

A shirtless man with light brown hair and striking blue eyes is the central figure. He has a serious expression and is looking directly at the camera. His torso is covered in intricate black ink tattoos. On his chest, there are two large, symmetrical designs featuring birds (possibly phoenixes or eagles) flanking a central rose. Above these, banners contain the words "Honor" and "Love". His arms are also heavily tattooed. The right arm (viewer's left) features a large floral design and a banner with "Honor". The left arm (viewer's right) has a banner with "Love", a large butterfly, and a design with the words "STAY TRUE".

My new landlord is a
complete *A-hole...*

Sex MATERIAL

NEW YORK TIMES & USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

VICTORIA ASHLEY

Sex MATERIAL

OceanofPDF.com

SEX MATERIAL
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1

JENSEN

AS IF THIS DAY HASN'T been shit already, I've spent the last hour on my crew's ass fighting to keep them motivated enough to get through the last job of the day.

They have no idea how thin my patience is wearing listening to their bitching and moaning every damn second of the day. It can only spread so far before it runs out, and it's almost to that fucking point.

My entire body is covered in sweat, making it hard to see what I'm doing without reaching up and wiping the beads with my arm on my forehead every few minutes. But I push through it, because it takes sacrifices to be successful in life.

It's entirely too fucking hot out here, and we all know heat leads to irritation and exhaustion, but there's no way in hell I'm letting my crew stop until this roof is done. I put my top guys on this job, expecting their best performance, and so far today they haven't been giving me that.

What they need to understand is that I meet every deadline I set with my clients, and that's the reason *Blake's Construction* is as successful as it is. People want to hire an honest and reliable company to get the job done, and I deliver one hundred percent of the time. I'll be damned if I'm going to let one of my men fuck my reputation up for me.

"Can't we call it a day and finish at sunrise? We have an hour, maybe two of work left, boss. I'm baking out here, and I'm pretty sure I'm a few degrees away from heatstroke. I can barely think with the pounding in my head."

"You're not the only one. But like I said twenty goddamn minutes ago, no one leaves until the work is done," I say gruffly, looking up at Jason towering over me. His six-foot-three giant ass made sure what tiny thread of

patience I had left snapped. I'm just as ready to drop from the heat as they are, and truth be told, as the owner, I don't even have to be on this roof. I could've sent any one of my other guys to help finish this job, but as the owner of a company, I feel like you should put just as much, or more, hard work into a job as you expect your employees to. It's my business that will sink or swim, not theirs.

"It's hot as shit—"

"You'll survive. If you can't, then I'll find someone who can. Do I need to pull out the list of assholes hounding my ass for an opportunity?" I drop my nail gun and stand up to get the attention of my other two guys. They're busy at work, which makes me a tad bit less angry at the quitter in front of me. "Anyone else afraid of dying from fucking heatstroke, or can we finish this shit so we can all go home?"

"Hey, it's hotter than roasting balls up here, but I'm ready to get things done," Austin says with a shake of his head. "I'm good, man," he reassures, his eyes barely meeting mine but for a split second, terrified to piss me off even more than I already am.

I don't blame him. He's known me the longest and knows how I work. Austin knows when to back off and when not to push me.

Exhaling my anger, I turn to Patrick and he looks up at me. "How about you? Need me to call someone and give them your job? I can have someone here to replace you before your two feet hit the ground."

He shakes his head, before reaching up to adjust his bandana. "Hell no. I need this job. I'm not going anywhere until you tell us to, boss."

With my jaw clenched, I pull my shirt over my head and wipe it over my forehead, before shoving the white fabric into my back pocket with a grunt.

I'm difficult to work for. There's no denying that, and even with that knowledge, I don't give a shit about changing it. I'm not here to play nice or make friends. I'm here to get shit done, and I make that as clear as possible with all eight of my crews.

Jason hasn't budged, watching me when I turn back around to face him, but quickly gets back to work once he realizes I'm not fucking around.

He's one of my newer guys, but he proved in the first week to be one of my fastest and hardest workers. I'm starting to think the fucker was just putting on a show to get the job. I make a mental note to keep a close eye on him over the next week.

I don't have time to mess around when it comes to my business. My two businesses are the only things I have left that I give a damn about—*Blake Construction* and *Blake Rentals*. Everything else in this world is irrelevant to me.

Both have managed to keep me busy, and out of my head as much as possible. Being in my head isn't good for anyone around me—especially me. It took me too long to realize that, and I refuse to go back to the way things were before I opened my second business.

We manage to make it through the next hour without any more bitching from my guys. The only thing left to do now is cleanup, which shouldn't take long, as long as they exercise their hands and not their mouths.

I'm in the middle of tossing old shingles into the dumpster when I look over at Hannah leaning against her porch railing, watching me with interest.

Her fire-red hair is piled high in a messy bun and the cut-off shorts she's wearing barely exist.

She's been renting this property from me for six months now, and has made her attraction for me clear on multiple occasions. It's something I'm used to with my female tenants.

It's obvious by her lingering she has something to say, so keeping my gaze on her, I pull my gloves off and throw them next to the pile of shingles.

I have no idea how long she's been out here, but it's not hard to figure out what she wants from me.

Every damn woman wants the same thing.

It's been this way for the past year and a half.

"Mind coming inside for a minute, Jensen?"

I pull my shirt from my back pocket and wipe it over my sweaty abs and chest, before using it to clean my filthy hands off. "I'm busy, Hannah. Got work to do."

"It'll only take a minute. I'm sure your crew can handle cleanup without you. Please. It's important."

I doubt it.

Frustrated, I tuck my shirt into my back pocket and follow Hannah inside. It's been a long day, and truthfully, I'm exhausted and ready to kick back with some beers and pass out on my couch. It's my nightly ritual. I don't like that she's messing with that.

Once inside, she closes the door behind me, taking the time to let her eyes roam over every inch of my hard body as if she's been dying all day to get a close-up.

"What do you need, Hannah? Do you have a question about your roof? We've discussed everything you need to know."

She shakes her head, moving in closer to me, her sweet scent attacking my senses. "What I need you for has *nothing* to do with my roof and everything to do with my body. Today has been hell. In fact, this whole week has been total hell."

"And what?" I ask stiffly as she runs her hands over my abs and chest. "You think I can make it better by *fucking* you?"

"From what I've *heard*... yes. Very much so." She removes her hands from my body, but keeps her gaze trained on me, taking me in slowly. She's devouring me with her eyes and already mentally choking on my cock. "Come on. We've known each other for nearly six months. There's nothing wrong with two adults using each other to release some frustration. I *need* this, Jensen. You have no idea how much."

"I'm your landlord. Our relationship has been strictly business. You hand me your rent check and I cash it. Simple."

With that, I remove her hands from my body and prepare to walk away before I make the mistake of screwing another tenant. I made that mistake one time, or ten. I'm not saying I'm proud, and I'm definitely not bragging.

"I need it fast and hard—no attachments—and that's something you're good at, right? I can't handle any more clingy, attached guys. All I want is to get off and forget about my life. I'm not ready for that. Tell me I'm wrong about you being the right guy for this and I'll back off, but we both know you're perfect sex material."

Sex Material. It's what I've become good at, and these women aren't afraid to show me that's all they need and want me for.

From the determination in her fuck-me-eyes, I know she won't give up until I give her what she wants. They never do, and in the end, I always regret giving in. But during... I need an escape from my shitty reality just as much or more than they do.

I come at her with a small growl and grab her thighs, lifting her up my body with force. "No kissing. *I'm* in control. Nod if you understand."

She nods, tightly wrapping her thighs around my waist as if she's afraid I'll change my mind. I'm still considering it, depending on what comes out

of her mouth next. That might be enough to make me come to my senses. "That'll work."

"Where are the condoms?" I ask with a scowl.

"Kitchen drawer, closest to the fridge."

Who the fuck keeps condoms in the kitchen?

I'm frustrated as I make my way through the house in search of a hat for my fucking dick. These women *use* me, and as much as I hate it, here the fuck I am, giving her just what she wants.

I make my way back through the kitchen to the living room, not bothering to be gentle with Hannah as I slam her against the wall and reach down to undo my jeans. I always end up giving them my body, but I refuse to give them anything more.

What the hell? The woman is already moaning out her pleasure before I have a chance to pull my dick out and cover it.

Clearly, the idea of me being inside her is enough to get her started early. It wouldn't be the first time a girl came before I could even touch her. Women talk. Word of mouth is the best form of advertisement. They tell their friends how good of a fuck I am and then those friends go and tell their friends. By the time one gets a chance, the anticipation of me sinking between her legs is already high.

Holding her against the wall with my hips, I bite the wrapper open, before tossing it aside and sliding the condom on.

I don't give her a chance to get a look at my size before I rip her panties to the side and slam into her. I'm ready and eager to get this over with so I can cleanup and get home.

"Oh, my God!" she screams in my ear, rattling my eardrum. "A little warning first." She breathes heavily, digging her nails into my arm. "It's okay. I'm good... I'm... just keep... going."

I thrust my hips and grind, hitting deep to get the job done. Five minutes max is what it takes a girl like her to be where she needs to be.

With a growl, I dig my fingers deeper into her hips as I bounce her up and down on my dick, taking my frustration out on her tiny body.

"Oh, fuck, Jensen... keep going... it's working." She throws her head back and screams out in a mixture of pain and pleasure when I slam into her as hard and deep as I can, giving her every hard inch of me.

For as long as she's wanted this, she at least should experience all I have to offer. This will be the only time she'll have me like this.

Forgetting the rules, she leans in to kiss me, but I grab her hair and yank back right before her lips touch mine. Hell no.

“No *fucking* kissing. Do I need to explain the goddamn rules again?” I yank back on her hair harder, to be sure she doesn’t attempt kissing me again, and pound into her repeatedly, not stopping until she’s clawing her nails into my skin and screaming out as her orgasm takes over.

She moans out and bites her bottom lip when I move my hand around to grip her throat as I continue to move inside of her. “I can’t believe this is finally—”

“No talking,” I growl out, biting her shoulder and then backing away from the wall.

A few more thrusts in and a slight tug pulls on my balls, confirming I’m getting close, so I grip onto her as tightly as I can and fuck her so hard and fast that she can barely catch her breath.

Hell, I’m the one doing all the fucking work here, yet she can’t breathe?

Just when I think I’m about to blow my shit, she leans in for a second time and attempts to kiss me. My nuts relax and my orgasm fades. It’s over, just like that.

“Fuck!” I yell out and throw her across the room onto her huge couch. I’m pissed the fuck off now. “I’ll finish myself off.”

“What the hell, Jensen?” She sits up and slaps the couch. “We’re not done yet.”

“Oh, yes we are. You made sure of that.” I growl out and yank the condom off, tossing it aside.

Hannah’s eyes go wide as I grip my dick and begin stroking it. She licks her lips. I’m not even touching her and she looks as if she’s about to come again.

It’s just enough to get me off, busting my load in my hand in less than two minutes from start to finish. I clean my hands off on my dirty shirt and toss it beside her.

“It’s time for me to go.” Tensing my jaw, I pull my pants up and button them. “You broke the rules twice and this was your only chance.”

I hear Hannah cussing and complaining as I walk toward the door, but I don’t bother stopping to listen to what she has to say. She knew damn well before asking me to fuck her day away that I don’t want any of that intimate shit. Hell, she said she didn’t want it. She played me, and I caught her in her own lie.

That's not me. I'm the guy that'll fuck you and send you on your way. Every girl knows that, yet they *still* want me inside of them. I'm not a fucking idiot. I know it's for my body, because it sure as fuck isn't for my charm.

I ignore her all the way out the door and get right back to working as if I never stopped. She is already forgotten. Just like the rest. But like always, once I'm through with a random woman I'm left with nothing but regret and an empty feeling deep inside my chest.

I need to stop doing this to myself, but every time I'm about to quit, I remind myself that I deserve the torture. I deserve the emptiness that it leaves me with.

My crew ignores me as if I never left, but less than two minutes later Hannah steps outside, her hair a tangled mess, and begins screaming and kicking my truck. They definitely know what went down in there now.

I know her game. She expects me to be embarrassed due to the numerous neighbors who have decided to come outside and be nosy, but instead, I pull out a smoke and kick back while I watch her wear herself out.

It angers her more, making her scream like a banshee until she pulls off her heel and throws it at my head. I duck just in time and go right back to enjoying my cigarette as if it never happened.

Hannah should know that I own every property in this subdivision. She's sadly mistaken if she thinks I care about the little show she's putting on. If she knew me well enough she would know it's not the first time they've seen it.

"You're an asshole, Jensen. A huge fucking asshole." She looks around at her nosey neighbors and gives them the middle finger, before rushing inside and slamming the door behind her.

The bitch has anger problems. She must have needed my dick as badly as she claimed. I don't know why these women believe sex with me is a cure to whatever shitshow they're dealing with.

It's not.

"Um," Jason mutters, "should we leave?"

I take a long drag off my smoke, before bending over to grab another handful of shingles. Time to get back to business. "Get to work. That's what you should do. We don't leave until the job is done. Am I clear?"

He nods when I look at him.

"Good." At least someone is.

2

Cami

MY FOURTH GRADERS ARE BECOMING restless and anxious waiting for the final bell of the day to ring.

They can't seem to sit still—not that I can blame them—and have decided now is the time to start annoying each other and fighting about who's going to make it out the door first.

"All right, everyone. Calm down and take a breath or two." I smile and motion with my hands for them to relax and take a seat, even though I feel like rushing for the door just as much as they do. "No one is going anywhere until that bell rings, including me, so there's no need to rush."

"But I'm ready, Miss Reynolds. My mom is taking me to the store to get the new videogame that came out last night." Riley throws his little arms up and grunts. "What if it sells out? I've been waiting a lifetime for it already."

"I don't know what to tell you, Riley." I look over at the clock above the door, checking the time for the fifth time in the last five minutes. "The bell doesn't ring for another seven minutes. You can use that time to finish studying for the spelling test coming up this week. All of you."

My entire class grunts and whines at the mention of a test, even though they've known all week that one was coming. I laugh and continue to go through the papers they turned in after lunch.

Everyone pulls out their list of words and manages to quiet down and study for a few minutes. But that silence is broken when someone farts loudly.

I try to hold back my smile when I look around the classroom. "Does someone need to use the bathroom?"

"It was Xander!" Stacy screams, before plugging her nose and pointing beside her. "And it stinks! He's so gross! Make him stop."

Everyone laughs and points at Xander, and it takes everything in me to hold back my own laughter to be the *role model* I signed up to be when I became a teacher just over five years ago. I may be the adult, but sometimes I want to laugh right along with my students. Even when it comes to something as silly and disgusting as passing gas in class.

“All right. All right. That’s enough. Put your papers away and grab your backpacks. If you can do it quietly, I’ll let you out *one* minute before the bell rings. One minute and no sooner.”

The kids try their best to be quiet, but they still end up bickering at each other in hushed voices, while scrambling to gather their things in a hurry.

I’ll give them credit for trying. It’s not easy getting a bunch of ten-year-olds to keep it down to an indoor voice. They’ve gotten better since the beginning of the year and that’s something.

“I’ll accept the attempt.” I stand up and walk over to open the door and place the doorstop beneath it, before I stand in the doorway. “Everyone line-up at the door nicely and no shoving to...” They all rush toward the door in a hurry, as if I didn’t just ask them to be respectful of each other.

Reminds me of when I was in fourth grade, and sometimes even my twenty-seven-year-old self, when all I want to do is escape the day to be with Douglas. Like right now. I feel like budging them all to be the first one out the door.

I look up at the clock again, waiting impatiently for the seconds to tick by. I’ve been feeling impatient all day, ready for a night out with adults.

Who knew seconds were so long.

“Come on, Miss Reynolds!” Stacy says anxiously, looking up at the clock. “Can we go now? Please!”

“Yeah, Miss Reynolds,” Matthew adds. “Please!”

I step away from the doorway and out into the hall, letting my students know it’s about time.

In three... two... one...

“Everyone have a good weekend. See you all on Monday, prepared and ready to learn.”

My entire class is practically out the door, yelling bye before the last word can leave my mouth.

I laugh as I close the door and return to my desk to finish going through today’s work.

Once I'm done here, Douglas and I have plans to go out to dinner and get a few drinks with our friends. It's something we plan every weekend if possible, and after a long week with ten-year-olds, I desperately need adult time. I love my students, I do, but adult time is my relaxation time. It soothes me.

Douglas told me he'd wait for me in his classroom. It's something he always offers, so I quickly make my way through the papers and shove them to the corner of my desk. I don't want to keep him waiting too long.

Douglas won't be expecting me for at least another ten minutes, so it'll be a nice surprise to show up early, then we can go ahead and get the evening started. I know he will be just as ready to get out of here for the weekend as I am.

I flip off the light and lock up my classroom, before making my way across the building to where Douglas' sixth grade classroom is.

"Miss Reynolds." I smile and nod to Jonathon as he steps out of his office, looking just as I feel. "You and Douglas have a good weekend. Enjoy the nice weather now that it's here."

"You as well, Principal Goodwin. Say hi to the wife for me." He offers me a smile, before he makes his way down the hall, speaking to everyone he sees in passing.

Everyone seems to be leaving at once, so by the time I get to the other side of the building the hallway is empty. I'm relieved I won't have to deal with Susan's snooty ass, whose class is right next to Douglas'. I usually end up running into her as she's leaving her class for the day.

For some unknown reason to me, she's been a bitch to me since the day I started. I refuse to let her get under my skin, so I always brush her off and offer her a synthetic smile.

Once standing in front of Douglas' classroom, I reach for the handle, about to open the door when I peek through the small window to see him chatting with the one person I was hoping to avoid. She's been known to go to his class quite a bit during class hours, and even trying to combine their classrooms a few times a month, but this is the first time I've seen her here after hours.

I understand they need to meet because they give out a lot of the same assignments, but when she spends as much time in my boyfriend's classroom as she does her own, it does nothing to make me hate her any less.

