's younger brothers eyes us as we approach, and his lip quirks up when he sees Mia in Jace's arms. She's restless and wants her mom. I'm sure she can sense the panic and fear coursing through our family, and the thought of her suffering has my feet moving toward Bren's office with a fierce determination for answers and, more importantly, for help.

The brother opens the door for us and steps aside. Of course, they knew we were coming, no doubt STORM Enterprises gave them a heads-up or

the many cameras surrounding the warehouse did. Either way, I don't care, I refuse to leave here until Tia and Harper are found and those twisted fucks are dealt with. I stroke my thumb over my blade, the one that ended Martin, the one that will end them too.

Cole takes the lead, striding into the room like a man on a mission, which we all are.

The mission being the safe return of our girls.

Bren pushes back in his chair and stands. Jesus, the man is tall and broad too. His eyes narrow. "What the fuck are you doing here?"

Okay, so he wasn't aware of us coming. His blue eyes flit toward Mia, who is still squirming in Jace's embrace.

"They took them," Jace spits out, and the sound of his sharp voice causes Mia to cry. He immediately attempts to reassure her, stroking his hand down her back and whispering he's sorry.

Bren's eyes narrow, assessing us.

"They took Tia and Harper," Cole clarifies.

"Who did?"

"Who? Who?!" Jace gets louder on each syllable, as does Mia. "The fucking Lancasters!" He bellows so loud even I jump.

Bren's shoulders sag, and his hand rubs along his jaw. "Con, get Oscar on the phone, and Owen too," he tacks on before who I am now guessing is Con leaves the room with a nod.

He takes a seat, then his eyes lock with mine before he says, "You could have just called."

I stare at the man dumbfounded. *Called?*

"Called? Fucking called? They kidnapped our girls!" Jace is becoming erratic and so is Mia. Cole steps toward her, but as if sensing my gaze, his eyes meet mine, and I shake my head. He can't take her from Jace, she's the only thing keeping him from becoming the man he once was, from becoming Rage.

I step toward Bren's desk, and our glares collide. "I don't think you understand the severity of the situation."

None of them do, and I'm kind of grateful for that right now.

His temple tics as he stares back at me. This man is pigheaded and obtuse, but he has a weakness. He's a family man, and with that thought, I change tactics.

“That baby over there is crying for her momma, do you want to know what else she’s crying for?” Bren glares back at me, his lips pulled into a thin line. “She’s crying because she’s hungry. Her mom gives her the best of everything she has, which means she’s breastfed, and right now, she doesn’t have a mom. What would you do as a man watching his baby cry for your wife and food.” I don’t need to tell him we have enough bottled breastmilk made up to last her almost a week. The relief I feel inside with that knowledge is reassuring.

No, I won’t tell him that.

His eyes soften as he watches Jace soothe Mia, then his body jerks, his hand snaps out toward his phone, and he presses it before lifting it to his ear. “Get me Luca Varros on the fucking phone, now!”

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-TWO



LUCAS

I glance around the table at the members of two prominent Mafia families, alongside the security manager of STORM Enterprises, a firm I'm becoming increasingly convinced is a joint venture of theirs; at least the security part, judging how close they both seem with Owen.

Lorenzo Varros has someone on the inside of the FBI disclosing information to help us, but he's handed the job over to one of his trusted capos, Luca.

"Let me get this straight, the trackers aren't working?" Luca Varros bites out at Owen. The fury in his eyes is enough to make your balls shrivel—he is the epitome of what a Mafia man is expected to be. Dark and deadly.

Owen is tapping away on his laptop, ignoring the glaring I'm pretty sure is penetrating the side of his head.

"Speak!" Luca slams his hand down on the table so hard it shakes beneath me, and the sound only makes Mia cry louder; she's becoming inconsolable. "And can you shut the baby up?" he spits out, not taking his dark eyes away from Owen.

Jace stops pacing, spins on his heel, and slices Luca with his glare. “No, I can’t shut the baby up. She wants her momma and sister back, and right now they’re—”

“Kidnapped, we know.” Oscar holds his hand up to stop Jace from speaking further, and I feel the anger radiating from Jace as he breathes through his nostrils with wide eyes.

I’m about to open my mouth to let him know the severity of situation again, but I’m stopped when the door to the office opens and in walks a tattooed woman with piercings that line her ears. She heads straight toward Jace and Mia. “Hey there, little missy. My name’s Angel, it’s so lovely to meet you.” She coos toward Mia as Jace transfers Mia to his free arm farther away from the woman. Her eyes don’t miss the movement, but she doesn’t question it, then she nods as if she’s agreeing with some inner thought. “How about you follow me? I have somewhere you could change her.” Jace’s eyes meet mine, and the look of despair in them makes my heart skip a beat. He doesn’t want to leave the room, but he wants to settle Mia, he’s torn. But there’s not a chance he would leave her in this moment. Cole shifts in his chair, as if to swap places with Jace, but I shake my head at him, and he pauses.

“I’ll have a plan in place for when you return,” Oscar prompts, saving me from having to persuade Jace.

His shoulders drop, and he nods, then glances at his watch, then back toward me. “She should be in bed by now, Lucas.” Our eyes remain locked, a silent conversation between us. He’s scared for them, and truth be told, I am too. No matter how put together I appear, inside I’m terrified for them. I know the danger they’re in.

It’s why I keep my secrets.

To protect my family.

COLE

As soon as Jace leaves the room, Oscar sits forward in his chair, and his calculating eyes settle on Lucas.

Lucas shrinks back in his seat, and the movement unsettles me. This isn't the guy I know him to be, and I refuse to have him feel intimidated by these jerks, Mafia or not.

"What's your problem?" I snap out to protect my brother.

Oscar's eyes flick toward me, then away just as quickly, as if my presence is so insignificant, he refuses to acknowledge I'm even there. This only enrages me further; my shoulders broaden, preparing for battle.

He pushes a folder toward Lucas. "This is the information we have on the Lancasters"—he taps the folder—"but you know what we have already,

don't you? And you also know why it's so important we get your child back from them, don't you?"

Lucas pales and his body shudders. The man I know disappears in a split second and becomes a shell of the person he is. Terror strikes his face, and before I know what's happening, he leaps from his chair, throwing his guts up into the trash can.

"What the hell is in there?" I point toward the folder as dread fills me. The only thing that could have Lucas reacting this way is the trauma from his childhood, and with that thought, my resolve crumbles.

"The truth," Oscar breathes out, holding my gaze.

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-THREE



JACE

The blonde, tattooed woman is sweet and caring. She has this rough exterior I know through my own experience is a shield. I see the emotions swimming in her eyes; she's genuine and wants to help, but I'm unsure of how much she knows about us.

After all, we're family.

"Do you know who I am?"

Her green eyes meet mine, and she shakes her head. "No. You learn not to ask questions in the Mafia. I just received a call from Finn, heard the baby in the background, and knew I was needed."

"He called you?"

She nods while stroking Mia's cheek as I change her diaper. My little girl's eyes are puffy and rimmed red, but she's stopped crying at least.

"He did. This needed a woman's touch. Besides, I was happy to get out of the house." She smirks, making me smile for the first time since Kem called to say that the girls were taken.

"Do you have kids?"

Her head snaps up from staring down at Mia, and she pauses, as if unsure of how much to share with me, but in that moment, her eyes soften.

Maybe it's the hopelessness fermenting from me or the way I'm clinging onto Harper's giraffe stuffy like it's my lifeline that has her spilling about her family. "I do, four. All very lively. Our house is a mad house. I swear I love my kids, but the stories I could tell you of their antics." She shakes her head. "Last week, my youngest two, Knight and Kingston, dropped my daughter's phone in a bucket of horse shit. It was no accident, trust me." She waves her hand as she speaks, and I can't help but like her enthusiasm for her family. She's good people.

My smile tugs up. "How do you know it wasn't an accident?"

She scoffs, and the sound has my eyes lighting up. "We don't even have a fucking horse." She huffs. "Nor do I want one."

"Then how the hell did they get ahold of horse shit?"

She breaks out into a low chuckle. "Exactly." My lip quirks up at the side on her words.

Harper likes horses. Maybe after this is over, I could see about getting her one. I can see her now in her pink cowgirl boots. Cute as shit. Emotion clogs my throat as the emptiness creeps back in. She might be the one missing but part of me is missing too.

When I fought so hard to find Thalia, I swore I'd never lose her again, yet here we are. And things are worse than ever.

Angel lowers her voice. "They'll do everything they can to help, you know. They're all family men. You need to trust them." Sincerity oozes from her eyes, and I nod.

I only hope she's right and it's not too late.

Because without my girls in my life, it's not worth living.

Her hand strokes my arm in a maternal gesture that doesn't have me wanting to bat away her touch. "Come on, Jace. I'm sure Oscar has news by now."

Hope blossoms in my chest as I finish buttoning up Mia's romper and lift her into my arms, then we make our way back toward the office.

The moment I lock eyes with Lucas, my body tenses tenfold. He's pale, drained, and his eyes scream for me to save him, a look I haven't seen on his face in a long time—the look of trauma.

"What the fuck happened?" I glare toward Oscar and Luca in accusation.

"Your brother began puking." Luca shrugs, as if it's nothing. But it's every-fucking-thing. Lucas has PTSD, and when he's reminded of his

trauma or being alone, he pukes. He's suffered from it since the moment he was placed in Cole's nana's care.

I thrust Mia into Angel's arms—shocking the hell out of her—and pull my shoulders back, ready for action. Then I step toward Oscar, prepared to go to battle for my brother. “You best start talking, motherfucker.”

His lip lifts at the side, goading me while Finn steps into my path.

“Sit your fucking ass down. We have a plan,” Luca booms, forcing me to give him my attention.

“He's right. We have a plan, and I also have a ping on your little girl,” Owen adds. My ass finds a seat right away, and my attention is pulled toward him.

“They must have used a scanner over their bodies that scrambled the signal momentarily, but I have a ping on your little one now.” Owen continues staring at the laptop, without giving me a second glance, and normally, that would bother me, but in all honesty, I couldn't give a shit less as long as his attention is on finding my girls.

“What about Tia?” Cole interrupts.

Owen shakes his head. “Not yet, which leads me to believe they're being kept in different locations.”

Cole's head drops, and my stomach plummets. Not only is this the news we didn't want but it's even worse knowing Thalia has been separated from her little girl, and that will be killing her.

My eyes latch onto Mia, who is now cooing back at Angel as she rocks her in her arms. She needs her mom and sister back, ASAP. With renewed vigor, I straighten in my chair. “Where is she?”

“At the Lancasters' old home address.” Oscar turns to face me. “The property has been empty since the fraud was brought to light, but somehow, they've managed to hang onto it. Therefore, I believe there's more at play here, a lot more.”

“Meaning?” I snap at his evasive response.

Oscar sits forward. “Meaning someone is behind them keeping the house. Someone is protecting them, hence the reason we want the FBI files.”

“And where are we on that?” Lucas asks. The color still hasn't returned to his face, and it makes me wonder what the hell went down during the short time I was out of the room.

“Our man has made a move,” Luca responds dryly and somewhat evasively.

“ETA?” Owen asks.

“No, I don’t have a fucking ETA!” Luca looks like he’s ready to explode. “If your trackers had been working like they should have, I wouldn’t be sitting here right now.”

My blood boils with unadulterated rage. How fucking dare they squabble when my girls are missing, and this prick talks like they’re an inconvenience. “I’m so fucking sorry for keeping you because my kid and woman got kidnapped,” I snipe out, and the disdain oozes from me.