Douglas is sitting on his desk smiling up at Susan as she twirls her dark hair around her finger. It's hard to see her facial expression from this angle, but from the looks of it she seems to be a little too giddy to be discussing curriculum, eyeing him occasionally as he messes with some paper beside him.

I give myself a small pep talk to keep my cool, but that goes to shit the moment she steps in between his legs and runs her hands up his thighs as if he is *hers* to do with as she pleases. I wait a moment, my breath held, expecting him to push her away.

He's going to push her away, right? Of course he is...

But that doesn't happen. My heart stops and a wave of nausea hits me when he grabs the back of her head and kisses her right on the lips.

For a moment, I almost believe I'm imagining it, but when I shake my head and open my eyes again, their lips are still locked together.

I'm going to puke.

Five years.

Five fucking years and he goes and kisses another woman as if I mean *nothing* to him. And of all the women he could've chosen, it just has to be Susan. He knows how uncomfortable she makes me feel.

I grab my chest and take a deep breath to keep from exploding. I could go in there right now, rip her stupid perfect hair out and cause a scene, but he's not worth throwing my career away.

I do the only thing I can think of. I pull out my phone and snap a picture of the two of them, before forcing myself to walk away.

My chest is being crushed by an imaginary boulder, and it hurts to breathe as I make my way down the hall to escape.

I need to get as far away as I can and do so as fast as possible, before I do something I'll regret. I'm sure Susan would be thrilled to see me lose my job over a scene, so she can finally prove to me that she's the better woman.

It's been nothing but a competition with her since the day I started here, and now I can see why. She's probably wanted Douglas long before I came along.

I've been nothing but kind, loving, and faithful to this jerk, and he doesn't even have the decency to break things off with me before giving into his dick and screwing around with her. Who knows what all they've done or how long this has been going on.

I'd love nothing more than to knee him in the balls before pouring a glass of my favorite wine over his pretty head, but I can't. No, scratch that, my wine is too valuable to waste on a shit like him. He just had to ruin my right to shove his balls into his stomach by getting caught *here* of all places.

The place we've worked together for the last five years. We met here and fell in love here, and now I'll always fucking hate him here.

I push the exterior door open, finally feeling as if I can breathe for the first time since forcing myself to walk away. It's never been so hard to walk away from something before. It's also never been so hard to breathe.

After mentally collecting myself, I force myself to keep walking. *Just keep walking, Cami. Don't stop until you reach your car or you'll end the day unemployed.*

When I finally get across the parking lot to my car—which feels like the longest walk of my life—the sight of Douglas' SUV parked beside Susan's Jeep has me wanting to carve 'Fuck' into the back of his vehicle and 'You' into hers, to show them I know about them messing around behind my back.

But instead, I take a deep breath and reach for the door handle of my old Sebring. He's going to be the one regretting that we're done. Not me. At least that's what I'm telling myself and hoping to believe it.

Feeling dazed and out of it, I get in my car and sit for a while, thinking about how he's probably expecting me to show up right about now. I can't help but wonder if he would've kicked her out first or pretend they were 'talking' about their sixth grade homework assignments. Thoughts plague me.

How long has this piece of shit been doing this?

Have they slept together?

The way Susan Peters flaunts herself around here in her tight little dresses and stilettos, I likely already know the answer. "Of course they have. Late nights at the school, my ass."

Taking another deep breath, I grab the steering wheel with shaky hands and drive out of the parking lot. I shouldn't want to grab my phone and look at the picture I took of them kissing, but that's all I can think about during the thirty-minute drive back to *our* house—the house he convinced me to move into with him three years ago—as if witnessing it the first time wasn't torture enough.

I need to pull over so I can get another look. I don't know why. It's not like I need more convincing that what I saw is real. There was no mistaking his lips on hers. "Don't do it, Camille. Don't fucking do it."

I squeeze the steering wheel tighter and before I can stop myself, I pull off to the side of the road and reach for my phone.

The moment I unlock the screen, it goes straight to the picture. Apparently, I forgot to get out of it before locking my phone.

My heart sinks to my stomach and I feel sick as I stare at the two of them together. I could seriously vomit or cry right now. Truthfully, I think I might do both.

His hand on the back of her head, holding her in place like he has done to me so many times before. If he didn't want her there, then he sure as hell wouldn't be holding her like that. The way he holds me.

They look comfortable together, which tells me this most likely isn't the first time. But for how long? I'm not sure I want to know.

The knowledge of that turns my pain to hate and anger. "Fuck you, Douglas!" Screaming, I hit the steering wheel repeatedly, causing the horn to blare as I let some of my anger out, along with some tears. "I hate you!"

It does little to make me feel better. In fact, all it does is cause everyone driving by to slow down and look at me having my little psychotic breakdown. I fight back the urge to flip them off like an angry child.

I take a few calming breaths, just like I always tell my class to do, and pull back out into traffic. The faster I can get to the house, the faster I can get some of my things and leave.

That's all I want right now. I just want as far away from that lying, khaki-wearing asshole as I can get.

The cheating prick is not even worth me trying to save what we had. I won't be the girl that stays and works on building trust again once he gives me his sorry explanation and apologizes for hurting me.

I can't. I won't.

Break my trust once and I will always remember it.

By the time I pull into the driveway, I have two texts from Douglas. Even though I shouldn't read them, I do.

The first one asks where I'm at, and the second one says he's about to leave in a few minutes, which means he left about fifteen minutes ago.

That doesn't give me much time to pack and then have a glass of wine, so I'll have to drink a glass of wine *while* packing my shit.

One glass turned into two by the time I am done, and now, here I am sitting on the porch with a slight buzz and a suitcase at my side.

All the things I *should* say to him keep running through my head, but the truth is, I don't want to say anything to him. I just want him to know we're done. He doesn't deserve my energy.

My heart instantly reacts the moment Douglas' SUV pulls into the driveway and he steps out with a look of confusion. "Hey, babe. Why didn't you..." His words trail off when he notices the suitcase beside me. "What are you doing, Cami? Is that a suitcase?"

I swallow the lump in my throat and stand up, reaching for the handle. "Yeah, it's exactly what it looks like, Douglas. And before you ask, yes, my things are in it, but I think you're smart enough to figure that out."

He quickly walks through the grass to get to me, but I hold my hand up, stopping him before he can touch me. "*Don't*. Don't fucking touch me."

"Why?" he asks, doing a good job at sounding clueless. "Did I do something wrong? Tell me what I did and I'll fix it. Did you have a bad day at school? Tell me and we can talk about it."

I keep my emotions in check, not willing to let him see me cry as I reach for my phone and send him the picture. "I'll *show* you what you did and it'll make this a little easier for you to understand."

He pats his vibrating pocket and then reaches inside to pull out his phone. His face drops once he sees what's on the screen. "Shit! I can explain. It's complica—"

"Have you slept with her?"

The look of guilt on his face says it all. He has, and more than once. Most likely for a while now too. "Cami, let me explain. I have a past with Susan, but it's over now."

"We're done, Douglas. Don't bother calling or texting." I push past him and head to my car. "I'll be back to get more of my things this weekend. Don't touch anything."

"Cami, wait." His hand wraps around my arm, so I yank it from his reach and spin around to face him. "Please—"

"No," I say stiffly, my nostrils flared in anger. "Don't touch me. Don't *ever* touch me. Nothing you can say will change my mind. Have fun with Susan. You two deserve each other."

He stands there looking helpless as I throw my suitcase in the backseat and climb into my vehicle.

The only good thing out of this confrontation is that it was a complete buzz kill, which will make it easier to drive the thirty minutes back to Highland.

In between packing and guzzling wine, I called my friend Veronica and she offered me her spare bedroom and told me the house next to hers will be available for rent in a few weeks.

Her place is only a five-minute drive from the school, so I guess things aren't completely shit.

Veronica is sitting on her front porch when I arrive, and immediately hands me a glass of wine once I make it to her.

She's so pretty with her brown, knot-free hair and smudge-free eyes. I most likely look like a damn racoon that's been hit by a car right now. I'm a mess and I know it.

"I can't believe that asshole, honey. You deserve better." She gives me a quick one-armed hug, being careful not to spill her wine. "You can stay here for as long as you need. No more crying, babe. Ever."

I force a small smile and nod once she breaks the hug and begins wiping the makeup from my eyes. "Thanks. Are you sure Peter doesn't mind?"

She laughs and takes a seat on the porch, patting the spot beside her. "Peter thinks you're hot. Trust me, he won't mind having you around to look at for a while."

I shake my head and muster a tiny laugh, sitting down beside her. "You always know the right thing to say to lighten the mood."

"It's part of my charm, honey."

We both sit here in silence for a bit, enjoying a couple glasses of wine, because she knows more than anyone that I'm going to need a while before talking about what went down today. I love her for it too.

"So..." She smiles and points to the house next door. "This is the place I was telling you about. The landlord has been doing some renovations since the previous tenant moved out last month. I know it's kind of early to talk about it, but you should consider it before someone else calls dibs."

I guzzle the last of my wine and look to my right at the white house. "It seems a little big just for one person, don't ya think?"

"A guest room is always nice to have. Plus, you'll be close to the school and right next door to your favorite person. You can't pass that opportunity up."

I nod in agreement. “True, very true.” I stand up before I can change my mind.

Making a rash decision to commit to my own place might be exactly what I need to ensure I stand solid on my decision to not give Douglas a second chance. “Is the landlord there now? The lights are on.”

“Well, yeah. But...”

“Let’s go talk to him before someone else does.”

“Cami, wait...” She takes off after me as I quickly make my way across the yard and to the next property. “It’s probably best not to disturb him when he’s working. Cami, slow down.”

Despite her warning, I stick with my decision, determined to make this breakup with that cheating asshole as official as I can.

I step onto the porch and push the door open, not bothering to knock first. The wine is telling me nothing can stop me right now. Nothing.

Except for the sight I’m greeted with. A sweaty, rock-hard body with tattoos is the first thing my eyes land on, before they slowly ascend to a very sexy, highly angry face and messy blond hair. His icy blue eyes pierce right through me as he speaks. “What the fuck are you doing in here?”

I’m not sure I even remember now. Since when do landlords look like this?

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3

JENSEN

HERE I AM BURYING MYSELF in work to try and escape the negative thoughts consuming me when I look up to see a stranger barging into my property, throwing me all off.

The blonde female with big green eyes looks me over, taking in every dip of exposed muscle, before her gaze lands on my face. She looks speechless for a moment, as if she possibly wasn't expecting what's standing before her. Seems I've thrown her off just as much as she has me, because I surely wasn't expecting the sexy mess in front of me.

I look her over, realizing I've never set eyes on her a day in my life, which tells me she's probably here by mistake and not for the same reason most women seek me out.

Whatever the reason, I don't have the time nor the patience for chitchat. With everything else going on I haven't had much time this week to work on getting this place move-in ready. I'm already behind schedule and hating every second of it. "What the fuck are you doing in here?" I ask harshly, unable to stop myself.

The woman nervously clears her throat, watching as I take my shirt and run it over my sweaty body. She doesn't seem as confident now as she did when barging inside without permission. But then again, she probably wasn't expecting a half-naked asshole to be inside either.

"I don't have all night. Tell me what you need or get out. As you can see, I'm busy." I scowl, watching closely as she rubs her palms down the front of her tight jeans.

Blondie has no clue that she picked one of the worse times to bother me. The entire town knows not to fuck with me during my *me time*. There's a reason.

“A place to rent.” She stands up straight, gaining a bit more confidence. Or at least giving off that impression. “I’m interested in renting this place and wanted to catch you before someone else does. So, whether you like it or not... here I am.”

I turn away and go back to installing the new floor. She’s wasting not only her time but mine too. “You’re too late. There’s about five other women interested. You can go now.”

I expected her to leave, so I’m surprised when I hear the clicking of her heels as she walks toward me. “I *need* this place before I end up making one of the biggest mistakes of my life, and I’m not leaving until you give me a damn chance to apply for it.”

Dropping the tapping block and mallet, I look up to her now standing right beside me. Her arms are crossed over her chest and she seems set on her decision to stay against my direct order. Judging by the red stain on the front of her blouse and her messy hair, my guess is she’s had a bit too much wine and is feeling brave. So, I might as well humor her in hopes it will get her out of here faster. “What’s the mistake and I’ll consider it? Maybe.”

She squeezes her eyes shut, as if trying to keep it together, before opening them, and then speaks. “Not that it’s any of your business, but giving my cheating ex a second chance to hurt me. Like I said, I *need* this place. All I’m asking is that you consider me. Give me a shot just like everyone else. I promise to be a good tenant, and I don’t have any pets or plan to throw any wild parties. It’ll just be... me.”

Her voice cracks on the last word, and that’s all it takes for the guilt to sink in enough to pretend to give her a chance. I suppose it wouldn’t hurt to give her a little hope. “How do you earn income? I have a process. I don’t just rent to any-damn-body.”

“I’m a teacher at the local elementary school.”

Well damn... since when do teachers look like that?

“How long have you been employed there?”

She drops her arms at her sides and takes a step back when I stand a little too close to her. “Um...” She swallows and pulls her eyes away from my lips. “Five years. I’m good for the payments and I’m extremely responsible. Some would even say *too* responsible.”

“And what if you change your mind and decide you want your ex back?” I move in closer, causing her to swallow again as I look down at her. “What then?”

“I won’t be changing my mind. That’s the whole point of me wanting this place.” She sounds unsure, so I question her further.

“How can you be so sure?”

It takes her a few seconds to respond as her gaze lowers to the tattoos on my chest. “Because...” She turns and walks away, stopping once she reaches the door. “I work with him *and* the bitch he cheated on me with. Seeing them both every day will be a reminder of how he fucked me over and ripped my heart out. He broke my trust, and I’ll never be able to move past that. Having a place next to my best friend is exactly what I need to stay strong. I won’t change my mind if I get this house. It’s a promise.”

Her vulgar words have my dick slightly hardening. A hot teacher with a dirty-as-fuck mouth is too much for me to handle right now when all I want is to be alone. This has gone on too long. I’m about to tell her just that when her phone rings from inside her back pocket.

“You gonna get that?” I question when she doesn’t make a move to reach for it.

“Don’t, Cami!” Veronica Michaels, the girl I rent out the house next door to, rushes through the door and offers me an awkward smile and an apology, before turning to her friend. “Ignore that, and maybe it’s best if we go back to my place and have another glass of wine, or three. I’m sure Jensen is too busy for this right now. Let’s stick to wine drinking, yeah?”

I cross my arms and shake my head when *Cami* grabs her phone from her pocket and hovers her finger over the screen, as if considering hitting the green button. “It’s him. What do I do?”

Not make him think you give a shit...

A look of horror crosses Cami’s face when I grab the phone from her hand and answer it.

“Cami is fucking busy. How can I help you?” I question, sounding out of breath to give off the impression that we’re in the middle of sex. “Make it quick, asshole.”

“Wait... what?” a male voice says, cautiously. “Did I hit the wrong...” His voice trails off, as he most likely pulls the phone away to see if he dialed the wrong person. “This is a joke, right? Put Cami on the phone. Who is this?”

“She can’t talk right now. Her face is smashed into the pillow I’ve been making her scream into for the last twenty minutes.” I hit the end button and hand the phone back to a wide-eyed Cami.

“Oh, my God. No.” She looks down at her phone, as if she doesn’t know what to do with it. “I can’t believe you just did that. What kind of girl do you think I am? He’s going to think I’m a reckless, heartbroken mess that ran off and slept with the first guy I found. Why did you do that?”

“Good.” I move in until there’s only about an inch left between us. “At least now you won’t be the only one hurting. You should be thanking me, and by that I mean leaving so I can get some shit done.”

“Wow.” She shakes her head and pushes on my chest as if me being so close disgusts her. That would be a first when it comes to women. “You really are an asshole, aren’t you? Is this how you treat all of your potential tenants?”

“No. In case you fucking forgot...” I reach into my pocket for a much-needed smoke. I’m way too much in my head right now. “You’re just some random woman that barged into *my* place and started demanding that I let you move in. It’s pretty obvious you don’t know the meaning of the word *no*. Now, if you don’t mind...”

I push past her and Veronica and make my way outside. I need some fresh fucking air and two cigarettes after dealing with this woman.

What’s most infuriating about this damn situation is that she has me so pissed off all I want to do is bury her face into that pillow I mentioned and actually fuck her for real; good and hard, to punish her.

I lean against the porch railing and take a long drag, watching as Cami and her friend step outside and look at me.

They both watch, not saying anything as I slowly exhale the smoke, running a hand through my hair in frustration.

“Come on, Cami.” Veronica loops her arm through Cami’s and begins guiding her back next door. “I’ve got plenty more wine, honey. Let’s drink that shit up and forget about Douglas.”

I chuckle over his name. What a fucking douche.

“You find something to be funny?” Cami snaps in my direction.

“Yeah, I do...” I take another drag and slowly exhale, before continuing. “Even his name makes him sound like he’s a loser. Good thing you got out when you did.”

I go to take another drag, but before I can see what’s coming, Cami is in front of me, snatching the cigarette from my lips.

Looking me in the eyes, she throws the cigarette down and smashes it with the front of her high heel. “You know what? Forget it. I don’t want an

asshole like you for a landlord anyway. Not if it involves having to see or talk to you every month to pay rent. You can kiss my ass.”

“Gladly,” I mumble as she turns to walk away. “It’ll probably be better action than anything Douglas has ever given you. You have no idea how *good* I can kiss an ass.”

She gives me the middle finger and continues to walk away, stomping her pretty little feet all the way back over to her friend’s house.

I may be an asshole, but I never pretend to be anything else. It’s exactly why women want me for *sex* and nothing more. But I have a feeling Cami won’t be wanting me for *anything* after tonight.

Good. Less for me to deal with. I have enough shit on my plate without adding worrying about a heartbroken teacher that makes my dick jump whenever she opens her sassy mouth.

After I watch them disappear inside, I light up a second cigarette and take my time smoking it, before going back inside to work the night away.

This time I lock the door and grab a beer. I don’t want any more distractions tonight. I just want to get lost in work and forget about everything else.

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4

Cami

LAST NIGHT WAS ROUGH, AND waking up this morning is a sad reminder of just how brutal it was. I'm not certain how late Veronica and I were up drinking, but I know it was late enough to do some damage, because...

"It hurts... It hurts so much." I sit up slowly and grab my head, squeezing my eyes shut as it throbs against my hands.

Apparently, drinking three bottles of wine and then digging through the fridge for any form of alcohol we could find to finish the night off was a horrible idea.

I feel it physically. I'm feeling it so hard, and it sucks tremendously. Keeping my eyes squeezed shut, I blindly feel around the bed for my phone. After leaving from next door yesterday, Veronica made sure to put my phone on silent to ensure I'd ignore Douglas' calls and messages for the rest of the night.

Since the asshole next door took it upon himself to answer *my* phone without permission and give the impression I was having sex with some stranger, it was ringing off the hook all night.

I was tempted on more than one occasion to pick up and tell Douglas the truth. That I'm not sleeping with another guy after getting my heart stomped on by him. I wanted to tell him I'm hurting, even though I'll do everything in my power to pretend that I'm not.

And the fact that Douglas never showed up here last night looking for me tells me he believed the asshole landlord's lie. He believed that some insanely *hot* guy was fucking me from behind, while shoving my face into a pillow.

Okay, so Douglas *doesn't* know he is hot, but damn him, he is. So damn hot, and it only makes me hate him more. Landlords are not supposed to look like *that*. They should be creepy, unattractive bastards that sit around waiting on the rent money while hiring out to do the hard work. A tenant isn't supposed to picture her landlord giving it to her hard in every room of the house.

And to top it off, the asshole refuses to even rent me the house. So, it's not even *my* landlord I've been fantasizing about since walking away last night.

Oh yeah. I almost forgot that little detail. Not only am I brokenhearted because of Douglas, but I'm also sexually frustrated because of some stranger. As much as I hate to admit it, he was right last night when he said Douglas wasn't big on the action part. But hey, I learned to live with it, because that's what you do when you love someone unconditionally.

Cautiously opening my eyes, I squint down at my phone to see a bunch of missed calls and texts from Douglas.

"Oh wow..." I open his texts and begin scrolling through them, but before I get too far, Veronica practically dives into the bed and knocks my phone from my hand, saving me from the heartache and empty promises.

"Don't do it, Cami!" She grunts and squeezes her eyes shut, as if she's in just as much physical pain as I am at the moment. "Nothing he can say will change the fact that he's been *cheating* on you. Reading his messages will only give you hope where there is none. He's a liar and doesn't deserve your forgiveness."

"I'm not going to forgive him, Veronica. The picture in my phone is to make sure that *doesn't* happen. I'll keep it there as long as I have to, and if I feel myself slipping then I'll pull it up and force myself to look at it. Hell, I'll even print it out if I have to. Don't worry."

The thought of seeing his lips locked with hers makes me sick. But that's the whole point of having it, I suppose.

We both look up when Peter appears in the doorway with a grin on his face. He looks clean and showered, as if he's been up for hours. "You ladies look lovely this afternoon." He crosses his arms and looks us over. If I look anything like Veronica then we both look like a hot mess. "I see you guys found my six pack of beer. I hope you ladies enjoyed it."

"We did..." I groan. "I mean, I think we did. We were already pretty wasted by then. Thank you, Peter."

“Yeah. Thanks, honey.” Veronica rolls over and smashes her face into the bed, before struggling to look up at her husband. “Can you bring us some water and painkillers? Pleeeeeease. Whatever you can find will work.”

“Sure, babe. Anything for my ladies.” He walks over and kisses Veronica on the forehead, before laughing and walking away. It’s not very often he gets to see us hungover. It’s usually the other way around, and both Veronica and I always have a good time laughing at his expense.

“He’s really enjoying this, isn’t he?”

She nods. “Uh huh. Very much, and I hate it.”

Peter comes back a few minutes later with some pills and water, offering to run to my place to grab a few things.

It’s best if I don’t see Douglas for a while, so I agreed to let Peter grab the things he thinks I might need that wasn’t packed in the small suitcase of clothes I brought.

It’s a struggle, but after a while I force myself out of Veronica’s guest bed and make my way to the bathroom to shower. I stand under the water for a while, thinking about Douglas and Susan, wondering how long he’s been fucking her behind my back. The more I try and figure it out, the angrier and more determined I become to get as far away from him as possible.

I tried convincing Douglas to move closer to the school just a few months ago and finding a decent place to rent was nearly impossible. The houses that were available were dumps no one wants to bother fixing up or were too small.

There’s got to be something I can do to convince Jensen to give me a shot. I can’t and won’t move back to Douglas’ hometown.

I refuse to.

My newfound motivation has me rushing through the rest of my shower and quickly throwing on some clothes, not even bothering to brush my hair or do my makeup.

“Whoa. Where are you storming off to?” Veronica watches me from the stove as I walk past her through the kitchen.

“How often is the landlord next door?”

She gives me an ‘oh shit’ look and drops the spatula she’s flipping pancakes with. “Almost everyday now. Why? What are you going to do now?”

“What time?”

“Cami?”

“What time?” I push.

She exhales and reaches for the spatula to flip the pancakes. “It’s the weekend, so probably around one or two.”

My phone is still on the floor in the bedroom where Veronica knocked it, so I search the kitchen for a clock. When I don’t see one, I rush into the living room to check the cable box. My heart speeds up when I see that it’s just past two. “I’ll be back. You can stay here this time if you’re scared.”

“Oh, I’m scared all right. He may be hot. *Unnaturally* hot, but he’s just as much of an asshole, and I don’t want to get kicked out. Good luck, honey.”

“Thanks,” I mutter. “I’ll need it.”

I take a few deep breaths and slowly release them, before I make my way outside and look next door.

There’s a motorcycle parked out front instead of the huge black truck I saw there last night. I hope he didn’t send someone else to work on the place today so he could take the day off.

I won’t know if I don’t try.

“Here goes nothing.”

Walking barefoot through the grass, I make my way to the side of the house to peek into one of the windows to see if he’s even there.

Yes, I’m aware I look like a creeper right now, but unlike last night, I don’t have any alcohol in my bloodstream to just burst through the door again. I hope setting my eyes on the asshole first will anger me enough to give me the courage to give it to him hard, and I don’t mean sexually.

It’s not until I reach the window at the back of the house that I finally see *him* shirtless, covered in paint.

He’s looking around the room as if to see what’s left to be done, and for a split second, my heart stops when I think he notices me watching him. But when he places his hands against the wall and bows his head, I freeze, unable to turn away. Clearly, he’s thinking about something, and I can’t help but wonder what that something is.

He stays like that for a few moments, before taking one of his hands and sliding it down the front of his jeans.

My heart slams against my ribcage as he leans his head back and bites his bottom lip, before he begins running his palm over his dick.

His movements are slow and sensual, and before I can force myself to look away, he pulls the side of his jeans down a bit, exposing the defined V of muscle that leads down to his groin.

I'm unable to move away for a few moments, cemented to where I stand, but all it takes is him pulling his pants down farther and growling out as his movements speed up for me to finally get a handle on my body.

"Oh, my God," I whisper in panic, nearly tripping over my own feet as I move away from the window and slam my back against the house.

I may not have been able to see his dick, but just the fact that I witnessed him pleasuring himself has my body heating with desire and need I *shouldn't* feel. Especially right now.

The temptation to get another glimpse of him touching himself is stronger the longer I stand here, fighting to catch my breath.

What the hell is wrong with me?

I take one more quick breath, before pushing away from the siding and then turn to walk around the side of the house before anyone sees me. I stop dead in my tracks when I slam into a rock-hard body that almost sends me flying to my ass.

"What the fuck are you doing back here?" He crosses his arms and looks down at me. The way his icy blues roam over my face before landing on my lips has me almost coming undone again. "Were you spying on me?"

"No," I say angrily, even though inside I am dying from embarrassment because it's true. I'm a damn *pervert* who just watched my best friend's landlord touch himself. "I was trying to see if you were working before barging in again. I..."

"So, you *weren't* watching me touch my *dick*..." He steps in close and whispers in my ear, "and enjoying it?"

His breath caressing my ear and neck has my nipples hardening, forcing me to move my arms up to cover myself by crossing them over my chest.

"No," I say on a nervous swallow. "Now move so I can leave. I'm not in the mood to deal with your shit today. All I wanted was an application, but for whatever reason you clearly don't plan to give me one."

"It seems to me you'd rather have a peep show. *That* I have no problem continuing if it helps you get over your ex." Keeping his eyes on me, he slowly moves his hand down his stomach, before gripping his hard dick. "We've gotten this far, Cami. You might as well watch me come too."

“Wow! You’re an asshole.” I push on his chest in anger and walk past him. “Go fuck yourself.”

“That’s what I was trying to do when you were watching me through the window.”

I stop in my tracks and turn around to face him. “You knew I was there the whole time, didn’t you? Is that why you did it?”

“I was horny and you showed up at the wrong time, or right, depending on how you want to look at it...” He looks me over, his lips curving up into a confident smirk when his gaze lands on my hard nipples. “The thought of you watching me get off had me ready to fucking blow my load. So, yes, I touched myself for you.”

“You really are something else,” I say angrily. “I’m going inside.”

“Me too. I’ll be in the shower finishing myself off. When you go inside and touch yourself, think about that. You’ll come in no time.”

“You’re an asshole.”

“Never said I wasn’t.”

I’m about to open the door to Veronica’s house to get away when he speaks again. “Check the mailbox for your application. I want it completed and back to me within a few hours.”

I turn to look at him, but he’s already making his way up the porch and into the house.

This guy makes me insane. In fact, he has me so crazy and caught up in *hating* him that Douglas doesn’t even cross my mind until he calls a few hours later.

“Please tell me you’re still ignoring his calls,” Veronica says over my shoulder from where I’m sitting at the kitchen table.

I look away from the application I have yet to fill out and flip my phone over, face down. “Surprisingly, this is the first time he’s called since Peter got back with my things.”

Veronica laughs and takes a seat at the table. “Peter might’ve mentioned to him that if he called anytime soon he’d come back and break his arm.”

A satisfied grin settles on my face when I picture Douglas’ scared expression. Peter is a pretty intimidating looking guy. He’s tall and muscular with tattoos and a beard. “I’ll have to remember to thank him by cooking my famous tacos before I leave. *If* I ever leave that is.”

“Umm...” Her gaze lingers down to the paper in front of me. “Isn’t that an application for next door? It says *Blake Rentals* on the top.” She taps the

paper and smiles. "Looks like he has a soft spot for you after all."

I let out a sarcastic laugh. "Are you still drunk, Veronica? I'm pretty positive he hates me just as much as I hate him." I pick up the application and wave it around, before slamming it back down on the table. "He's probably going to throw it in the trash. There's no point in even filling it out."

"Welp, I guess you won't know unless you try." She stands up and reaches for a clean wine glass. "When does he want it back? He usually gives a timeframe, and trust me, you don't want to be late."

I flip my phone over and shrug. "About twenty minutes ago."

"Cami! Oh hell... You'll be needing one of these too." She reaches for a second glass and fills it halfway up, before shrugging and filling it to the top. "Are you insane?" she asks, handing one of the glasses to me.

"Sometimes. Everyone deserves a little respect. He needs to learn that he can't just bark out orders and expect everyone to obey."

And that he can't just use his body to get what he wants. But I leave that part out. I've barely recovered from that little show and I'd like nothing more than to forget it ever happened.

"Are you trying to get me kicked out?" She tilts her glass back in panic, taking a huge gulp. "I don't want to have to move. Do you know how long it took to get into one of his properties? They're hard to get into, because *everyone* wants a *Blake Rentals* home. *Blake Construction* builds each and every one and they're the best quality homes around."

"He builds the houses too?" I ask in shock. "When does this guy ever have time to rest?"

"He doesn't," she says quickly. "It's probably why he's such an asshole when it comes to his properties, and I don't want to provoke him in any way."

"He's not going to kick you out because he's pissed at me, Veronica. Surely, he's not that big of an asshole."

She nods, spilling wine down the front of her shirt as she continues to drink. "Yes. Definitely. He's that big of an asshole. Fill that out ASAP and get it back to him. I mean it. Don't fuck me over on this." She stands up, completely on edge. "I'll be in my room trying not to hyperventilate. Holy fuck, Cami! Holy..."

She disappears down the hall, not finishing her sentence. I've never seen her so nervous in the entire six years that I've known her. I can't deny

that it has me somewhat nervous now too.

Her reaction and Douglas calling, mixed with the fact that the guy I'm trying to convince to rent me his property is a complete asshole who touched himself hours ago, knowing I was watching, has my nerves shot.

Thank God for wine. I'm definitely feeling the need to drink it all now...

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5

JENSEN

FUCK, I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE that in front of her, but the fact that she showed no interest in me the other night had me wanting to do something to change her mind when I saw her watching me through the window.

As sick as I am of all these fucking women wanting me for my body, when it comes to Cami, for some reason I *want* her to want me for the same damn thing.

Talk about being fucked in the head.

Had she stood outside that window for two seconds longer she would've gotten a view of my very hard dick as I stroked it while looking her right in the eyes until I came. And I would've had no problem in doing so.

It's been four hours since I told her to bring me the application, so I'm beginning to think she's changed her mind about living here after the little show I put on.

Maybe that's a good thing, because I'm not sure how many more times I can look at her *without* using my body for what I do best these days—*fucking* good and hard and forgetting it ever happened.

After I finished the final coat of paint in the spare bedroom, I moved on to do some work in the kitchen. I can only handle so much painting at once without thinking too much and getting lost in my head.

In the middle of tearing up some of the damaged floor tile, I hear a throat clear from somewhere close by.

When I look up Cami is standing barefoot in a little white summer dress with her long blonde hair pulled up into a loose bun.

The sight of her sun-kissed skin and long legs has my dick instantly hardening beneath my jeans, and the moment my gaze moves up to her

scowling lips, it manages to harden even more.

“Is this even a real application?” She holds the paper up and points at one of the *extra* questions I added before printing it. “How many times a week did Douglas make you come? Really?”

“It’s definitely a real application.” I stand, wiping my hands down my jeans. “Did you answer every question?”

She shakes her head and lets out a sarcastic laugh. “Did I... did I answer every question? Of course I didn’t, because there’s at least three that are irrelevant to me living here. You’re insane if you think I’m going to give you that kind of information.”

Shaking my head in disappointment, I move toward Cami, stopping once I’m standing right in front of her. “Then you didn’t listen.” I point out. “I told you to complete the application and bring it back to me within a few hours, and here you are four fucking hours later standing in *my* kitchen with an incomplete form.”

She swallows nervously, her gaze roaming over my half-naked body as I take another step closer to her, my arms now on either side of her waist, her back against the counter. “Now answer the *fucking* question, Cami.”

“Who said he made me come weekly?” she questions stiffly. “Maybe I *can’t* answer that question.”

“What a shame,” I say against her neck, before moving my lips up it, stopping just beneath her ear. “Want to know how many times a week I would make you come?” When she doesn’t say anything, I lick my lips and continue. “Fourteen.”

“You do realize there’s only seven days in a week, right?” Her voice is weak, and I can’t help but hope it’s from my body being so close.

“Exactly,” I whisper in her ear. “But that’s just the number of times I would, not the number that I could.”

“You’re full of it.” She places her hands on my chest, causing me to take a slight step back.

“Am I?” I grip her waist with both hands. “I could prove right now that I’m not.” With that, I pick her up and set her on the counter, spreading her thighs for me to step in between them.

“What the hell are you doing?” She shoves my chest, but I stand firm, barely moving. “I’m not going to have sex with you, Jensen. Firstly, I can’t stand you, and secondly, I just got cheated on by my ex of five years. Sex is the last thing on my mind.”

“Who said anything about *sex*?” I remove my hands from her waist to place them on her thighs. When she doesn’t push me away, I slowly move them up her dress to grip the thin strings of her panties. “I’m only interested in making you come, since your ex clearly wasn’t doing the job. My tongue will do the job just fine and you can continue to hate me *after*.”

I wrap my fists around her panties and give them a slight tug to test her. When a small gasp leaves her lips instead of a no, I know she wants me to taste her pussy just as much as I want to.

Spreading her thighs wider for me, my lips curve into a slight smirk as I get a look at her wet panties. “Fuck, Cami. I haven’t even touched you and you’re already wet for me. You really think I wouldn’t give you multiple orgasms a day?”

She yanks her dress down and closes her legs. “I hate your mouth,” she grumbles.

“You won’t for long.”

“You’re an asshole.” She pushes my chest hard enough to make me take a step back and give her room to jump down to her feet. “I’m out of here. I don’t have time for your games.”

I stand back with a smirk, watching as she walks toward the living room as if she can’t wait to get away from me.

“The place will be ready in three weeks. You’re going to need Eighteen hundred up front to move in. That’s first month’s rent and deposit.”

She stops right before reaching the door and turns back around to face me. “Are you messing with me right now? Because I can’t take this being some big joke to you. Don’t get my hopes up and then let me down.”

“I never let people down, Miss Reynolds. Once I give my word, I keep it. If I say the place is yours, then it is.” I flex my jaw as she looks me over, most likely trying to figure out if I’m being serious. “I’ll have a contract printed up by Monday. Come back with the first payment and it’s yours.”

She swallows, before finally speaking. “How did you know my last name? You didn’t even look at my application.”

“I’ve done my research. There’s not many teachers around here with the name Camille.” I run a hand through my sweaty hair and turn away, before I have a chance to do anything else stupid tonight. “Now, I have shit to do. You can let yourself out.”

The moment I hear the door shut, I throw myself back into work, needing the distraction just as I do every fucking night.

I could have any of my guys on this project, yet I choose to take care of all renovations myself, because it's the only thing that keeps me going.