His dark eyes turn toward mine; they’re so cold and calculated I’m forced to suck in a deep breath. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone look so demonic.

“Apology not accepted,” he responds.

The door to the office swings open, and Finn walks in and throws a bulletproof vest in Cal’s direction, and they begin securing their vests. I spring to my feet. “I’m coming with you.”

“That’s not a good idea.” Owen slams his laptop shut and stands. Not for the first time, I’m shocked at his height and build. He’s like a bigger version of Cole. I shake my head at the thought as adrenaline to get Harper back floods me.

“I don’t care what you say. She’s my little girl, I want to be the first person she sees.” His eyes flit toward Luca, and I know who holds the control in this situation. Quickly, I turn toward Bren because he seems to be more reasonable when we mention family.

“She’s probably scared, and she’ll be fucking terrified with you guys going in there. I’m her dad. I’m going.” I cross my arms over my chest and stand firm.

Bren drags his hand over his cropped hair.

“Do you know how to use a weapon?”

Luca’s voice surprises me, and I spin to face him. “Yeah, of course.” I nod, and the glimmer of hope that he’s allowing me in on this mission to save my own fucking child shines through.

He throws a handgun in my direction, and I catch it, check the magazine, and secure it behind my back.

“Oscar, I want a location on Tia, ASAP. Utilize Lucas. Con, Cole you’re locking down this warehouse. Until we have them back, you’re guarding

her.” Bren swoops his hand in Mia’s direction, and Cole and Con nod.

“I want them dead. All of them. I want them gone.” Lucas’s cold voice filters through the air as he stares into space. Something is off with him, and when he tugs his knife from his pocket and strokes it, I know he’s lost the motherfucking plot.

“Are you all ready?” Bren asks. Each man grunts in approval as we leave the room, but, for some reason, my eyes continue to be drawn toward Lucas and his aimless gaze. As I step through the door, dread fills my stomach lined with uncertainty.

Oscar’s voice filters through the door as it swings shut, enclosing him with Lucas and Cole. “I think you and I need to talk. Don’t you?”

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-FOUR



JACE

Staring up at the imposing Victorian mansion, I freeze and my blood turns to ice. The iron gates are open but they're far from welcoming. Vines are growing up the walls of the outside of the building, and it appears empty, with not a single light on, car in sight, or curtains hanging in the windows. No, the place looks abandoned.

My stomach rolls at the eeriness, and the hairs on the back of my neck rise as Owen runs through the plan once again.

I already know what's going to happen, so I zone out as I peer toward the house. Cole explained how scared Thalia would be when coming to visit Harper, and seeing it for the first time, I understand. What our girl has endured at the hands of the Lancasters has been nothing short of cruel, and now that they've overstepped, I've even more reason to want to end them both.

"Two minutes and counting," Owen says into his earpiece.

In two minutes, we will storm the house, and while Cal, Owen, and I go in the front, Luca will cover the back, along with a dozen men, giving me the confidence I need in getting Harper out safely. And Finn, who is scaling

the walls as we speak, will enter from the attic, so we have every angle covered.

Bren has been sent to the Lancasters' abandoned office block. Apparently, Mrs. Lancaster was reported there earlier, so he's intercepting her and bringing her back to Luca's basement. Even the fucking thought of him having a basement sends a chill through me. It's a fucking torture chamber, call it what it is.

"Something feels off," Cal states, voicing my own concerns.

"Yeah," Owen agrees.

"Do you think it's a trap?" Cal turns to face him while I watch the exchange from the back seat of the SUV.

"No. I think there's more to it than we realize." They stare at one another in a silent exchange, and not for the first time tonight, I realize I'm missing a big part of whatever is happening.

"Any word about Thalia?" I ask.

Owen meets my eyes in the rearview mirror. "It won't be long," he voices with a confidence I don't feel.

Cal slices through my thoughts with his next words. "Thirty seconds."

I glance down at the letters tattooed on my fingers: H-E-A-R-T B-R-O-K-E. I had them done the day I thought I'd never see her again, the day she missed my birthday.

As I stare at my fingers and count down in my head, I can only hope I never feel the way I felt the day I got them.

Brutally devastated.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-FIVE



TIA

Viggo thrusts his hips back and forth, over and over. Then he pulls out, and his palm meets my face. The sting from previous hits multiplies, and I stumble into the wall, struggling to stay upright.

His familiar heavy chuckle echoes off the walls, and I know there's more to come. He enjoys toying with me; he always has.

His shaved head is still the same, his gold tooth makes him all the more villainous, and the gold rings on his fingers glisten in the low lighting streaming in from the sole window.

"Lick my boots," his dark voice booms, and I tremble. The way he sneers down at me heightens my terror. "Say, yes, sir."

Before I can even contemplate moving, his hand goes to the back of my head and I'm thrown face down onto the floor. With my hands tied behind my back, I'm unable to break my fall. My chin hits the concrete, and a metallic taste fills my mouth. A strong surge of pain into my skull forces my eyes closed as I sniffle to keep the tears from falling. "Y-y-y . . . yes, sir."

"Lick." His voice is low and calculated, but I move in a flash, remembering how he once kicked me in the face and knocked out the last of

my baby teeth.

My tongue darts out, and I lick over the tip of his boot, grateful for the copper filling my tastebuds.

The sound of him fisting his cock above me threatens to spill the meager contents of my stomach, but I ignore it. Instead, I please him, making a show of dragging my tongue over his dirty work boots.

“Yes. Yes. You’re doing good on the floor for me. Where you belong.”

He bends, grabs me by the hair, then surges his putrid cock into my mouth, making me gag as he plunges as far down as possible. He thrusts his hips over and over, and my jaw hurts from his cruelty. My mind tries to wander, to protect me from the here and now. I imagine the guys and our babies together, enjoying the little tea party Harper recently insisted on them attending. My heart pangs as I scramble to hold onto the memory to give me the strength to see this through.

Then he withdraws his cock with a heavy grunt, and warmth splashes onto my face along with his putrid scent, then a part of me crumbles inside. He’s done it again, taken that piece from me I tried so hard to rebuild. He’s made me feel insignificant, filthy, like I’m nothing but something to use.

His action wasn’t done through love or devotion. It was done with pure evil intent for his own gratification. I want nothing more than to vomit on his boots, but I know how that goes, and I don’t want Harper to see me hurt when I finally have her back in my arms. A lone tear trickles down my face, and I try to push thoughts of her to the back of my mind. She’s no place in my thoughts while I’m in somewhere like this—somewhere cold, dark, and dirty—a place used for the pleasure of monsters.

My little girl should be tucked up in bed, in her princess room, with her sister asleep in her crib next to her. My heart wrenches, and I can’t help the sob that catches in my throat when Viggo wipes his cock down my cheek. The hand in my hair unclenches, and I sag at the release of pressure on my throbbing head.

His calloused fingers run down my face with a tenderness I know to be feigned; the man is a glorified sadist who doesn’t care how he receives his pleasure. “There, there, don’t cry, little one.” I shudder at the words he whispers, the same words that haunted my dreams as a child and forced me to seek sanctuary in Jace’s loving arms. He’d chase away the monsters hiding in the corners of my foster father’s basement with the simple beat of his heart against my ear.

“You grew into a beautiful woman.” He tucks himself into his pants, and I avert my eyes, knowing he can turn at any second.

It keeps me from seeing his fist coming, but my ears ring as my head snaps to the side, and I fall to the ground with a heavy thud.

“Filthy little whore.” He spits onto my face as he looms above me. “I’m going to tear your cunt apart.” He chuckles to himself while I squeeze my eyes closed and give myself over to the hazy sensation filling my head.

As my mind swirls with the memories of Viggo, I close my eyes and search for the familiar warmth that I would cling onto. The surge of strength I would encounter whenever I would seek out the gray eyes staring back at me, holding me both hostage and yet giving me hope.

Even then, they were filled with devotion.

But only now I see it.



MY BODY JOLTS as the memories I tried so hard to block assault me.

At night, they would creep up on me, taking me by surprise, and I’d crawl into Jace’s bed. By this point, they were nightmares jammed together like jagged jigsaw pieces that never quite fit. Jace would stroke my hair to calm me, and my racing pulse would settle, then I’d tell myself it was just a dream, the nightmares weren’t real, the basement wasn’t full of monsters, and they didn’t have a little boy in there with terror in his eyes. It was all just a dream.

Until it wasn’t.

When Viggo opened that basement door, it all came rushing back like it was yesterday.

THALIA AGED EIGHT . . .

I hate going down there, it’s dark. Even when it’s light, it feels like I’m drowning in a sea of darkness.

Martin has been drinking again, and when he drinks, he's mean. He makes me do things to him and other people I don't want to do. If Jace knew, he'd kick him in the balls. But Martin said if I tell him, we'll get split up and I won't ever see him again.

He said the photos they take will make me a model, but I want to draw pictures when I grow up, I don't want to be a model.

Grabbing the snacks off the counter, I glance toward the clock. Jace won't be home until later. He has basketball practice on Fridays, and Martin said he gives the coach extra to train him longer, but I never saw him give coach any money.

My foot wobbles like Jell-O on the top step when I hear them laughing, but when I hear a snuffle, I stop moving. The hairs on my arms stand up, and my tummy does a flip that I don't like.

Someone is being hurt, and I don't know whether to call 911 or not, because the men down there aren't good men, no matter how many times Martin says they are.

"Tia, get your ass down here!" Martin's voice isn't right, and I know he's probably drunk again, but I jog down the stairs before he shouts again and takes my punishment out on Jace when he returns later.

My breath comes out in sharp gasps, and when I see what's happening, I blink, then blink again. The man pulls away from the boy, then another naked man steps forward.

Then when the boy's eyes meet mine, I suck in a sharp gasp for air. His terror filled eyes sear through my chest, and a feeling of need clings to my heart, holding on for dear life. Binding us in a darkness only we share, creating a force between us that gives us the strength we both need.

Martin pulls the snacks from my hand and pats me on the head, and like always, my feet move without me thinking, until my ass finds the chair. I pull my legs up and hug them close. My lip trembles and my eyes go blurry, but I refuse to cry, because the boy staring at me needs me to be strong.

Each time his face crumples in pain, I dig my fingernails into the palm of my hands, hating they're doing this to him. Hating they're causing such pain to him.

"Say, please, sir."

I scowl in Viggo's direction, then wish I hadn't witnessed what he's doing to the boy, so I dart my eyes away. "Please, sir." His voice is broken, like a robot, and I wonder if it's always been like that or if they caused it.

As the room moves around us, he suffers in silence, apart from the odd whimper that makes me shudder. Each time he whimpers, he clamps his mouth shut, as if trying not to. As if he's trying to protect me.

In the darkness of this hell, he becomes my light.

Maybe we can drown here in our darkness, together.

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-SIX



TIA

No sooner than Viggo stomping from the room, allowing my body to sag in relief, does the door open again. The clicking of her heels along with someone else's shoes scuffing the stone floor has my head lifting from only just burying it in my lap, where I was using my jeans to wipe away the remnants of his evil action.

My eyes roam over the man standing behind Mrs. Lancaster. He carries a briefcase and has a professional appearance, with black pants and a white shirt. His glasses sit on the tip of his nose, and he has a weaselly appearance to his face. I shrink back against the wall when his black demonic eyes land on mine. He's not a good man, it's radiating off him like a toxin.

"I want her blood taken for assurance she's fit and healthy. The proprietors require all their subjects to be screened before they accept them for bids."