The idea of being at home alone gives me the same sick feeling in my stomach that it's been giving me for almost the last two years. So, I do my best to avoid it at all costs.

Even if that means spending my nights working until every muscle in my body aches to the point I can no longer keep going.

It's late by the time I arrive home, so I'm surprised when I pull up to Kelly Moore sitting on my porch waiting for me.

The moment I pull my helmet off, she stands and walks toward me, as if she can't wait for me to get to her.

"I've been sitting here for hours, Jensen. It's been a rough night for me." She places her hands on my chest and immediately moves in to kiss my neck, speaking against it. "I need you to fuck me."

"That's not happening again." I grab her arms and push her back a bit, allowing space for me to look down at her. "It's been a long night and I can't do this shit right now. Go the fuck home."

I move past her to get to my porch, but she grabs my arm and begins pulling me back. "He married her today. He went through with it and it's only been seven months. I *need* this." She sounds desperate now. "I can't think about him any more tonight. I won't, and you're the only thing that will stop that from happening."

She moves around me and goes for my belt, unbuckling it as if she's ready for me to take her right here in the open.

"That's shitty..." I grab her hands to stop her right before she has the chance to pull my cock out. "But this is not happening. I gave you what you *needed* months ago when he left you. It was a onetime deal."

Ignoring me, she goes right back to working my dick out of my jeans. I let her grope it for a few seconds while I work on sending a quick text to Austin to get his ass here.

He lives right around the corner, so he's the fastest option to get her off my dick and back home where she belongs.

As soon as I toss my phone into the grass, I grab my dick and shove it back into my jeans before she gets too far. "Like I said, it's time for you to go."

I pick her up and nod at Austin when he pulls up a few minutes later and steps out to open the backdoor of the car.

“What are you doing?” She squeaks.

“Getting you home.” I place her on the backseat and shut the door before she can try to get out. “Sleep it off and don’t show up at my house again.”

“What the hell, Jensen! You’re such an asshole!”

Austin laughs and shakes his head. “You’re lucky I live so close, because this is becoming a regular thing with you and women.”

“Tell me about it.” I cross my arms and back up, watching as he jumps into his car and drives off.

“Shit,” I grunt, running my hands through my hair. I stand here for a few moments staring out into the darkness, before I call it a night and head to bed.

I lie here, naked, my chest aching and my mind stuck in the past as I down half a bottle of whiskey, before passing out.

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6

Cami

MY NERVES ARE SHOT, MY hands shaky and unsteady as I reach to pull my hair into a ponytail. I've been working on my breathing since I woke up early this morning, but my anxiety over seeing Douglas soon is getting the best of me.

The idea of seeing him, or Susan for that matter, has the walls feeling like they're closing in on me. Regardless of which way I turn, I can't escape, and it's crushing me.

I managed to avoid his calls and texts the entire weekend with the help of Veronica and Peter, but the moment I get to the school, ignoring him will be close to impossible.

The school is only so big. We're bound to bump into each other at one time or another today, whether it be in the hallway, lunch room, or after school, and truthfully, I'm not sure what my reaction will be.

The tears haven't hit yet this morning, and that scares the crap out of me. I stayed up most of the night worried I'll have a mental breakdown in front of him and everyone at school, making a fool of myself.

The last thing I need is for all of our colleagues to look at me with pity in their eyes while they tell me that everything will be okay. I don't want or need their judgment, and I for sure don't want to talk about the situation with anyone other than Veronica.

I turn around when I hear a tap on the bedroom door. "Morning, babe." Veronica offers me a smile and a glazed donut. "Stay strong today. Remember, Douglas is a loser and you can do so much better. Just keep reminding yourself that and you should be good. He's not even that good looking anyway. He's mediocre at best, babe. You're much more attractive than him and Susan put together."

“Thanks.” I grab the donut from her and nervously shove it into my mouth, taking a huge bite and chewing. “I haven’t been this nervous in a long time. What if I see his face and breakdown like an idiot?”

She shakes her head. “You won’t. You just need to think about something else. Anything else.”

I let out a small breath as I reach for my purse. “Like what?”

“Like Jensen.”

I stiffen at the mention of his name, because Veronica has no idea what happened Saturday night when I went next door to turn in my application. At least, I don’t think she does. “Why would you say that?”

She laughs as if it should be obvious. “You’ve been talking about my landlord more than you’ve been talking about Douglas lately. It’s obvious he’s been on your mind this entire weekend, but hey, no judgment here. Maybe that’s a good thing for you. Sometimes a distraction is the best thing to keep you from repeating mistakes.”

“*Nothing* I’ve said about him has been good, Veronica. It’s not like that. He gets under my skin more than anyone ever has, and not in a good way. I may even hate him more than I hate Douglas right now, and that’s saying something.”

“That’s okay. Use that anger to fuel you throughout the day. Between Douglas being a lying, cheating douche and the cocky asshole Jensen, you should be nice and pissed off all day. No tears. Not a single one.”

“You’re right.” I straighten and look in the mirror again, being sure I look somewhat presentable before leaving the house. “My weekend was hell because of the two of them. I’m not sad, I’m angry, and when I see Douglas he’s going to know just how pissed I am.”

“Right, babe. Just don’t forget where you’ll be. There will be children present. Maybe you shouldn’t *show* him how angry you are. It might be best to just stand up straight and ignore him. Pretend he doesn’t exist. Men hate that.”

“Good advice. I’ve got to go. I’m running late.”

She smiles but doesn’t say anything as I walk past her and make my way out the front door.

“I can do this,” I say, opening my car door and shoving the last bite of donut into my mouth.

“You sure you don’t *need* my help?”

Jensen's deep voice scares the crap out of me, causing me to jump and cuss under my breath.

I haven't seen or talked to Jensen since Saturday night, but he's been randomly creeping into the back of my mind, driving me insane.

A cheating ex is enough to worry about. I don't need the guy who informed him of our imaginary sex life to be on my mind too. My future landlord that promises he can deliver multiple orgasms a day. And I almost let him!

Not now...

"Keep your cool." I breathe to myself. "You can't help it that men suck."

I breathe in through my nose and slowly exhale through my mouth, before turning to face his property.

Jensen is leaning against his motorcycle, smoking a cigarette, his gaze trained on me. It's a little cool this morning, so he's wearing a leather jacket that makes him look a hundred times hotter than he already does.

"I'm pretty sure," I say stiffly. "I would say thanks for the offer, but I know you're just being cocky again."

"You sure about that?" He pushes away from his bike and walks toward me, not stopping until we're face to face. With his eyes on me, he flicks his cigarette across the yard. "Something tells me this Douglas guy wouldn't like a guy like *me* hanging around you."

"You mean a cocky jerk who uses his body to get what he wants from women?"

He steps in closer until our lips are almost brushing. I hate that it creates goose bumps across my skin. "Who says it's *me* that uses my body? You don't know anything about me, Cami."

I swallow and take a step back, needing some room to breathe. The intensity of his voice has me feeling more nervous than I was before I stepped outside. "Maybe that's a good thing. I need to go. I'm going to be late."

Without speaking, he reaches for the car door and opens it for me to get in. Once I do, he closes the door and walks away.

I watch him all the way through the yard and up the porch until he disappears inside, unable to look away.

The last thing I expected was to see him before work, and now I'll be thinking about his offer and what exactly he meant by *needing his help*.

I don't know why I let him affect me the way he does. I barely know him, yet everything he says and does frustrates me and leaves me thinking about him.

By the time I pull up at the school my thoughts have switched back over to Douglas. The first thing I notice is his SUV, which happens to be parked far away from Susan's Jeep this time.

Yeah, because that's going to make things better...

If this idiot thinks avoiding Susan is going to help him, he's out of his damn mind. The damage is already done, and there's nothing in this world that will make me forgive him.

Once I turn off the car, I sit here for a few minutes, taking slow, deep breaths. *Slow, deep breaths.*

I leave the safe confinement of my car. Chances are, if I see him it'll only be for a few seconds anyway, unless I stop and talk to him. We used to meet for lunch every day, but that won't be happening anymore, so I might be good for a while.

Standing up straight, I put on a confident smile and step into the building, greeting everyone I see just like it's any normal day here.

Just a normal day, Cami.

As far as I can tell, no one is acting weird or giving me strange looks, so hopefully that means word hasn't gotten around about the staff *love triangle* and how I was left *brokenhearted* by the douchiest teacher here.

I'm relieved to make it past everyone and to my classroom without Douglas waiting at the door for me. Now, if I can just make it through the next nine hours.

CLASSES ENDED TWENTY MINUTES AGO and still no sign of Douglas. A part of me is relieved he hasn't shown his face, but there's that part of me that knows the day isn't exactly over yet.

There's still a hallway and parking lot walk I have to make before I can go back to my safe place, dodging everything I've been sick over all day.

I wipe my sweaty palms down the front of my pants and exhale slowly, before stepping out into the hallway, cautiously looking around.

My face heats, because for the second time in days I feel like a creeper, like when trying to *spy* on my future landlord the other night, as he called it. *Ugh...*

I push the thought from my mind before I let it get the best of me. I don't need that distraction. That was one of the most embarrassing moments of my life, and he made sure to rub it in like the jerk he is.

When I see the hall is empty, I hurriedly make my way toward the back of the building, wanting to get to my vehicle before Douglas comes looking for me. I know he's going to want to talk at some point.

Just when I thought I was going to complete my mission, I step outside and bump into the one person I wanted to get away from. It's definitely a much softer cushion than running into Jensen, and I can't help but to make note of that.

But that knowledge isn't enough to distract me from my getaway, so I push past him and keep walking.

"Cami, wait," he says, keeping up with me. "I've waited all day to talk to you. I thought after school would be the most appropriate time or I would've found you sooner."

"No. I will not wait, Douglas. Don't follow me either. Let's not cause a scene where there's teachers everywhere. Back off."

"Stop. Cami. Will you just give me two seconds to apologize, and I need to know..." He comes up behind me and grabs my arm, stopping me. "Who was that guy that answered your phone?"

"Seriously?" I yank my arm from his hold, angry that he has the audacity to question me when he's been the one sneaking around with someone. "I don't owe you an explanation. We're no longer together. *You* made sure of that. Remember?"

"I miss you, Cami. I really do, and I'll do anything to prove it. Going three days without you was complete hell." He takes a step closer, reaching out as if to touch me again, but I begin walking backward to get away.

"Missing me doesn't excuse you screwing another woman, so unfortunately, that's not going to work for me. Go find Susan before you end up alone and miserable like you deserve."

"Dammit, Cami!" He rushes around to stand in front of me when I continue to walk away. "I'm not leaving here until you consider giving me another chance."

“That won’t be happening.” My heart skips a beat at the sound of Jensen’s voice coming from behind me.

Please let my mind be playing tricks on me...

Swallowing, I turn around, not quite prepared for the hotness I’m hit with. Jensen is standing there in a pair of formfitting jeans and a white t-shirt that clings perfectly to his sculpted chest. He changed since I saw him this morning, and he looks incredibly sexy cleaned up. The toothpick in his mouth has my eyes ascending his body, landing right on his perfect lips. They stay there for a few moments, before landing on his eyes.

His icy blues look me over, taking me in from head to toe, before focusing on Douglas standing beside me, who is most likely just as surprised as I am.

“Who the hell are you?” Douglas finally speaks. “Is this him, Cami? The guy from the phone?”

Jensen pushes away from his motorcycle and wraps an arm around my waist, pulling me against him. My heart speeds up as he leans in to whisper in my ear. “Should I tell him I’m the one who fucked you into that pillow? Or should I *show* him?”

“What are you doing here?” I ask quietly, unsure if I want Douglas to know how annoyed I am with Jensen for coming here.

“I’m meeting one of my tenants for a rent check.” He pulls me closer until I’m practically on top of him and brushes his lips over my neck to mess with Douglas. Despite it being for show, it sends chills over my body. “But *he* doesn’t need to know that.”

“Is this him?” Douglas asks again, louder this time, to make sure we’re listening. “*This* is the guy you’re sleeping with?” He runs both of his hands through his hair, before turning away to calm down. “This is a mistake, Cami.” He quickly turns back around and moves in as if to grab my arm, but thinks twice when Jensen flexes his jaw. “I’ve heard about this guy and he’s nothing but trouble.”

“How do you know?” I question. “You don’t even know his name.”

“Not many guys look like *that*, Cami. Trust me, word gets around. Jensen Blake, owner of *Blake Construction* and *Blake Rentals*. Now tell me I’m wrong.”

Jensen smirks, before grabbing the toothpick from his mouth and tossing it down. It looks like he’s about to say something, but stops the second Susan steps outside and heads toward us.

From the ‘oh fuck’ look on his face, I’d guess he knows her from around town. It almost seems like he’s trying to avoid her from the way he quickly turns away.

My heart skips a beat the moment her gaze moves from Douglas to me, and suddenly, I’m happy Jensen is here, because I can’t deal with whatever it was she was coming over here to say.

She nervously looks me over, before moving her attention to Jensen beside me, his arm still wrapped securely around my waist. It doesn’t take a genius to see that she’s jealous of him touching me. It’s written all over her pretty little face.

Cussing under her breath, she storms off and slams the door to her Jeep, before quickly pulling out of the parking lot.

“You’re a dumbass,” Jensen says on a laugh. “Just thought you should know.” He shakes his head and faces me. “I’ll see you back at the house.”

Douglas clearly doesn’t know what to say to Jensen’s little comment, because he turns and walks away, his hands pulling on his hair.

“What was that about?” I ask once we get to my car. “You know Susan?”

He nods and backs me against my car. “You could say that.”

“Have you slept with her too?” I’m not sure why, but my heart beats hard and fast while I wait for his response. I don’t know why it matters to me, but for some reason it does. I hate that she’s so beautiful.

He shakes his head and pushes away from my car. “No, and she still hasn’t gotten over it apparently.” He runs a hand through his messy hair, before turning to walk away. “Meet me at the house in an hour so we can get this shit over with. I have to run inside and do what I came here for.”

“Seriously.” I yank my car door open and get inside, slamming it shut behind me. He’s so damn aggravating. “This guy is unreal. So damn unreal.”

First, he pretends he’s here for me just to piss Douglas off, and now he’s back to barking orders at me as if I’m one of his employees instead of a future tenant.

I’m still sitting here gathering my thoughts when Jensen exits the building minutes later and walks straight to his bike.

Exhaling, I watch as Jensen straddles it and slips his helmet on. The sight of him on his motorcycle has my body buzzing with need and I hate it.

I hate that he is so unnaturally sexy. Veronica said it right that night. I've never in my life seen anyone as heart-stopping and jaw-dropping gorgeous as him, and I can sense Douglas noticed too.

His name wasn't even needed for Douglas to know who he was. One look at the heartthrob leaning against his motorcycle was all it took for him to place him with a name.

I'm not sure what that says about Jensen, but I know for a fact that he's someone I need to stay away from, and I plan to do just that.

I need to stop at the bank, get his money, and sign the contract. Once that is done, he won't exist to me until it's time to move in.

The entire trip to the bank I try to convince myself, but that doesn't stop me from thinking about Jensen and how incredibly hot he looked on that bike on the way back to Veronica's house.

His arrogance fuels my anger and hate for him even more. I just hope it's enough to ensure I don't end up half naked with his filthy mouth on me like I almost did the other night.

My stomach twists into nervous knots when I turn down the block to see Douglas' SUV parked a few houses down from Veronica's. Without giving it a second thought, I grip the wheel and pull into the closest driveway to turn around and go the opposite direction.

"Ohhh. That jerk has a lot of nerve." Once I get a few blocks away, I slam on the brakes and reach for my phone to send Veronica a text.

Cami: Look out the window to the left.

A few moments later, my phone vibrates with a reply from my best friend.

Veronica: That dickhead!!!!!! I'm going out there right now to tell him he has five minutes to drive away before I send my husband after his scrawny ass. Stand by.

Exhaling, I toss my phone aside and glance across the street at the house when I hear some people talking. I'm just about to turn away when I notice the siding is being replaced.

I'm angry at myself for wondering if it's one of Jensen's properties, but I don't have to wonder long when I look toward the driveway to see his bike parked in front of the garage.

I stare at the front door for a few moments, before finally realizing what I'm doing. I'm looking for him. I'm actually hoping he walks outside so I can see him.

"Ugh! What the hell is wrong with me?" I grab the steering wheel and get ready to drive off, but like an idiot, stop and stare when Jensen steps outside, followed by a pretty brunette.

She's busty with plump lips and long slender legs that instantly make me feel inadequate. That's the kind of girl Jensen would look perfect with, and that thought annoys the hell out of me.

I know I should drive off, but I can't pull my eyes away as she reaches out and runs her hand over his chest with a sexy little smirk.

"Really? Are there any women that don't want this asshole?" I roll my eyes and reach for my phone when it vibrates from the passenger seat.

Veronica: You can come back now. He's gone.

I lock the screen on my phone and get ready to slip it into my purse when a knock at the window causes me to scream out and drop it on the floorboard.

Placing my hand over my racing heart, I slowly turn around to come face to face with Jensen. He's watching me with amusement as I reach over to roll down the window.

"I said meet me at the house in an hour, not fucking stalk me."

"Are you kidding me?!" I can't control my anger over his assumption I would *want* to stalk him. "I didn't know you were across the street until *after* I parked here to get away from Douglas. Besides, I don't even like you enough to want to see you when I *have* to. It's not my fault you apparently own this whole subdivision."

"You're a shitty liar, Cami." He reaches into my car to roll the window down farther and lean in close to my face. "If you didn't want to see me you wouldn't have been staring at me since the moment I stepped outside."

Annoyed, I place my hand on his face and shove it out of my car before I punch it. "Unless you have eyes in the back of your head, then I highly

doubt you know what I've been looking at this whole time. For the record, it wasn't you."

"Do you lie to yourself often, Cami? If so, you should probably get better at it." He stands up straight and crosses his arms. "Meet me at the house in thirty minutes. I've got more checks to collect." He gets ready to walk away, but stops and turns back around. "Oh, and you look sexy-as-fuck today. Explains why Jasmine was so jealous of my stalker."