A gasp lodges in my throat as I try to register her words. *Subject? Bids?* Just what the fuck are they planning on doing to me? And does this affect Harper too?

Stars dance in my eyes as panic builds so strong my chest feels like it's closing in.

A tsk of disgust oozes from Mrs. Lancaster. “Ignore her, she always was such a drama queen.” Then she claps her hands. “Hurry, I have a chopper coming to collect her shortly.”

The man, who I now think is a doctor, kneels beside me, and I attempt to shuffle away, but my mind is hazy. When a blow hits my cheek, I’m not even sure if I’m still upright, but the throbbing pain in my temple clues me in. She hit me so hard I hit the floor.

So when the sleeve of my shirt is ripped open and a sharp sting in my arm occurs, I’m little more than a “subject.”

My eyes flutter closed as I float into a dream, or is it a memory?

I’m not quite sure, but his presence brings me warmth, and those gray eyes bring me love.

And when he accepts my gift, he brings me relief.

Because I know everything will be okay.

I know I’m just as devoted as they are.

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JACE

The moment Owen gave the signal, I tore out of the SUV and stormed toward the property.

We keep our bodies low as we make our way toward the heavy wooden doors. Then, on signal, Owen kicks them in, and while I hear multiple guns being fired from the inside, I remain on target.

I need to get to Harper and bring her out safely.

It takes a minute for my eyes to adjust to the darkness of the room, and I wish I'd had the foresight to grab a pair of the night vision goggles that Cal and Owen wear. Following through with the plan, Luca and his team clear the ground floor before moving toward the basement, and my stomach flips thinking about what could be down there. I know without a shadow of doubt I was purposely kept out of there. Dread lines my stomach with each

step I take up the spiral wooden staircase toward the first floor and farther away from that basement.

On reaching the landing, Owen uses his hand to signal for Cal to go left, while I remain with him and follow the corridor to the right.

Movement catches my eye, and I'm relieved when Owen saw it too and shoots him between the eyes as he steps out from beyond a door. My hand tightens on my gun, and my heart races as I get closer to her room.

Owen turns to face me and gestures for me to step to the side of the bedroom door. I give him a nod and hold my breath. With anxiety rippling through me, he swings open the door, then freezes in the doorway, causing my whole body to flood with dread. His demeanor has me moving without thinking, and the moment I step up behind him, my heart tears in two and falls to my feet. Only dread now consumes me.

Timothy Lancaster has a gun trained on Harper's forehead where she lies on the bed, appearing to be asleep. A whimper escapes my throat at knowing my daughter is still very much alive, judging by the way her chest moves up and down, but is potentially moments away from that not being the case.

"Here's what's going to happen." My eyes flick up toward Timothy, and my mouth becomes dry. His suit is crumpled, he has red rings beneath his eyes, and his usually careful sideswept hair is a mess. He's unraveling, and it's terrifying because this guy holds my daughter's life in his hands. "You're going to let me leave here, and I let her live."

"You won't get far," Owen spits out, and I want to throat punch him, rendering him speechless. That's my little girl's life he's toying with.

"Your men are going to leave the property, I have a chopper landing"—he glances at his watch—"in two minutes." My heart skips a beat at how close we came to losing them. "When I board the chopper, I release the girl."

"You're a wanted man, Mr. Lancaster." What the fuck is Owen saying? My eyes implore him to shut the fuck up.

"That's Senator Lancaster to you," he quips with malice in his sneer.

Owen chuckles, and I seriously consider putting the gun to the motherfucker's head. "Ex," he taunts. I breathe through my nostrils, trying to rein in the rage I feel. The way I want them to suffer is nothing compared to anything I've ever felt before. If that gun wasn't pointed at my little girl, I'd tear them both apart, limb by limb.

“Do you think you’ll get far?” Owen goads, and I step forward, prepared to put an end to this bullshit, but a hand signal behind his back makes me still. It’s only then I realize he’s biding time. He has a plan.

“I’ve always managed to evade justice. I’m sure I’ll manage.” He smiles.

The sick fuck seriously thinks we’ll let him get away with this?

“I think we’d rather see to your justice, yours and your wife’s.” Owen grins.

Timothy turns his head, a sadistic smile encompassing his face and transforming him from a put-together businessman to a sinister monster in the blink of an eye. “Ahhh, the office.” He smirks. Owen jolts at his words, and my mind whirls at the insinuation.

The sound of a helicopter approaching has my pulse jumping with anticipation.

“So, what’s it going to be?” Timothy presses the gun harder to Harper’s head, and my legs shake with a need to end this. The man doesn’t look the least bit fazed by ending my daughter’s life, proving that he never cared about her. So why the hell go to all this effort?

I suck in a sharp breath as his finger hovers over the trigger. A black shadow passes over the window, and Timothy turns, and in that moment, the window shatters, a rope drops into the room, and the dark shadow pounces onto Timothy, tugging his head back. Shock mars his features, the gun wobbles in his hand, and I freeze, then it falls to floor, and my gaze snaps up to see the shadow slicing Timothy’s throat.

Blood spills onto the floor as Timothy’s wide eyes fall closed on a stuttered gasp.

Owen springs forward. “You weren’t meant to fucking kill him!”

Timothy’s lifeless body falls to the floor with a heavy thud, and I rush toward Harper. I scoop her into my arms, and my whole body shudders with relief as I press kisses to her hair, rocking her gently in my arms.

“You said don’t maim him.” The shadow whips off his balaclava and gives me a wink.

“Don’t maim him means don’t kill him,” Owen snaps while bending down and retrieving Timothy’s phone from his inside jacket pocket.

The sound of the helicopter becomes distant, as if retreating, and the pounding in my head becomes lighter with the steady beat of Harper’s

heart. I cling to her tighter for comfort. “You’re safe now, Harps. I’m here. Daddy is here,” I whisper into her soft hair.

“You need to be more specific with your demands. How the fuck do you orchestrate a rescue mission without being specific?” Finn continues to argue his now meaningless point with Owen, who is tapping away on his phone.

“Oscar, tell Bren to abort mission.”

Finn stills at Owen’s words.

When Owen turns to face Finn, I see the anguish on his face. “I think it’s an ambush.”

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CHAPTER
TWENTY-SEVEN



BREN

There's a deep gut-wrenching feeling in my stomach I can't seem to shake, and I fucking hate it. It rarely occurs, but each time it has, it's been followed by something significant. I shake my head, trying to shrug it off. The sooner I sort this mess out, the quicker I can get back to my life. My family.

Thalia has no idea she has a sister, same as Sky, and I intend to keep it this way. No way in hell am I allowing their fucked-up lives into ours. We have enough to deal with. If there wasn't a kid involved, I'd have shown them the door, but I'm a father and not completely heartless like my bastard of a da.

As I drive toward the old office complex, I can't help but wonder why the fuck Mrs. Lancaster would be there. The place has been shut down and abandoned for months now. Maybe she's hiding something.

My cell rings, and I press the answer button on my steering wheel. "Bren?" The urgency behind Oscar's tone is practically unheard of, causing my blood to turn to ice. My brother is usually so in control I doubt his face even alters when he's coming.

"Yeah," I grunt.

“Bren!” Oscar yells, and it’s unlike him to show any emotion that isn’t carefully orchestrated. “You need to turn the fuck around. I’ve reason to believe it’s an ambush.”

I scoff at him; I’d like to see them fucking try.

“We have intel from the FBI. It’s a human trafficking ring, Bren. The Carrera family is involved and had a chopper waiting at the house. It’s on its way to the office block,” he rushes out.

My body stills, and fear tightens my chest. Sky was part of a human trafficking ring. My girl was put in a fucking crate to be sold off to some rich, twisted fuck before she was intercepted at my warehouse. The Carreras are a fucked-up Mafia family off the West Coast, and every once in a while, they try and dip their toes onto our turf, then we’re forced to remind them to fuck off back to their seedy hell.

I lick my lips as worry and guilt eat at me viciously. They’re savages, and I let the poor girl get taken, and now she will be handed over to some sick fucks. “You think they have Thalia there?” I ask, knowing the answer before he even says it.

“I do.” Oscar sighs, as if reading my mind. Let’s face it, he more than likely can, the man is a genius.

I sit up straighter, pushing my foot onto the accelerator.

“Tell me everything I need to know,” I demand.

Oscar seethes down the line, and I imagine my brother unraveling, counting in his head to try and regain the control slipping through his fingers. He clears his throat, and I listen intently.

“There’s a chopper six minutes behind you. It’s going to take Tia; she’s been sold on the black market.” I slam my fist against the steering wheel. *Son of a bitch*. “She’s . . .” He remains silent for a moment longer, then spits his words out so fast I almost miss them. “She’s pregnant, Bren.” I hear him swallow hard. “They’ve registered her as pregnant on the black market.” My heart sinks.

She’s not just in danger, her baby is too. I don’t want to even imagine the horror that she would endure. Death would be welcome, that’s for sure.

“The kid okay?” I grunt out, changing the subject.

“Yes, she’s fine. Sedated but fine.”

I nod, even though I’m unsure if he can see me. A sliver of relief flows through my body at knowing the little one is okay.

I swerve through oncoming traffic, determined to get there quicker, to give myself more time.

“Bren, please.” Oscar lowers his voice, which leads me to believe one of my brothers is nearby. “It’s suicide.”

“Gonna get her back to her family,” I respond with little emotion. It’s the right thing to do, I know it is. I’d never forgive myself if I did nothing and effectively handed her over to the scum of the earth.

Something tells me the girl has been through enough. I might not want her as family, but I sure as shit want to get her home to hers.



“YOU’VE GAINED ENOUGH TRACTION, you’re nine minutes ahead now.” Oscar’s voice is monotone as he delivers me information about the offices. He explains it’s like a maze of corridors and I’m best to go for the basement first, as that’s most likely where she’s being kept, then as soon as I enter the premises, I turn left and follow the stairs down. I commit it all to memory, thankful I put a bulletproof vest on before leaving my warehouse and saved a little time.

“Con is on his way in a chopper, backup following him,” Oscar says as I approach the gates. I nod, knowing it won’t make a difference. “Park toward the left side of the building, zone A. There’s a small window leading to the basement, if she’s in there, you might be able to get her through it.”

I nod again, and glance at my satnav: two minutes from my destination.

“Bren?”

“Yeah.”

There’s silence before he speaks again, and a chill spreads over me while waiting. “Thank you.”

I swallow past the lump lodged in my throat at my brother’s words, knowing the enormity behind them. Knowing I was always the one to protect him. Then I clear my throat without addressing him, he doesn’t need me to, he knows I care. They all do.

Slowing on approach, I’m surprised to see how many cars are here, and that feeling of dread hits me tenfold as I casually turn through the open gates of the office block and follow Oscar’s instructions. I take note of the small window and wince; there’s no way in hell she will fit through that.

Still, we gotta try.

“Goin’ in” is the last thing I say to my brother before I open the car door and push it closed. I scan the lot for cameras and am relieved to find them pointing toward the metal fencing lining the lot. Moving quickly, I keep to the shadows. It’s a little after 5:00 a.m., so there’s still a few around, enough for me to get to the door undetected.

I check the handle, and surprise and dread fill me when it opens. Voices filter through as I step inside.

“How much did you say we would get again?” someone asks, but I don’t wait around for a reply.

I move in the opposite direction, turning left. When someone steps out in front of me, I wrap my thick hands around his neck and snap it with ease, then drag his lifeless body back into the room he appeared from and dump him to the floor before moving forward.