"I was not stalking..." My words trail off as he continues to walk away, ignoring me. I'm so angry right now that I could scream, but instead, I drive away, mentally telling him to fuck off.

"Whoa!" Veronica says when I stomp my way through the door and toss my purse down. "Douglas piss you off that bad?"

"No." I grunt and make my way to the kitchen for a much-needed glass of wine. "Try again."

She laughs, watching as I fill my wine glass to the rim and tilt it back. "Jensen does have that ability when it comes to women, it seems."

"Tell me about it." I take a huge gulp, followed by another. "I don't think I can rent from him, Veronica. He's driving me mad."

"Then don't." She smiles when I turn to face her. "Buy from him. You said you have money saved up."

My eyes must widen to the size of saucers, because she laughs and reaches for my glass to refill it. "Is that an option?"

She nods and hands the glass back to me. "He gave us the option when we first moved in, but it just wasn't the right time for us. We plan to change that soon though. I believe all he requires is that you rent from him for six months before giving you the option to buy."

I smile and bring the glass to my lips. "Six months is doable. It'll be a struggle to not want to *kill* him every month, but I think I can handle it."

"Good." She pours herself a glass, before taking a sip. "Looks like Douglas can screw off. Surely, buying your own place will be enough to show him you're moving on. This is a great idea and it's even *greater* because the house you're buying is right next door to moi."

"Exactly." I make my way to the front door and step outside to look at the property next door. "And maybe it's possible to make a few changes to his renovation plans before he gets too far. What do you think?"

She shakes her head. "Nope. Hell no. Not a good idea. He doesn't like *anyone* questioning his designs. Even if he does plan to sell in six months,

it's *his* property right now, and he takes a lot of pride in designing each one."

"Yeah..." I turn away from the house next door and smile at my friend.
"But it *will be* mine."

I'm not afraid to fight for what I want, and I plan to show him just that.

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7

JENSEN

CAMI WILL NEVER ADMIT IT, but she was relieved when I showed up at the school and put a face to the voice for Douglas. I saw the way her shoulders lowered as if a weight had been lifted when all hope of him getting a second chance drained from Douglas' face.

I bet she spent the entire school day avoiding him, afraid of looking him the eyes in fear of giving into his bullshit apologies and promises of never hurting her again.

Me being there was the distraction she needed to get away without thinking too much and getting lost in her own confusion. I didn't mean for it to happen, but I did her a favor she'll be thanking me for later.

As soon as I turn the corner, I notice Cami sitting in front of the house waiting on me. I made it my purpose to show up at the house late, just because I knew it would get under Cami's skin. For some reason, the idea of her wanting to strangle me makes my dick happy, and that's something to look forward to.

When she looks at me with ice-cold eyes like she wants to rip me apart limb by limb, I imagine her doing that very thing with my clothes, taking her frustration out on me in the bedroom. The sexy, dirty-mouthed teacher. So many tempting fantasies...

I love that she makes no attempt to conceal her hatred for me, unlike everyone else in this town.

"You're late," she seethes from the porch step, surrounded by papers she's most likely grading. "I've been waiting for over an hour. What makes you think I don't have things to do on a Monday evening? I don't have time to sit around and wait for you to show up."

Ignoring her question, I walk past her and unlock the door to let myself inside. I'm afraid that if we argue right now I won't be able to stop myself from slamming her against the house to show her who's in charge here.

She has no idea how much it turns me on that she can take my controlling and overbearing personality and dish it right back. I've been on edge since seeing her at the school with Douglas, so one wrong word from her mouth is going to either have me fucking her or continuing with the show she missed the other night.

It takes her a few minutes to gather her papers before she joins me in the house and slams the stack down onto the kitchen island. "Seriously? You can't even apologize for making me wait? My time is valuable just like yours."

I set my helmet down and grab a beer, twisting the cap off before I make eye contact with her. "Why should I apologize? Did you fucking apologize for making me wait the other day?"

"Well... no, but—"

"Exactly, Teach. So, don't expect an apology when you aren't willing to give them out yourself."

Her face reddens with anger, and from the way her cute little nose flares out, it's clear she's holding back. "There are a few things I'd like to discuss before I sign the contract. Can we just get to it, so I can get some work done?"

I flex my jaw and lean against the island. I'm not sure whether it angers me or I find it cute that she thinks she's the one in control here. "There's nothing to discuss. You sign the contract and that's it. End of story."

She takes a step closer and swallows, as if she's nervous. I can see why considering what happened the last time we were in this kitchen.

"I've changed my mind," she spits out as if it was a struggle to say. "There's one big change I want. Huge, actually."

I lick my lips and grip my beer, watching her watch me as I bring it to my lips and take a swig. "Is that right?"

"Yes." She nods and swallows again, her eyes bouncing from my lips to my eyes. "I want to rent-to-own. Veronica said you gave them the option and I want it too. It's the perfect time in my life to settle down and do something for myself."

I shake my head, because truthfully, I wasn't planning to sell any more properties. I like owning shit. The money is good. I like for things to be

mine. She's about to learn that real quick if she keeps pushing me. "No. That option is no longer available." I take another quick swig, watching for her reaction. "And I've changed my mind too."

Her mouth drops open in disbelief, before her perfect, plump lips turn into a scowl. "You're not going to rent to me at all now? Why? Because I want the option to buy from you? That's bullshit."

"I never said that. You're putting words in my mouth." I push away from the island and walk over to stand in front of her, holding my bottle to my side. "Help me fix the place up and then I'll let you sign the contract. It's simple as that."

She narrows her eyes at me and stands tall. "Is that even legal? You can't just force someone to do something for you in order for them to qualify as one of your renters."

She's right. Legally, I can't. But I know if she wants the place bad enough she will.

"I can do whatever the fuck I want to, Cami. You know why?" I move in close, wanting her to hear every fucking word as clearly as possible. "Because I own this property, along with a shit ton more, so you won't be finding another place anytime soon without going through me. Now, let's get to work, because school is out for the day and we both know you're done grading those papers. You only brought them as a distraction to use as an excuse to get away from me."

I back away, keeping my gaze locked on her shock-filled face, before turning away to grab a second beer from the fridge.

"Are you serious? You want me to help you with labor before signing the contract first?" she questions tensely. "Wow. I didn't think it was possible for you to become an even bigger asshole, but you've proven me wrong. You want my help. Fine. You'll get it." She takes off down the hall and stops to reach for the gallon of paint that's sitting in front of the bathroom.

I have that there, because I chose that color specifically for the fucking bathroom, and I'm pretty sure she's smart enough to figure that out. "What are you doing with that?"

"Painting. What else do you do with paint?" she responds calmly, before disappearing into the guest room.

"The fuck you are." I drop my tools and rush to my feet. By the time I make it to her, she already has the paint poured into the extra tray and is just

about to wet the roller brush.

I cross my arms and watch her roll it in the thick Wolf Gray paint, curious to see if she's actually brave enough to go through with it. "Did you miss me painting this room the other day when you were spying on me through the window like some perverted, sex-deprived housewife?"

"Nope." She stands up and rolls the brush up the center of the wall. "And I wasn't spying, jackass. I refuse to have this discussion again, because clearly you don't listen to the words that come out of my mouth no matter how distinctly I announce them."

I grab her arm and stop her from rolling it back up. "Go paint the bathroom." My voice is firm, and usually that's enough to scare the shit out of anyone else.

Not Cami Reynolds.

She looks up at me, her angry breath hitting my neck. "Why would I paint the bathroom? Do I need to make it any clearer than I already have that I'm painting *this* room? The one we're standing in right now."

Aggravation takes over and I grab the brush from her and toss it across the room, not giving a shit about the mess it's going to make. She doesn't have a chance to say anything before I press her against the wall—right where she just painted—and block her in with my hard body. "This is my fucking house, Cami. I make all the decisions. Don't push me. This room is staying white."

"White is not even a color! It's too plain." She stares me right in the face as she speaks, her green eyes harsh and unwavering. "If you want me to help, then maybe you should let me choose which color I want *my* guest room since I'll be the one living here. Oh, and by the way, you owe me a new dress."

My breathing picks up as I match her hard stare. No one challenges me, and I've discovered since I met Cami that I fucking love a good challenge. "You'll only be the one living here if I let you sign the contract. Let's not forget that small but very important detail."

She pushes my chest to put some space between us. "You're so infuriating, but I'm sure you're used to hearing that."

"More times than I can count." I back away from Cami to grab the paint roller. There's gray paint splattered all over the carpet, so I make a mental note to add replacing the carpet to the growing list of things she's going to help me with before signing the contract.

If she would've listened to me to begin with this mess never would've happened. "You really don't care, do you?" she questions when I hand her the roller.

"I don't know what you're talking about, but yeah, most likely not."

I get ready to walk away, but stop at the sound of her voice. "I've never met someone that enjoys being hated as much as you. Leads me to believe there's a reason behind it."

Her words gut me. "Just paint," I say stiffly. "Gray will work."

I knew she was right the moment the paint roller hit the white wall, but I don't give anything up without a fight. It's too easy, and I don't like easy. Never have.

Especially when it comes to women, and every single one of them in this town seem to be just that when it comes to me. Again. Not Cami Reynolds.

"Wait," she says when I go to walk away. "This room is huge. You're not going to help me?" She doesn't wait for me to respond before she grabs a brush and hands it to me. "You can do the trim since you have way more experience than I do."

I look down at the brush in my hand and let out a silent laugh. This woman really is something else. "I'll be back. Start without me."

She watches me shove the brush into my back pocket. I can feel her eyes boring into the back of my neck as I exit the room. The look on her face is sour as hell, but I have a feeling that will change any second.

When I come back a minute later with a glass of wine in my hand, she tries to hold back a smile as she reaches for it. "You had wine just sitting around?"

"Nope. I picked it up today between jobs." I keep my attention on the wall, focusing on not screwing up around the trim. "I figured you'd need it."

She's silent long enough to take a huge, and probably much needed—because of me—gulp of the red wine. "You're completely right. I hope you grabbed a big bottle. Actually, scratch that. A huge one. Because of you my phone has been blowing up all evening."

"Is little Douglas jealous you're fucking another man?"

"I'm not," she says quickly.

"No." I turn away to wet the brush, my eyes landing on hers. "But you will be."

8

Cami

WE'VE BEEN PAINTING FOR NEARLY thirty minutes now and his response still has my insides heated with desire for a man I don't even like. In fact, being around him is nothing short of painful. The two glasses of wine I've had doesn't help that situation much either. They seem to have gone straight to my vagina.

He's been looking at me as if he knows this. As if he's confident we'll indeed be sleeping together before we're done fixing this place up.

I don't think so, jerk.

I can't take the silence anymore; not if we're going to be alone together, because the more his trap stays shut the more physically attractive he becomes. He needs to talk to remind me not to do anything stupid.

"Why do you want me here when it seems what you really want is to be alone?" I ask, breaking the silence. "Do you want me to be miserable with you? Because if so, it's working."

He smirks but doesn't answer my question. Instead, he dips his brush into the paint and gets right back to work as if I don't even exist.

"Okay, you know what? Don't answer that. I already know the answer." I stop painting to take a drink of my wine and look around the room. Any distraction from my current thoughts is needed at the moment. "This is much better. I can already picture my white desk and futon in here. All I need are a few bookshelves and it'll be perfect. I can kick back with a glass of wine or two and grade some papers before relaxing with a book to finish the night off. How long before it'll be ready again?"

"Three weeks," he mutters, as if annoyed that I'm talking.

The excitement of having my own place is finally kicking in now that I can imagine myself being here. I'm not going to let Jensen's permanent

sour mood ruin it for me either.

"I'm thinking maybe an ice blue for the master bedroom. I could go and pick out the paint and some bedroom furniture tomorrow after work. Maybe Veronica can help me paint so you can work on other things and we can get done quicker."

"No."

I look across the room to see Jensen staring at me, his jaw tight. "Why not? It'd be much better than the two of us having to work in the same room. Clearly, we can't stand each other, so why suffer if we don't have to?"

"Because I said so. Now, can we go back to working in silence?"

No. I think I'm in the mood to talk. Or maybe I just don't want to give him the satisfaction of getting what he wants. He's used to that, and if I'm going to be stuck here helping then he's going to be stuck listening to me talk. Maybe it will make him change his mind about Veronica helping out.

"Did you grow up here in Highland? My parents lived here a bit when I was a kid, but we moved a lot due to my father's job. I came back when I turned twenty but ended up finding a nice affordable apartment in Jamestown."

"Yes," he says stiffly. "No more questions."

"I need more wine." I grab my empty glass and walk to the kitchen to get away from Jensen for a minute or two, or five. I don't know. I just need to not see or *smell* him right now. He's incredibly gorgeous and his scent has my mouth watering. Or maybe it's the wine. I don't know.

A few moments later, Jensen joins me in the kitchen to grab a fresh beer from the fridge. With his icy blue eyes on me, he unscrews the top and brings the bottle to his mouth.

Why is he so sexy with a beer between his lips?

"What's the deal with you not being able to have a decent conversation?" I pour myself another glass of wine and look up, waiting for his answer. "Is it that painful to get to know someone?"

"I work in silence. I always have, and that's not going to change just because I have a partner that can't stop talking." He tilts his beer back again, and just like before, I find myself staring at his sexy mouth. "Besides, if I have to listen to your sassy mouth for one more second I'm going to put mine in places that'll make you scream. So you should probably stop fucking talking."

“Ha! You’re delusional to think I’d let you.” I slam my wine glass down and narrow my eyes at him. “I’m only here because you’re forcing me to be, not because I want to. I don’t like your mouth when it’s in the same room, nor do I want it on or anywhere near me. Get that through your arrogant head.”

He watches me grab my glass and down the rest of my wine before he comes at me and grabs it from my hand.

“What are you doing?” I ask as he sets the glass aside. “I’m going to need that back unless you expect me to drink straight from the bottle.”

He tilts his head and grips my waist, lifting me onto the counter just like the last time we were alone. My heart speeds up with excitement I didn’t expect to feel. Not again.

“What you’ve been wanting me to do since the last time I had you in this fucking position. And don’t try to deny it, because your body was proof that you wanted me to taste you.”

“You don’t know shit about my—”

His hand skims up my leg and I make the mistake of letting out a quiet moan of pleasure. He uses that as an invitation, because he has my panties on the ground and my legs spread wide open for his viewing before I can stop him.

“No more talking.” He lets out a deep growl, before moving his tongue along my bare thigh. My head is screaming for me to push him away, but my body is buzzing with need, and it’s winning at the moment.

Once he reaches my pussy, he bites down right beside it, causing me to squirm and grab onto his hair for support.

Preparing to yell at him for biting me, I moan out the moment he slowly and teasingly slides his tongue along my aching pussy instead.

I know I’m going to hate myself for this later, but right now my body is loving me.

Jensen works his tongue slowly at first, taking his time to taste me. He’s teasing me gently, knowing in the end I’ll be begging him to make me come. He might be right about that. His rhythm is precise and controlled, as if he knows exactly where to taste me to drive me crazy with a need I’ve never felt before.

In the five years we were together Douglas never made my body feel this damn good.

I moan out again and pull his hair hard when he slides his tongue into me and begins fucking me with it, rubbing circles over my clit with his thumb.

I'm so close, and I don't know whether to slap him or just let him finish me off. It feels so good it doesn't matter that I hate him right now. All that matters is my need to come against his mouth.

He continues to move his tongue in and out for a while, getting me close to climax before he slips his tongue out and moves up to suck my clit into his mouth. He sucks gently at first, before moving his fingers up to slide into me, driving me wild.

"Oh God..." I grab his head and begin grinding my hips into his face, taking control. "Keep... going. D... don't stop."

He growls against my clit and shoves his fingers in one last time, causing me to scream out in pleasure as I come all over them.

"Holy fuck!" I scream, my body shaking as he slowly pulls his fingers out of me with a satisfied grin. "You're an asshole for doing that," I say out of breath. "This never should've happened."

"I'm not done being an asshole yet. So why don't you wait until I'm finished to comment." He wraps an arm around my waist and pulls me down to my feet, before bending me over the kitchen island and gripping my ass cheeks in both hands.

He moves in behind me, letting me feel his thick erection against my ass before he moves one hand around to grip the front of my neck. I let out a breathless moan as he slides his hand up the back of my skirt and begins finger fucking me from behind.

His dick is hard and thick and I'm sure he can tell I'm imagining his fingers were his rock-hard cock taking me rough and deep by the way I'm moaning out each time he digs it into my ass.

My landlord's fingers are inside of me, and oddly, that thought arouses me even more.

In less than two minutes I'm gripping onto anything I can get my hands on and coming around his fingers for a second time.

Keeping his hand around my throat, he pulls his fingers out of me and slides them into his mouth, being sure to watch me as he sucks them clean.

Breathing heavily, I watch him with hatred as he leans in to whisper beside my ear, "Now do you hate my mouth? I bet not so fucking much now. You're welcome."

“Get off me.” I push him away and quickly adjust myself. My heart is racing so fast that I can hardly catch my breath. I’m an idiot for letting him go down on me. I’m stupid for even agreeing to be alone with him. “I can’t believe I let that happen. Move. I need to leave. You can finish this place yourself.”

Swallowing, I grab the bottle of wine and rush toward the door, needing to get away as quickly as possible before I make an even bigger mistake that I’ll regret.

As soon as I get outside, I slam my back against the door and grip the bottle of wine, tilting it back.

Veronica is good at reading me. Too good. If I go back now she’s going to take one look at me and know something went down with Jensen.

“Shit, what did I do?” I push away from the door and head toward my car, but I stop once I remember that I’ve had three glasses of wine already. “Crap!”

I change direction and head toward the back of Veronica and Peter’s instead. Hopefully they won’t look for me for a while and I can get my thoughts together and put on a straight face.