Reaching the stairs, a door above me opens. “Hey!” I lift my gun with the silencer attached and put a bullet through his head. His body slumps to the floor, then falls down a dozen or so stairs.

Part of me was hoping I could make it to the basement undetected, but the other part knew I would have no such luck. As soon as either of those bodies are discovered, it’s game fucking over for me, and potentially, Tia and her baby too.

My feet move quickly down the stairs with that thought in mind, and when I reach the bottom, I’m surprised to see no one here. A heavy metal door is dead bolted in three places, and I rush to push each of them aside.

One.

My heart pumps faster.

Two.

My blood races.

Three.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-EIGHT



B^{ren} Glancing around the dark room, I struggle to make anything out in the poor lighting and sweat beads on my forehead. I don't have long and am acutely aware of it. I already hear the thunder of footsteps above us. Moving deeper into the basement, a small whimper draws my attention toward a corner of the room. My hand fumbles in my pocket to locate my phone, then I hold it up and put the torch on, shining it in the direction of the low noise. A bundle of something is scrunched up in the corner, and a surge of regret hits me like a Mack truck. Fuck, I'm a bastard for letting this happen.

Shaking off the guilt, I move toward the shadow, and knowing it's her, makes every step heavier with what I'm about to discover, and I hate myself for it.

She shuffles back, as if trying to hide. Her head is buried into her knees, and her hands are bound behind her back.

"Tia?" I question as I kneel in front of her, unsure whether to touch her or not. Her entire body trembles, and my heart aches for the poor girl. "Tia, sweetheart. You're safe now. But I gotta get you outta here." I glance toward hushed voices heading our way. "Gonna get you home to your babies. To Harper."

Her head snaps up, and her eyes latch onto mine, and just like that, my stone heart plummets to the floor and the air is sucked from my lungs. My mouth is so dry I can't even fucking swallow. Staring into her wide blue

eyes is like a knife slicing through my heart, because she is a replica of my wife. My Sky. My fucking everything.

The woman I protected from day one. Who engrained herself so deep inside me, I never want to be without her, and the thought is too much to bear.

My blood is frozen, making it difficult for me to move, to breathe, to function.

A wave of nausea rolls in my stomach as her face merges with Sky's. They're so much alike, and I hate myself for not protecting her as I should have. Hate myself for not allowing Sky to meet her.

Jesus, I need to make this fucking right.

In that moment, while our eyes remain locked and my heart freefalls, I know what I have to do. My head drops forward.

There's not a doubt in my mind that what I'm going to do is the right thing, the only thing. I need to give my girl her family back, at whatever cost.

Without realizing what I'm doing, my thumb swipes away a lone tear streaming down her dirty face. The swelling, bruising, cuts, and dirt that coat her pretty features make my blood boil and my jaw grind. How anyone can treat a woman or child like this is beyond me. They're monsters, sick fuckers who deserve to have their lives extinguished . . . painfully.

"Harper?" Her voice is weak but laced in concern for her little girl.

I take out my penknife and lean over her, cutting the cable ties, and she winces.

"Harper?" she repeats.

Her question makes me jolt, the sound of her voice different from Sky's yet familiar. "Harper is with her dad, whichever fucker he is." I attempt to joke and can't help but curl my lip into a smirk at the thought of this scrap of a woman taking on three men. She must have fire in her. Like my woman.

A sound outside the room has her body shuddering and her lips parting in terror. I glance over my shoulder and know time is running out. I need to get her out of here. ASAP.

Moving quickly, I unclip my bulletproof vest, but my eyes remain locked on her. "My name is Bren O'Connell." I hold her gaze, and she gives me a nod. "Gonna help ya, sweetheart." Her eyes widen and fill with tears,

and her lip wobbles, but I ignore it, I need to remain focused. “Now, can you stand?”

“Ye-esss, I think so.” She tries to avoid eye contact.

“Ain’t gotta be scared of me, sweetheart. I’m gonna get you home.” She nods and pushes back on the wall. Then she wobbles before righting herself, her strength is clearly drained, but I don’t have time to second-guess my plan. I clip my vest onto her in case she needs an extra layer of protection.

If only I gave her the protection when she needed it the most—before this shitstorm went down.

“Gonna need you to be strong.” I watch her, then take her delicate chin between my fingers. She’s as cold as ice, and I wince thinking about the conditions she’s been kept in. Once again, I shake off the guilt. I fucked up of epic proportions but don’t have time to dwell on it either. Every fucking second counts. “Can you be strong, Tia? For your girls.” I tack on the latter to give her the strength I know she needs.

She straightens her shoulders, and I couldn’t be prouder. She’s a force to be reckoned with, only now I just wish I could be there to see it.

“We don’t have long. I’m going to lift you to that window, then you’re gonna run like your ass is on fire to my SUV.” I point toward my vehicle in the distance. “You drive toward the gate and don’t let anything stop you. You hear me?” I look at her pointedly, and she nods and stares back at me wide-eyed.

“Gonna need you to do something for me.” I hand her the keys to my car. Her small hand shakes as she takes them from me, and I cringe at her delicate features so like my wife’s.

“Okay.” Her voice is so low and scratchy I barely hear her.

I gently tip her chin up to face me. “Need you to tell my woman something.”

She nods again, her expectant eyes not leaving mine this time.

“Need you to tell her, ‘Forever.’”

“Forever?” She furrows her eyebrows.

I lick my lips at the meaning behind my words. “That’s right, sweetheart. Forever.”

“Okay, but may-maybe you can just tell her yourself?”

I choke on a sardonic laugh and shake my head, and her shoulders sag, as if suddenly aware of the severity of our situation.

“Thank you.” A tear streams down her face once again, and my heart tugs to draw her toward me, to embrace her, and tell her it’s all my fault. That I’m sorry. That she’s deserving too. Like my wife was.

Instead, I turn on my heel and motion for her to join me, and when we reach the small window, I take out my gun with the silencer attached, then I shoot through the lock. I’m another bullet down and need every single one of them. It doesn’t hurt like I expected it to, because that bullet will spare this girl’s life.

It will get her home to her babies, to her men who are devoted to her, and, more importantly, it will get her home to my girl.

“Up.” I lower myself and put my hands together for her to climb on and heave her onto the small windowsill.

A storm of heavy thuds above us makes my heart race at the realization of what I will walk into, but I refuse to back down or consider any other option.

Tia glances down at me as I check the safety clips on my guns, and then I say the one word that springs her into action.

“Run.”

She turns and pushes through the window with ease, then runs toward my SUV, and I pray she makes it there safely. Taking a deep breath, I steel myself, step forward, and open the door to the basement.

My plan falls into place as I become the perfect distraction to allow Tia to escape.

Regret floods me as I step out into the line of the men waiting on the other side of the door. Regret over the secrets I’ve kept and the lies I’ve told, hoping to keep my family safe but never giving them an opportunity of more.

My wife and boys will grow up to know I gave the ultimate sacrifice; I gave up being with them so they could have so much more.

So they could have them in their lives.

I fire bullets freely, but it becomes white noise as they fire back just as quick. Footsteps thunder down the stairs in my direction, and even though I know I’m taking down one man after the other, I’m also acutely aware of the pain searing through my chest, leg, and shoulder as bullet after bullet slices through me and my vision becomes hazy.

My footing stumbles when warmth flows down my chest, and I drop to my knees with a heavy thud when another bullet sends a shooting pain up

my spine. I can only hope that Tia has made it out, that she's driving toward the gate not looking back but looking forward to the future with her babies.

That she forgives me for the pain she's endured and lives a life of happiness with my family by her side, protecting her, like I should have done.

As my eyes flutter, I fight to keep them open, to send another bullet through the stairwell. I try in vain to protect myself, but now all I see is Sky, my beautiful girl. She has our boys around her and her belly full with my baby. A bloody cough escapes me, and I wince at the torrent of pain searing into my chest, making it difficult for me to inhale.

My mind wanders away from the pain and to our children. Another, more excruciating, surge of hurt spears through me thinking about me not being there to watch them grow into the strong, reliable, and protective men I know they'll become, and I hate myself for it.

Will Sky have the little girl I always wished for? Or will our baby add to our brood of boys.

The rattling in my chest as I try to breathe becomes louder, and I concentrate on looking down at Sky as we dance. I sing "It's You I've Been Looking For" by Lewis Brice, and my lip twitches at the memory as I float above the scene playing out.

She smiles up at me, those bright-blue eyes that captured me from the first moment I saw her. They're full of life, life I want her to lead even if I'm not by her side.

The whooshing in my ears encompasses me, causing my entire body to drift away from her, and I want to scream, I want to shout, to bring her back where she belongs, in my arms, curled up in my safety.

But then Sky steps toward me once again, and standing in the sand, her hair blows in the sea breeze and her eyes settle on mine, and she's never looked so damn beautiful. So damn mine.

"Forever," she whispers with a soft smile that forces my body to sag at having her feel the same way about me as I do her. For her to be back where she belongs.

"Forever, baby," I whisper as I finally close my eyes, succumbing to the darkness surrounding me.

I'm numb now, my body free as the room becomes silent, and so does my mind, apart from the gentle whisper of her lips to reassure me as I descend into a sea of darkness. "Forever."

My lips move one final time, determined to tell her how I feel.
“Forever.”
TO BE CONTINUED . . .

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BRUTAL LIES

SNEAK PEEK

C hapter 1 Tia

Everything inside of me screams for me to continue running toward the SUV. I want to glance back, I do, but I'm scared. I want my babies; I want to hold Harper in my arms and never let her go. Shots being fired have me shaking uncontrollably, and I try my best to ignore it and not imagine the harm he's facing in order to rescue me.

A pang of guilt hits me as the pebbles crunch beneath my sneakers. The man with the kind blue eyes—Bren O'Connell, he's a savior. He's my savior, and I left him there.

To die.

A sob catches in my throat, and I stumble as I reach the car. It opens when my hand touches the door, and I scramble to get inside. The moment my ass touches the seat, I slam the door shut. My pulse races so hard I can hear the whooshing in my ears. Panic surges inside me, and my mind goes blank, I can't think straight. I can't function. I don't know what to fucking do.

"Tia. My name is Oscar O'Connell, I'm Bren's brother. I'm going to start the car's engine for you." A cold voice fills the SUV, startling me.

My seat moves forward, and my eyes widen as my hands dart out onto the steering wheel for support. *What the hell is going on?* I glance around the SUV, searching for the voice.

“I need you to put your seatbelt on. Put your foot on the accelerator and calmly drive toward the exit through the gate. Please do not rush, it will only draw attention to you.”

I squeeze my eyes closed. Is this a fucking dream, did I die in there? I glance back toward the building.

“Tia, listen to me. You have little time. Now, do as I ask and let’s get you home to your children.” His voice is firmer this time, making me take notice, so I buckle my seatbelt and tighten my grip on the steering wheel. “Good. Now, press the accelerator.” I nod, unsure if he can see me or not. *He can, though, right?* “I have cameras in all my brothers’ cars,” he responds, as if reading my mind. “Now drive.” And I do, my foot touches the accelerator, and I turn toward the exit, leaving a piece of my heart behind as I do.

Bren O’Connell is a hero, and now I have to deliver his message. My heart crumbles at the thought.

The lone tear that trickles down my face multiplies as the wave of guilt takes over me.

“Forever,” I mumble, welcoming the air from the vent as it warms my cold cheeks.

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BJ Alpha lives in the UK with her hubby, two teenage sons and three fur babies.
She loves to write and read about hot, alpha males and feisty females.

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