It only takes two minutes of me sitting out here to realize I left my students’ papers on the kitchen island and five minutes to realize that I’m screwed. Whether I like it or not I’ll be seeing a lot of Jensen over the next three weeks.

When I drove away from Douglas over the weekend the last thing I thought I’d be doing is letting some jerk I can’t stand, possibly even more than him, go down on me.

I shake my head, before walking over to toss what’s left of the wine into the trash at the side of the house. I need to get those papers back, but I don’t think I can face Jensen right now. Not when my taste is all over his mouth.

I do the only other thing I can.

“I need you to go next door and grab my students’ papers.”

Veronica is sitting on the couch watching *Bates Motel* when I burst through the door. She looks up with a confused look. “What? What are you talking about? And why is your face so red? Are you okay?”

I run my hands down the front of my dress and exhale.

“Oh honey.” She jumps up from the couch and brushes a loose hair behind my ear. “What happened?”

I shake my head, and she smiles at me. “No need to be ashamed, babe. You’re single now. There’s nothing wrong with a little fun.”

“There is when that fun is with an arrogant asshole. Shit, Veronica. What did I just do?”

I’m sure she’s wondering the same thing.

“Hopefully something that felt good. A new person can be exciting. You deserve a little fun.” She pulls me toward the couch, before sitting down and slapping the cushion beside her. “I want details. Every juicy one.”

“Veronica, no.” I plop down beside her and bury my face in my hands. “The only thing I’m worried about at the moment is how I’m going to get my papers back without facing him. Can you help me or not?”

She opens her mouth to respond, but stops the moment a knock comes from the front door.

“I’m not here!”

“He knows you are!” She shakes her head and stands up when another knock comes. “You better face your new landlord and get those papers back, babe.”

“Veronica,” I whisper yell to her back as she slips away into the kitchen. “You’re the worst.”

I consider saying ‘screw the papers’ and not answer the door, but I swallow my pride and open it to find Jensen leaning against the porch railing with a serious look on his face.

He walks over and hands me the papers as if nothing sexual happened between us less than twenty damn minutes ago. “I’m busy tomorrow night. Meet me at the house Wednesday at six to work. Don’t be late.”

All I can do is stand here speechless as I watch him walk away and light up a smoke. I don’t know who he thinks he is, but there’s no way in hell I’m showing up on Wednesday.

Nope.

Not a chance.

Moments later, his eyes meet mine as he flicks his cigarette across the street before disappearing into the house.

Aggravated, I slam the door shut and grab some clean clothes to take a long, hot shower to wash his asshole mouth off of me. It’s the first and last time it will be on me.

That’s a promise.

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9

JENSEN

MY NERVES HAVE BEEN SHOT all day, and being stuck in this office taking care of the shit my employees slacked on last week isn't helping my anger any.

I meant to spend the day doing physical labor to the point my body couldn't take it, not sitting here on my ass where it allows me too much time to think in between catching up.

If I stay here any longer, I'll blow up and break something. That thing most likely being my fist against the desk.

I glance up at the wall clock and stop pacing. *Shit.*

"Where's Ben?" I poke my head out the office door, searching for my manager of *Blake Rentals*. Kim, the receptionist, looks up from whatever she's doing at her desk and shrugs, nervously. "As soon as his ass gets back from doing whatever the fuck it is that he *shouldn't* be doing, tell him to come to my office."

Ben Scott is my oldest friend and the biggest pain in the fucking ass. He's the only one brave enough to test me, because when it comes down to it he's just as big of an asshole as I am. Maybe even a bigger one.

"I think I just heard his motorcycle pull up outside, Sir." She stands and swallows, looking nervous. "I'll tell him to hurry. I'll go right now."

I nod and slam the door shut.

Minutes later, the door opens to my old friend walking inside and setting his helmet on my desk. "What's the deal? Kim is freaking the fuck out about me leaving. I had a few errands to run."

I flex my jaw and watch as he takes a seat across from me with a shit-eating grin on his face. "You can get laid on your own fucking time. There's shit here to be done and I need to take off. Got it?"

“Calm your balls, Man. I knew what time you needed to take off. Why do you think I’m back? I had plenty left to do.” He stands and reaches for his helmet, before giving my shoulder a squeeze. “Kelly Moore says hi, asshole. I can’t believe you shoved her into Austin’s car instead of taking care of her needs. But I can’t complain. I had fun fucking you out of her system.”

This motherfucker is really pissing me off right now, but I grab my jacket and slip it on before I waste more time here. I can’t be late. “Just get shit caught up here and do your job. I’ll be checking in with Kim in a few hours. I have to go.”

Looking down at the time on my phone, I rush outside to my truck before jumping inside and driving off. I have less than ten minutes to get to a destination that is fourteen minutes away.

I made a promise to never be late, and I’m not about to break that promise just because Ben is a dumb fuck. He’s one screw-up away from getting fired. Oldest friend or not.

Once I pull up outside the school, I jump out of my truck and rush toward the doors. The bell rings the moment I reach it, and a pile of kids rush outside, screaming and laughing.

My eyes search the group of kids, a smile crossing my face when Benny comes into view. He’s busy looking down at his backpack, but smiles and rushes toward me once he notices me in the crowd.

“Jensen!” He gives me a high-five, jumping as high as he can, before he fixes his backpack and waves goodbye to a couple of his friends. “Grams didn’t tell me you were picking me up from school today. Are we doing something fun?”

I nod and place my hand on his shoulder, guiding him through the fence where I’m parked. “Yeah, buddy. That new ice cream place on Kennington opened up today. You down for a sundae before your homework?”

“Heck yeah!” The kid is fast at just eleven years old, beating me to the truck and jumping inside before I can even reach into my pocket for my keys. “I want to be the first one in my class there,” he says once I climb inside. “Go! Go! Go!”

I laugh as he struggles with buckling his seatbelt, missing the buckle two times before actually getting it. “Hang on a minute. We can’t just race through a school zone to get there. You trying to get me in trouble just for some ice cream?”

He chuckles and unzips his backpack to put something inside. “I guess not. I just wanted to beat Wes there. He’s been bragging *all* day to the whole class about how he’s going to be the first one to get ice cream from Patty’s Dairy and he always gets what he wants. He’s such a big jerk.”

I shove the key into the ignition and turn it. “If I get you there first you have to promise to be good for your Grams all week. No bickering when she asks you to do something, even if it’s cleaning your room. No one likes cleaning their room, but it’s your responsibility to keep it clean. Deal?”

“Yes!” He nods excitedly and zips his backpack. “Deal! I promise.”

Instead of following the school traffic like everyone else, I turn my truck down a sideroad and head toward Patty’s. Since school just let out, there’s only a few cars in the parking lot when we arrive.

“Is he here?”

Benny leans forward to get a look at the cars parked out front of the small building. “Nope! His mom drives a red van. Yes! I can’t believe we beat Wes.” He celebrates his way out the door by doing some dance I’ve never seen, before rushing for the glass door.

I jump out of the truck and jog over to open it for Benny and he quickly runs inside. My heart fills with joy to see the excitement in his eyes when he steps into the little ice cream shop and looks around at all of the different flavors and toppings.

“Whoa! This place has more flavors than I’ve seen in my entire life. This is crazy! Look!” His eyes go big when he takes in the buffet of toppings. “They have everything! They even have brownie pieces.”

“My favorite, little man.” I nod at the counter when the girl greets him. “Tell the lady what flavor you want and then add as many toppings as you’d like. There’s no limit today.”

“As many as I want? For real?”

“That’s what I said. Pile it up, little man.”

It takes him a few minutes to fully top his sundae since there’s so many choices, but we eventually make it to the table, and right as Benny takes his first bite the door opens to an excited little blond kid and his mom stepping inside.

The kid’s face scrunches up with disappointment when he sees Benny holding up his tower of ice cream with a satisfied smile. “Hey, Wes. You’ve gotta try the ice cream here! It’s soooooooo good. Oh, but I took the last of the brownie pieces. I hope you didn’t want any.”

Wes' face turns red and he turns away without saying a word.

Sorry kid. You can't always get what you want. I learned that shit a long time ago.

Not even minutes later, the little shop fills up with parents treating their kids to ice cream. There are a few kids I recognize from Benny's sixth-grade class, but he's too focused on his desert to pay attention.

I let him enjoy his treat, waiting until he pushes the bowl away before talking. "All right, buddy, so how was school today?"

He shrugs and leans back in the booth. "It was okay, I guess. Nothing exciting happened. My teacher was really grumpy today and didn't talk much. He's usually pretty cool."

"Your teacher is Mr. Davis, right? The guy that always wears slacks and khakis?"

"Yeah. And those dorky brown shoes that we all laugh at." He snickers before taking another bite of his ice cream. "I'm sooo stuffed. I don't think I can finish it."

"I can see why. It was practically topped off with five pounds of candy." I grab a napkin and toss it to him, laughing at the chocolate mess covering his face. "Clean up and we'll go to the park while you do your homework."

"Cool! Can we play basketball when I'm done? Please!"

I stand to collect his garbage. "If you promise to let me win this time."

"I can't just *let* you win, Jensen! You have to earn it, remember?"

"Then no." I try to suppress a smile when his head jerks in my direction as if he thinks I'm being serious. "Kidding. Let's go. I'll drive."

He laughs and shakes his head, before rushing out the door. This kid is the only thing that makes me happy in life, and I'm going to do everything in my power to make sure that smile never leaves his face.

"Hi there." I look away from tossing Benny's trash away to see Wes' mom eyeing me over. Just like her son, she gives off that 'I always get what I want' vibe. She smiles and holds her manicured hand out. "I'm Claire Anderson. And you are?"

"Jensen Blake." I give her hand a quick shake and nod toward the door. "And I've got something important to do. Hope your kid enjoys his ice cream." I smile big and begin backing up. "Maybe next time there will be some brownies left for him to enjoy. Sorry about that."

She gives me a shocked expression, as if she's surprised that I'm not interested in what we both know she *really* came over here for. I guess it's

never too late for her to learn the same lesson her son did today.

It doesn't take long for Benny to finish his homework, and afterward, we spend a good hour playing basketball. I do everything I can to make our entire time together about him, but once we make it back to my truck, I can't help but to ask about douchebag Douglas.

"So..." I start the truck and look his direction as he tilts back some water. "Is your teacher dating another teacher at your school?"

He nods and places the water bottle down beside him. "There's this teacher across the school that teaches the fourth-graders. I guess she's his girlfriend. That's what everyone says at least."

"Oh yeah?"

He shrugs. "I haven't seen her in the halls like we usually do. Maybe she's mad at him because his shoes are ugly."

We both laugh as I shift my truck into drive. "Maybe she is, little man. No one likes people that wear ugly shoes. Why do you think mine are always so cool?"

"Because you're the coolest person I know! I want to be like you someday when I grow up."

I don't think so kid.

Once we pull up at his Grams' house, we sit outside for a while and talk. We do this every week, and it's not something I'm willing to give up, even though my phone has been going off the entire time. Everything else can and will wait.

"...no way!" he screams excitedly at the mention of the adventure park in the next town over. "Can we go there next week? I've been waiting for them to get new games and laser tag. Please. Can we?"

"We'll see what your grades tell me. Got it? You put a hundred percent into your school work at all times and listen to your grams. Always. Can you make me that promise?"

"I can try."

"Don't try, Benny. Do. Because you have the power to make it happen. Never forget that." I grab his head and kiss the top of it. "Your Grams is at the door waiting for you to eat dinner. I'll see you soon, all right?"

"All right, Jensen. Thanks for today. I had a lot of fun."

"Me too. I should be thanking you." I nod toward the house. "Now go eat some vegetables. They're better for you than ice cream."

He makes a gagging noise before climbing out of the truck and walking to his Grams. She offers me a smile and a wave and I return the gesture before driving off.

It doesn't take long before the emptiness I'm used to consumes me. So I do what I do best and throw myself into work. And the whole time that I'm at the house working on renovations, I find myself wondering if anyone at the school knows what Douchebag Khakis did to Cami.

As far as everyone knows they're still dating according to Benny. I'm not sure why, but I don't like the idea of that.

Deciding to take a break, I step out front into the dark night and light up a cigarette. I don't even hear anyone approaching until Cami is standing right in front of me with an envelope.

"Here." She holds it out to me.

"What's this?" I exhale, my eyes meeting hers.

"First month's rent and deposit. I forgot to give it to you yesterday." She shoves it into my chest and I grab it. "Take it."

I take another drag and watch as Cami walks through the grass, barefoot. "You look hot-as-fuck right now," my lack-of-filter mouth says before I can stop it.

She stops and turns around, narrowing her eyes at me. "I don't know how you manage to always sound so damn *gentleman*-like. Must be a talent you naturally possess. *Goodnight*, Jensen."

"There are lots of talents I naturally possess, Cami. You already discovered one. There's a whole lot fucking more where that came from." I toss my cigarette down. "*Goodnight*, Cami. See you tomorrow. Five p.m. Don't be late."

I walk inside before my mouth can get me into any more trouble. Truth is, it's late, and I'm exhausted. The last thing I should be doing is any kind of socializing no matter how brief it is.

After cleaning up a counter full of empty beer bottles, I head home and take a long, hot shower to clear my thoughts.

The pounding in my head has me searching through the medicine cabinet for some painkillers, but what I end up finding is an old medicine bottle that has me throwing my fist through the mirror.

"Fuck!" Blood drips over my knuckles and onto the sink and floor as I reach behind me for a hand towel to wrap my fist in.

I don't bother cleaning up the blood. Instead, I find myself in the kitchen, drowning myself in a bottle of whiskey until I black the fuck out.

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10

Cami

JENSEN MADE IT CLEAR LAST night that I was to be at the house by five today and no later, but after the crap day I had at work, seeing him is the *last* thing I want or need.

“I can’t believe Susan had the balls to come to your classroom and ask to speak to you in the hallway. That’s just...” Veronica stops to take a sip of her wine, as if she needs it just as much as I need mine right now. “Insane. It’s fucking insane. I would’ve cunt punched that slut so hard.”

“Oh, I considered it, trust me.” I wave my hand as our waitress walks by. “Another round, please.” I finish off the last of my wine before setting the empty glass on the table. “She ‘apologized’, telling me she shouldn’t have gone for Douglas, but after having feelings for him for so long, spanning before I came along, she had a moment of weakness when the opportunity arose. But that’s not even the best part. Just wait.”

I pay for the round of drinks the waitress drops off and offer her a weak smile, before diving into my fresh glass of wine.

“Holy shit. There’s more? I’m going to need this. Hold up.” She holds her finger up, while taking a long drink of her wine. “Okay. Go.”

I exhale and look down at my phone to see that it’s half past seven. “She asked me if I was dating Jensen.”

“What!”

“Yup. Can you believe it?”

“And your answer was?” Veronica pushes.

I swallow and set my wine glass down.

“Well? What did you tell her?”

I’m back to hating myself as I answer her. “I told her yes. Shit! What was I thinking?”

“Whoa!” She shrieks. “I can’t believe you told her yes.”

“I was embarrassed that my boyfriend wanted her and I just said the first thing that popped in my head. It was as if I needed her to see that someone else finds me attractive. Someone that *she* wanted and never got. I wanted to get back at her. To prove that she *didn’t* win. I don’t know what the hell I was thinking. I messed up big time.”

“I’m speechless, Cami.” She smiles above her glass. “Are you going to tell Jensen that you guys are ‘dating’?”

“No!” I shout a bit too frantically. “No. He never has to know. It’s not like I’m ever going to see Susan or Douglas outside of the school anyway. They both live thirty minutes away. I doubt they hang out here. At least I know Douglas doesn’t. Let’s just hope he doesn’t start.”

“Speaking of Jensen... weren’t you supposed to work on the house with him today?”

I nod, while sipping my wine. “According to him, yes. But after the lie I told today, I really don’t want to see him right now. I need a day or two, or three. We’ll see.”

“I think that’s going to be a problem,” she says nervously. “He just walked through the door.”

My heart drops to my stomach as I quickly turn around to see Jensen grabbing a beer from the bartender. He places the bottle to his lips and looks around the room, his eyes landing on me before I can pull mine away.

“Why did we choose this place of all places?” I mutter once turning around to look at my best friend. “We should go. Come on.” I stand up and search in my purse for money, but just as I’m about to throw it down on the table, a twenty lands in front of me.

“Get lost?” Jensen’s deep voice questions. “Because I was pretty positive a teacher would be capable of finding her way to the house next door.”

My stupid heart slams against my ribcage when I bring my eyes up to meet Jensen’s icy blue ones. He needs to work on not being so incredibly gorgeous when I’m supposed to *not* want to see him. *Ugh!* “How did you know I was here? Who’s the stalker now?” I mumble.

“Does it really matter?” he questions harshly. “What matters is that you were supposed to meet me almost three hours ago and patience is something I don’t naturally *possess*.”

“I’m going to um... get another round of drinks?” Veronica questions, standing up.

“No.”

“Yes.” Jensen chimes in. “Tell Rachel to put it on my tab.”

“Seriously!” I look up at Jensen, my anger flaring. “What makes you think I want to sit here and drink with you? Did you not see we were just leaving?”

“What for?” he questions. “I’m the only person you’re supposed to meet, and since I’m fucking here instead of where you were *supposed* to meet me, we might as well enjoy a drink together.”

Huffing, I return to my seat and slam my purse down on the booth beside me. “One drink and we’re done.”

“Why?” he questions with a smile. “Are you ashamed to be seen with me in public? It’s probably something you should do since we’re *dating* and all.”

My jaw drops open before I can stop it. “How did... who told you that?”

“You tell me, Cami.” He brings the beer bottle to his lips and looks down at me, waiting for an answer. The look in his icy blues give me the chills.

“It was a mistake. I hate her. We all say things we don’t mean when faced with someone we dislike. I wish I could take it back. So do me a favor and let’s both forget it ever happened.”

He shakes his head and sits down beside me. “I can’t do that.”

“Why?” I question, annoyed.

He nods toward the bar. “You see that pretty bartender up there?”

I shrug and sip my wine, not wanting to give him the satisfaction of me answering.

“She’s Susan’s sister. You definitely picked the wrong place to come tonight.”

My face heats with embarrassment when I look over my shoulder to see the bartender looking our way, as if she’s trying to determine if we’re really together.

What I’m trying to figure out is whether I’ll look like a fool more if I confess and come clean or wait a few days and stage a breakup because Jensen is a complete asshole.

“Do you really want her running back to her big sister with gossip that you’re so single and desperate you lied not to look pathetic? I’m going to guess not.”

“Screw you,” I spit out.

“Maybe later,” he says with a wink.

“All right, well, that bartender sure was talkative,” Veronica says, taking a seat. “She kept asking me about the two of you. I didn’t know what to say.”

“You should’ve told her that once we leave here I’m taking Cami back to the rental and fucking her so hard she’ll hear her screams from behind the bar.”

“No.” I growl. “What you should’ve told her is that Jensen is a huge asshole with an ego the size of Texas and he will not be taking me anywhere tonight or ever.”

Jensen lifts a brow and tilts back his beer. I’m sure he has something smartass to say, but for some reason he decides to keep it to himself. For now, at least.

That’s one thing I’m thankful for today.

“Oh crap!” Veronica looks up from her phone and stands. “I forgot about the casserole I put in the oven before we left. I should’ve taken it out twenty minutes ago. Peter has been waiting on us to eat.”

“I forgot about it too.” I stand and get ready to grab my purse, but Jensen grabs my waist and pulls me into him.

“Don’t you think Rachel would find it suspicious if you left the moment I sat down? Stay and finish your drink and then I’ll drive you home.”

I sit back down and exhale, realizing he’s right. “I’ll be home in twenty minutes. Maybe sooner. Save me some?”

“You know I will. Good luck,” she says on a smile. “Try not to kill each other.”

“I can’t make any promises,” I mutter. “But I’ll do my best to keep my hands away from his throat.”

“You like it kinky too, I see. This should be a fun night.”

“That’s not how I meant... you know what? Never mind. Let’s get this drink over with.” I look back to Veronica, who is watching us with amusement. “See you soon.”

“All right, babe.”

Things become awkward the moment we're alone. I'm hoping with everything in me Jensen will remain quiet and let us enjoy the rest of our drinks in peace.

"Why did you lie to Susan? I thought you didn't want *Ugly Shoes* to think we're dating."

So much for that hope.

"Ugly Shoes?" I ask, confused.

"Never mind." He plays with the label on his bottle. "Douglas."

"I didn't. I mean I don't. But..."

"But what?" he pushes.

"Susan," I grit out, squeezing my wine glass, wishing it was her face. "She pushes me. I didn't mean for it to come out. It just did. Like I said, it was a mistake. I'm not proud of it."

"I get it," he says, before ordering another round of drinks that I gladly accept, because I'm pissed at my thoughts and need an escape. "I'm sexy as fuck and you want to look good to the woman that grabbed *Khaki Boy's* attention, right?"

"No!" I blurt, causing Rachel to look our way. "You're such an idiot," I say, quieter this time. "Just drop it."

"Sure. Whatever you say."

"Why are you such an asshole?" I question, sitting up straight. "What made you treat others this way?"

"Who said anything made me this way?" he responds, his jaw tight. "Maybe I was born an *asshole*."

"No." I shake my head before taking a quick sip of wine. "There's always someone that turns us into assholes. I know, because my mom turned my dad into an asshole when she left him for his best friend. He was never the same after that. He treated everyone around him like shit, including his only child. I haven't spoken to him in five years, because I can't stand to even look at him anymore."

"That's unfortunate for your dad," he mumbles, not bothering to look up at me. "But no one has that kind of power over me and never will. Now, can we drink in silence and get the fuck out of here?"

"I thought you'd never ask," I grit out. "Once we're through with these drinks we're out of here."

It was a lie, because one hour and three glasses of wine later, I'm still sitting beside Jensen, except now the effects of the wine has kicked in. I'm

feeling good and carefree.

And when I see *Susan's* sister eyeing us over for the hundredth time, taking notes as if she's sure we're not really together, something inside of me changes and I move my purse out of the way to get to Jensen.

Like I've thought before, he's extremely sexy when he doesn't talk, and he hasn't said a word for the last twenty minutes or so. He seems just as lost in thought as I've been.

Jensen grips my thigh and squeezes it when I straddle his lap and run my lips up his neck.

"Okay. You've *gotta* be drunk to be this close to me without a knife in hand."

"I am." I admit. "And *Bartender* is watching us, so shhh..." I place my finger to his lips, letting the wine take over. "Just go with it."

A small growl sounds from his chest when I bite his earlobe and give it a slight tug. Between the wine and us being watched, I'm feeling brazen. I'd never do this totally sober and away from prying eyes.

And apparently, due to the lack of groping hands, he knows this too.

"Cami," he warns, when I move my hand along his strong thigh, inching toward the visible erection in his jeans. "It's time to get you home. You're drunk."

He slams the rest of his beer back and does something on his phone as I continue to brush my lips over his neck.

"Fuck me!" he yells when my hand grips his dick and squeezes. "Austin needs to hurry the fuck up."

"Why?"

"Because I'm not going to fuck you when you're drunk, and if you keep touching me like that it's going to get harder not to bend you over right here in front of everyone."

His words have a sobering effect, and I crawl out of his lap before hurrying to the bathroom, feeling foolish.

Once inside, I lean over the sink and splash cold water on my face to wake myself up. "What are you doing, Cami? Holy shit!"

I can't believe I'm letting Susan get to me like this. I'm making a fool of myself. I'm going to tell her the truth tomorrow at work. This isn't me. Not even close. I'll never be this girl.

A few moments later there's a knock on the door, before Jensen pushes the door open and steps inside, not caring that he's in the women's

restroom. That sobers me up even more. He's proven to be a buzz kill more than once, and the number keeps going up.

He waits until I turn off the water and dry my face off before speaking. "Time to go before you jump me right here in public."

"Don't push me," I hiss, embarrassed by my behavior. "Just leave. I'll find my own way home. I'd rather *not* be around you right now."

"I'm not going anywhere without you, Cami." He tosses my purse to me. "Austin is here to give us a ride. Pull your shit together and meet me outside."

With that, he walks away, leaving me standing here hating his guts even more.

When I leave the restroom moments later, Susan's sister is watching me with a grin. I have no idea what she thinks happened in there or what she might tell people happened in there, but the idea of people thinking we had sex in a public restroom has me wanting to disappear and be alone.

"Let's go," I spit out, walking past Jensen to the car waiting on us. "Don't say anything. I'm hungry and tired. I just need to eat and go to bed."

"You don't have to tell me how hungry you are, Cami," he says with a satisfied smile. "You already showed me and everyone else inside the bar. Now get in."

Unfortunately for me, I doubt Jensen will let me forget this night, and I doubt I could even if I tried.

Once we pull up in front of the rental, I thank Austin and rush out of the car, ignoring Jensen as he lights a cigarette and watches me walk away. I can *feel* his eyes on me, and I refuse to look back at his smug face.

Veronica and Peter are in bed watching TV when I let myself inside, so I quietly make myself a plate of her casserole and climb into bed to find something to watch while stuffing my face.

"Hey, sweets. I was expecting you a while ago," Veronica says from the doorway. "Are you okay?"

I nod and fork my plate of food. "Other than making a complete fool of myself, I'm as okay as I can be. I think I just need to sleep this day off. Is it cool if we don't talk about it?"

"Of course, babe. Let me know if you need me. We're watching Sons Of Anarchy for like the fifth time, so it's cool if I take a break."

"Thanks." I shove a bite of food into my mouth, before speaking. "And this is delicious, by the way. So good. Thank you for dinner. I'll make us

tacos tomorrow.”

“What about Jensen?” she says with a small smile. “He’s going to expect you tomorrow since you blew him off today.”

“I don’t know if I’m even still getting the place. It’s too complicated with Jensen right now and my stupid lie. I need to figure things out when I’m sober.”

She nods. “You’ll figure it out. Talk to me tomorrow.”

“Sounds good. Night.”

“Night.”

Moments after she leaves my phone vibrates with a text from Douglas.

Douglas: Please tell me you didn’t have sex with that Jensen guy in a public restroom.

My stomach twists into knots. What I expected to happen has already started. Looks like Susan’s sister really was taking notes. She’s worse than the damn paparazzi.

Less than a minute later two more messages come.

Douglas: Are you two really dating? Answer me, Cami. I deserve answers.

Douglas: I’m waiting...

“Seriously!” Him pushing for answers and assuming he deserves *anything* from me has me answering with another lie just to piss him off.

Cami: YES. So fuck off.

I toss my phone down in frustration and set my plate on the nightstand, forgoing the eating part and going straight into the sleeping part.

This day just needs to end already.

DESPITE IT BEING THREE A.M. I can't force myself back to sleep, and as much as it hurts to admit, I miss sleeping next to Douglas.

I'm not saying I want him back. My heart can't help but to feel the void of him being gone after being at my side for so long. It's a horrible feeling, and I know it's going to take a while for it to go away completely.

I've been hurt before in the past, but not like this. It's never hurt this deeply. Betrayal sucks. "Ugh. Don't do this, Cami."

I sit up and grip my hair as my eyes sting from the tears. I do my best to hold it back, but a small sob escapes, and I have to cover my mouth to hide the noise. Crying over Douglas is the last thing I want to do. It makes me feel weak and pathetic after what he did to me.

Why should I cry over someone like him?

Why should I miss us?

Reaching beside me, I grip my phone in my hand. I don't know if this is going to make me feel better or worse, but I do it anyway.

I wipe my eyes off, so I can see the picture in front of me. It doesn't take long to realize that seeing them together—with the way I'm feeling at the moment—is only making the ache in my chest grow. It's making my insides want to burst with sadness.

"I hate you!" I toss my phone across the room, unable to look at it for another second. It hits the wall hard and I immediately regret it, hoping that the noise didn't wake Veronica and Peter.

Once a few minutes passes without one of them knocking on the bedroom door. I think it's safe to say I didn't wake them.

Taking a deep breath, I slowly exhale and crawl back under the blankets, grabbing the extra pillow and shoving it beside me, so I don't feel alone.

It works. Within minutes, my eyes grow heavy and I drift off to sleep.

11

JENSEN

AFTER LOADING MY TRUCK UP with the right color gutters—the ones my crew should’ve already had—I head to the jobsite to drop them off and check on the guys.

Austin greets me at the truck, looking just as annoyed as I feel, and that’s at the highest level. “Sorry, Man. Patrick fucked-up the color and now we’re an hour late getting to the final job. I asked Jason to pick up the correct gutters to save us some time, but he said he couldn’t.”

Red becomes my filter over one of my guys refusing to do his job, and I have to fight not to punch my truck. “Why the fuck not?”

Austin shrugs and begins unloading the truck in a hurry. “He didn’t say. Sounded like he was in a rush to get off the phone. Isn’t he working the warehouse now?”

“Yup. That fucker’s job is to organize shit and make runs when needed.” I’m so pissed that I can barely get the words out. I told his giant ass last week if he couldn’t do his job I’d give it to someone that could. “Is Oliver still looking for a job?”

He nods and closes the tailgate. “Hell yeah.”

I pull out my phone to check the time. “Text me his number. But get this job done first. It’s almost dark. I’ll call the next job and let them know we’re going to push it to tomorrow.”

“Gotcha, Boss.”

After making sure the guys are good to go at their current job, I haul ass back to the warehouse in search of Jason. He better pray he’s not there, because I’m heated, and the last thing he wants is to feel my fucking wrath after the phone call I just hung up from. No one fucks with my business. I made this clear *before* I hired him.

When I pull up at the warehouse, I jump out of my truck without bothering to shut it off. That's how fucking anxious I am to get to Jason and tear him a new asshole.

His little white car is in the driveway, so he's still here, and there's no good reason for him not getting those gutters to the jobsite when asked to. I was too far out of the way to come here before the job—it would've wasted more daylight my guys didn't have to waste—so I had to place an order close by and pay extra for shit we already had sitting around here.

Flicking my cigarette across the driveway, I hurry around the side of the building and step inside to find Jason sleeping in a fucking lawn chair with his cap pulled over his eyes.

"Get the fuck up!" I seethe, yanking his hat from his head and throwing it at the wall. "I don't pay your ass to take naps and be lazy. You're screwing with my business. Stand up. Now."

Jason's eyes go wide as he jumps to his feet to stand in front of me. He's towering over me, and that's not even enough to stop me from wanting to kick the shit out of him.

"Shit," he grunts, tiredly. "I didn't sleep last night. It was a rough night. I stayed awake as long as I could, but—"

"But nothing." I flex my jaw and step up until we're face to face. "I just lost business because of your bullshit. My clients want to know they can trust us to do our job on time. I had to call Patrick and Austin's next appointment to let them know they can't make it until tomorrow evening and they made it clear they won't be using us again in the future. Some clients aren't so fucking understanding, Jason. Got that?"

"I was too tired. It won't happen again. My mistake—"

"Get the fuck out of my sight."

Without a word, he nods, and walks to pick up his hat.

"And don't bother showing up tomorrow." I add. "You're fucking fired."

"That's bullshit. Are you serious?"

"Dead fucking serious. Go."

"Whatever. I'm outta here." He tosses his *Blake Construction* hat down and mutters some shit under his breath that he's too chickenshit to say to my face. He pauses at the door as if he's going to say something aloud, but decides against it; probably realizing nothing he has to say is going to do shit to change my mind.

I stay at the warehouse over the next hour waiting for all of my crews to get back and take down their hours.

Usually, I trust my shop guy to handle this before locking up, but since he moved away early this week, I made the mistake of thinking Jason could replace him.

By the time I arrive at Cami's rental to work, it's already well past seven, so I don't expect her to show up, but she steps inside shortly after I arrive with a container of food and stuff to make tacos.

"I heard you pull up and I was about to eat a late dinner. Figured you might be hungry." She doesn't wait for me to respond before setting the container down and pulling out two paper plates. "I made tacos for Veronica and Peter today, and I always make too much meat."

I didn't realize how hungry I was until she pulls the lid off and the scent practically slaps me in the face. "Depends." I watch her from over the island as she scoops meat onto two taco shells.

"On what?" she questions, scooting a plate toward me and pointing at the variety of toppings she bagged up. "Are you worried I spit in your portion?" She smiles teasingly. "I'm not saying I didn't, by the way."

"No. Why would I be worried about your spit when I've had your *pussy* in my mouth, Cami?" She chokes on the bite she just took. "I was gonna say only if it tastes as good as it smells. *You* do, by the way."

Her face turns red with embarrassment and she slams her taco down. "Can we forget that happened? It seems since meeting you I've been making multiple mistakes, that being the biggest one."

I shrug. "Sure. I can forget." I look up to meet her angry eyes when they focus on my lips as I bite into the taco. "But can you?"

"What makes you think I haven't already?"

"Your eyes," I point out. "If you don't want me to believe you're imagining my mouth on you again then you might want to stop looking at my lips like you want to suck them and taste yourself on them."

"Wow." She stands up and wipes her hands off. "You really are full of yourself, aren't you?"

"Just as much as you wish you were," I say to piss her off. My attitude is shit right now and she just happens to be around at the wrong fucking time.

"You know what... forget it. I can't do this. I've had a shitty day and I can't handle anymore bullshit right now." She brushes past me and heads

for the door. "I'm over it."

"Why?" I surprise myself with my own damn question.

She pauses, but doesn't turn around. I don't blame her. I'd be ready to get away from me too if I were her, but maybe I'm not ready for her to leave yet.

"What happened at work today?"

"It doesn't matter," she says softly. "I'd rather forget it ever happened just like everything that has happened since I caught Douglas cheating."

"Did he say something?" The idea of him hurting her again adds to my already shit mood. I wouldn't mind taking a little drive to fuck someone up tonight.

"It's not what he said. It's what he *did*." She turns around, pain evident on her face. "He left after school with Susan today. He lied to my face when he told me things were over with her. I may not want him back, but it hurts to know he's still sleeping with her. I hate that he's having fun while I'm hurting. Why should I suffer while he enjoys himself? I'm not the one that did something wrong."

"Sounds like I'm not the only asshole you know." I stand and walk across the room, stopping right in front of her. When I lean in, our mouths almost touching, she sucks in a breath. "He's not the only one that could be having fun right now, Cami," I say across her lips. "One night with me and you'll forget the asshole ever existed. I can *erase* him. Just say the word."

I trail my hands down her sides, stopping to grip her hips, and pull her against me. The sexy sound that escapes her lips instantly makes my dick harden against her.

"Jensen..." Her words trail off when I lean in and scrape my teeth across the front of her throat. "This is a bad idea. A *very* bad idea."

I growl against her throat, before running my hand up it to squeeze ever so slightly, as I speak into her ear. "Sometimes bad ideas turn out to be the best ones. I can *show* you."

Coming to her senses, she shakes her head and pushes away, her breath fast against my throat. "No. I don't need any more complications, Jensen. I have enough to deal with."

"There doesn't have to be any complications when it comes to us. Just sex," I point out. "Let me make you come around my dick, Cami. Let me make you *forget* him."

“This is crazy. No. I... I just need to go. I never should’ve brought you dinner. So much for doing something nice for you. I was trying to make up for what I did last night. Stupid idea.”

“I don’t have to *touch* you,” I say, stopping her before she can leave. When she turns around, I’m already stripping my shirt off and tossing it across the room. Her needy eyes watch as I go for my jeans to unbutton them.

“What are you doing?” she asks, eyes wide. “Keep your pants on, Jensen.”

“Who said I’m taking them off?”

She swallows and backs away as I come closer to her. “It sure as hell looks like it.”

I open my jeans and lower them, watching with satisfaction as her eyes roam over my muscular body, stopping on the outline of my hard dick through my boxer briefs. “Shut up and watch. Stop thinking. You liked it from a distance. You’ll *love* it up close.”

Her throat bobs up and down as she swallows, the moment my hand trails down the front of my briefs to touch myself. Pulling my bottom lip into my mouth with a growl, I grip my dick and begin stroking it through my briefs.

It’s so fucking hard for her, making me imagine slamming it into her wet pussy and taking her from behind. She’d scream for me, and I’d love every second.

“Fuck.” I remember her grabbing me last night. “I’m so fucking hard for you, Cami. You have no idea how hard and deep I could fuck you. Look at it. Imagine how wide I’d stretch you.”

She looks embarrassed watching me stroke it for her, but she doesn’t look away, her legs slowly closing in the harder I stroke myself.

Keeping my eyes on her, I move closer, grabbing her hand and placing it on the waistband of my boxer briefs. “Lower them, Cami. Now is your chance to see it in the flesh. We both know you’ve been dying to since that night. Do it,” I demand.

Her hand shakes as she slowly lowers the front of my briefs until my cock springs free. “Holy shit...” she breathes in surprise.

“Touch it, Cami,” I whisper.

She swallows again, doing her best not to look me in the eyes. She wants to touch it just as bad as I want her to, but she’s afraid to admit it,

because she *hates* me. What she doesn't know is that her hating me only makes this so fucking hotter.

"Touch it," I say again, backing her up until she's pressed against the sheetrock. Looking down at her, I place my hands against the wall, making sure our eyes meet. "Don't be ashamed. Douglas is probably doing the same thing with Susan right now."

"Fuck Douglas and fuck you." Her eyes turn heated. She looks me over as if she wants to kick my ass.

"Yeah," I breathe into her ear. "I'll let you *fuck* me anytime, and anywhere. But since that won't be happening tonight..." I press my hips against her, letting her feel how hard I am. "Enjoy the fucking show, because it's going to be what gets you off on a nightly basis."

Grabbing Cami's hand, I place it around my dick and growl into her ear when she gives it a tight squeeze.

"Think you can handle that inside you, Cami?" I place my hand over hers and move it up and down, so that we're jerking my cock together. "Do you feel how it keeps growing in your hand?"

She doesn't speak. She doesn't even look at me, because she's ashamed to show me how much she's enjoying my dick in her hand right now.

"It's not done yet. Not even fucking close."

I moan against her neck and move her hand over my dick again, guiding her and showing her exactly how I like it.

Her breathing picks up when I growl against her ear, letting her know how fucking good it feels to have her touch me.

As much as I enjoy her hands on me, though—as good as it feels—in order for me to tease her in the way I want to, I'm going to have to finish this myself.

"Close your eyes, Cami."

"Why?" She shakes her head and places her arms at her sides when I remove her hand from my dick. "This is... I should go. This is insane."

"We both know you don't really want to go. You know I'm right. Now close your fucking eyes."

Releasing a hard breath, she closes her eyes and focuses on the sound of me touching myself.

"Fuck," I growl out. "I'm going to come, Cami. Tell me how much you want me to come."

She shivers against me at the thought of me coming for her. It has her body worked up and needy. So fucking needy, and we both know it.

“Do I have to?” she whispers, annoyed.

“Yes,” I say stiffly. “Tell me.”

“A lot,” she says, so quietly I can barely hear her.

“I can’t fucking hear you, Cami.”

“A lot, dammit. Now fucking come.”

Pleased, I grin against her ear and wipe my thumb over the pre-cum on the head of my dick, wetting it.

“That’s for next time. When my dick is buried deep inside your tight little pussy. But I’m not sending you home without a taste.”

Grabbing the back of her hair, I give it a slight tug to tilt her head back. Her mouth drops open on a moan and I run my thumb over her bottom lip, wetting it.

“Taste me,” I order.

She hesitates for a brief moment, before running her tongue over her lip, obeying.

“Remember what I taste like, Cami. Use me to get off, because we both know you will. Just like everyone else does.”

With that, I back away and leave her panting against the wall, clearly trying to figure out what the hell just happened.

“Fuck you, Jensen.” She shoves my chest and wipes her mouth off. “I don’t need you to get off and I definitely don’t want you too either. I’m out of here.”

Feeling like a complete ass, I watch as she stomps her way out the front door, slamming it closed behind her.

I shouldn’t have said what I just did, but my nerves are shot tonight and I have a hard time controlling it when I’m around her.

Minutes later, I step out front and smoke two cigarettes in a row, watching the house next door as if that’s going to tell me if she’s over there pleasuring herself to me.

I’m half tempted to creep on her through the window like she did me, but that’s not my style. Plus, I’d probably end up at the wrong window and catch Peter jerking off inside. I’m sure she’d get a kick out of that.

Tossing my final cigarette toward the street, I walk back inside and bury myself in work for the rest of the night. By the time I get Cami here to do some damn work, it’s going to be ready for her to move in.

I can't have that.

This shit is far from over, and by the time I'm through with her she's never going to forget the *feel* of me inside her.

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12

Cami

I RUSH ACROSS THE LAWN, my heart racing with adrenaline at what just went down with Jensen. Despite me hating him, I can't seem to stay away when it comes to him sexually. Being around him brings something out in me that I haven't felt in a long time. He makes me feel and think dirty thoughts. It makes me want to be dirty and daring in the bedroom, which is something I've never been.

Being with Douglas for so long, I became used to a normal routine with sex. The second it was over we were falling asleep.

He was never up for anything kinky, or even spontaneous, and what Jensen just did was definitely hot and dirty. So damn dirty.

"Holy fuck." I pant, closing myself inside the guest room and throwing myself down onto the bed.

I can still taste him on my tongue. I have to admit, it has me so turned on that I can barely move without coming from the friction to my sensitized clit. When I noticed Jensen's truck pull into the driveway next door, my intentions were to be nice and offer him dinner, since I was almost positive neither of us had eaten. I should've known it wouldn't be that easy with him. It never is.

Closing my eyes, I slide my hand down the front of my jeans, surprised at how wet I am. The last time I was this aroused was when Jensen went down on me.

One swipe of my finger over my clit is almost enough to unravel me with pleasure. That's how hot watching him was.

I don't even care that Douglas might be on top of Susan right now in *our* old bed. The only thing I can think about is Jensen inside of me. If it

turned me on this much to watch him, I'm almost positive having him inside me would make me come within minutes.

Arching my back, I moan out and grip the blanket with my free hand as I continue to touch myself to thoughts of Jensen Blake. My landlord, and the biggest asshole I know.

"Fuck you, Jensen," I cry out, coming harder than I have in years. Well, other than when I came under Jensen's tongue.

A knock at the door causes my heart to nearly fly out of my chest. "Hey, babe. Want to watch some TV with me? I made us some popcorn."

I hurry to adjust myself and fix my hair in case Veronica decides to open to the door. "Sure! Just changing really fast and I'll be out."

"Sure thing. I'll get Netflix up and going."

"Okay," I push out, still panicking and trying to catch my breath.

Once her fading footsteps confirms she's walking away, I jump out of bed and change into a pair of shorts and a tank top. I stop and stare at myself in the mirror for a few minutes, trying to make myself forget about what just happened next door, but I can't seem to lose the blush from my cheeks.

"Crap, Cami!" I hurry down the hall to wash my face as if that's going to help, but at least I can blame it on the hot water if she asks why my face is red.

When I finally make it to the living room, Veronica is searching Netflix and popping kernels of popcorn into her mouth. "Did you have fun next door?"

"What?" I ask in panic. "What do you mean? Why did you ask me that?"

She smiles as she watches me sit down and fight to get comfortable. "Because I heard that Jensen was unusually bitchy tonight and had to fire one of his guys. I figured that's why you didn't stay long."

"He fired someone?"

"Yup! I heard the poor bastard fell asleep at work. I'm sure being fired by Jensen would suck. Can you imagine having a pissed off Jensen coming at you?"

I nod and grab for a handful of popcorn. "I can only imagine."

"Shameless good?" she questions, smiling over at me. "I've been wanting to check it out."

"Me too. Let's go for it."

She drops Jensen after that, making me thankful that Netflix exists, because it helps distract my mind and keeps me occupied for the next two hours until we both retire to our bedrooms.

Not long after I crawl under the blankets and get comfy, I hear Jensen's truck start up, and I can't help but to look out the window in hopes of getting a glimpse of him.

I expected to see him standing by his truck with a cigarette in his hand, but what I didn't expect is for him to be looking right at Veronica's house. He must notice the curtain move, because suddenly he nods, a smirk present, as if he just figured something out. He tosses his cigarette down and jumps into his truck.

Swallowing, I close the curtain and pull out my laptop to distract myself until I'm tired enough to fall asleep. The problem is that I'm wide awake.

"WHO CAN TELL ME HOW to spell lunch? First, give me a practice sentence and then spell it out."

Trish's hand shoots up and she jumps out of her seat, anxious to be chosen.

I nod and motion for her to stand. "Start with your practice sentence."

"My mom packed me a *boring* bologna sandwich for lunch today when what I really wanted was a pizza Lunchables. L.U.N.C.H."

"Good job, Trish."

I smile and start down the list of words, calling on my class until we're through the whole spelling list.

Knuckles rap on the wooden door. The day is almost over, so I wasn't expecting anyone, but when I turn around to see who it is my heart drops to my stomach.

"Miss Reynolds! Your *boyfriend* is here to see you," Stacy teases. "Oooooooooohhhh."

Douglas steps inside and greets my class as if everything is normal between us, and all that makes me want to do is throat punch him. He has no right entering my classroom and disturbing my students. He shouldn't be here and he knows it.

"I hope you guys don't mind, but I need to borrow Miss Reynolds for a moment."

"Now is not a good time. I'm busy with class," I say, forcing myself to sound as friendly as possible; although, his face alone makes me feel the opposite. "Can it wait?"

He shakes his head and nods toward the door. "It will only take a minute. I promise. It's..." He hesitates for a moment. "It's important."

"Class, I'll be right back. Stay in your seats and talk quietly."

I follow Douglas out into the hall and shut the door behind me, before giving him an earful. "Don't you dare come to my class again and interrupt it for our personal business. That stays away from here. Whatever it is that you want can wait. It can't be that important. What the hell is wrong with you?"

"She's pregnant," he blurts as I turn to walk away. "I went with her last night to take a test and it was positive."

My throat closes up. I feel as if I'm suffocating as I turn back around to face him. "You didn't even have the decency to use protection while fucking me over? Congratulations, asshole! You weren't ready for kids with me but apparently you were with her. Wow."

"It's not like that, Cami. She told me she was on birth control. I trusted her."

"It sucks when someone you care about breaks your trust, doesn't it?" I look him over, fighting to keep my anger in check. I'm so angry I feel like bursting right here in the hallway. It almost doesn't matter that someone might find out what's going on. "Don't approach me anymore. Not here or outside of school. I want nothing to do with you. *Nothing.*"

"Cami, wait!" He grabs my arm when I go to reach for the door, but I shake it off, my heart racing with anger. "I can't be with her. I don't want her. I want you. I'm miserable without you. I already told her I won't be with her, even for the baby."

"And that's *messed up*, Douglas. Leave me alone and go be with her. We're through here. You really are a piece of work." I look up to meet his eyes, wanting him to feel every ounce of guilt he deserves. "Oh, and you and your little girlfriend should probably know that I'm not sleeping with Jensen nor are we dating. I just wanted to hurt you like you hurt me, but nothing I can do to you will make you feel the level of pain you put on me."

I don't give him another chance to speak, because I rush into the room and slam the door behind me. It takes me a few moments to realize the entire classroom is looking at me, so I quickly pull myself together, put on a fake smile, and do my best to make it through the next half hour without screaming in the corner.

“ARE YOU SERIOUS?” VERONICA’S JAW drops in shock. “Wow. Just wow. That’s extremely messed up, Cami. Pregnant?”

I pick at my food, unable to force anything down. Douglas getting Susan pregnant is just another blow to my already broken and confused heart, and as mad as I am, it still hurts. It’s been less than two weeks since we ended a five-year relationship.

“Yup. Apparently, that’s why he left with her after school yesterday. I’m not sure whether to be pissed or sad. I guess I’m both, but to be honest, I’m more pissed than anything else.”

“And you should be pissed, Cami.” She grabs her empty plate and walks to the sink. “You’re over him. You don’t want to be with him. Don’t mistake your loneliness for loss. He screwed you over in the worst way possible and now he’s having a baby with another woman, because he didn’t use protection. Then he came home and had sex with you with that same dick. It’s disgusting.”

My stomach sinks. “I didn’t even think about that. I think I’m going to kill him, Veronica.” I stand up and begin pacing around the dining room, my hands pressed against my face. “I’m going to drive thirty minutes to his house just to kill that son of a bitch.”

I’m so angry I can barely catch my breath.

Cheating is low, but not using protection is the lowest he could’ve gone, and now he’s going to be a father. We had plans to start a family in two years. We were supposed to be happy. The plan was never for me to be here at Veronica’s hating him with every part of me.

“Let Peter kill him for you. How about that?” Veronica says, but I’m barely listening, because all I can think about is taking a long, hot shower to clean myself.

I want to forget that Douglas ever touched me. That he was ever inside of me.

"I'll be in the shower," I say quickly. "I need to be alone."

"All right, babe. Take your time."

By the time I get out of the shower, Veronica is on her computer working on cover designs, so she doesn't even notice when I take off next door in hopes of finding Jensen. Usually, I hate dealing with him, but with the way I'm feeling at the moment, I could use someone to fight with to let some of this anger and frustration out before I lose it.

But my heart sinks and I feel sick to my stomach the moment I step onto the porch and notice that the lights are off and the door is locked. I've gotten so used to Jensen being here that I didn't stop to think he might not be around.

It's a strange feeling, and I'm not sure I like it.

"Of course," I mumble under my breath. "The one time I want you to be here you're not. Perfect."

I don't know what to do now, so I sit on the front steps and watch the vehicles driving by in hopes that one of them will be him showing up.

Maybe he got held up tonight and will be here soon. But after an hour passes, I realize that's not likely going to happen.

Standing up, I wipe my hands over my sweats. I think I'm going to take a long walk to cool off. If I'm going to live here soon, it wouldn't hurt to get familiar with the neighborhood. I can't go back to Veronica's right now, because I know she wants to talk about things some more and I just can't tonight.

I'm already so angry I have the urge to drive to Douglas' and burn everything he owns. Everything we bought together as a couple. Talking or thinking about it anymore tonight might just push me over the edge.

The cool night air feels good against my bare arms and face, so I keep on walking, and before I realize it I'm thirty minutes or more from the house and I didn't pay attention to where I was walking. I was focused on the things I want to do to the house once I move in. It was the only thing to keep me calm.

"Shit." I stop and look around, not recognizing anything around me. *Am I even still in her neighborhood?*

The sound of a motorcycle pulling up has me turning to watch as it turns into a driveway. A small spark of hope fills me that maybe it's Jensen,

but when the man reaches to slide his helmet off, the first thing I notice is tattoos on his hands before his blond beard comes into view.

He looks me over with a smirk, most likely noticing I look lost. "Need a ride somewhere?"

I shake my head. "I'm good." I point behind me. "I'm going to go this way."

"Are you sure? Last chance," he says. "I've got other shit to do if not."

He sounds moody and it instantly reminds me of Jensen. The last thing I need is another *him*. "I'm definitely good. Go do your *shit*."

His smile widens. "Maybe I don't want to now."

I smile back, feeling sassy. Usually, I'd be cautious, but I'm feeling anything but right now. Screw Douglas for being a prick. "Maybe I *will* take that ride, but we go where I say."

"Deal." Once I join him next to his bike, he hands me his helmet and nods. "Get on, sweetheart."

I slide the helmet on my head and am just about to climb onto the back of his bike when another motorcycle has me looking down the road.

My heart jumps with excitement, because I recognize Jensen's leather jacket right away. He pulls up beside us and climbs off his bike, pulling his helmet off to look at me. "Get over here, Cami. Now."

"How did... what the hell are you doing?" I manage to get out.

"Does it fucking matter? Get the fuck over here," he growls, looking the other guy over. "Stay away from her," he demands, after I hand the stranger his helmet and walk over to join Jensen.

"Seriously, Jensen?" The bearded guy shakes his head and laughs, before taking off for his door. "Have fun you two. It won't last for long."

Once the guy disappears inside, Jensen gives me a death glare, before shoving his helmet on my head. "Hang the fuck on. We'll talk about this shit later."

"No, we won't." I climb on behind him and wrap my arms around his waist. "Just take me home."

"I plan on it," he growls.

As soon as we pull up in front of Veronica's, I climb off Jensen's bike and slam his helmet into his chest. "I'm a grown woman, Jensen. You didn't need to come looking for me."

"You're wrong if you believe that shit." His jaw tightens as he stares me in the eyes. "You have no fucking clue whose bike you were about to climb

on the back of. How stupid can you be?”

“Well, I got on the back of yours, so obviously *pretty* stupid,” I spit out.

He looks shocked for a split second, but quickly shakes it off and gets in my face. “What makes you think I had time to ride around looking for you all damn night?”

“I never asked you to.” I’m pissed he even assumes I expect that of him. “I didn’t ask you to and I most definitely wouldn’t expect that from someone like *you*.”

“Well, think again, Cami. I may be an asshole.” He leans in close to my face, his eyes ice-cold. “But I care about a woman’s safety. More than you’ll ever fucking know.”

He walks away, the look in his eyes leaving my heart beating wildly inside my chest. I’m not sure what his deal is, but he seems pissed at the idea of someone not thinking he cares about women. That’s not exactly what I meant. I just meant... me. Not women in general.

I stand here, speechless, watching as he climbs back on his motorcycle and rides away.

A few seconds later, Veronica calls my name from the porch. “...is everything okay? Where were you? I tried calling you multiple times and you didn’t pick up. It took me a while to figure out your phone was here.”

“Jensen wasn’t next door, so I went for a walk to clear my head.” I walk past her and into the kitchen for some water. “I just needed to get out for a bit. There’s a lot on my mind right now.”

“Did you get lost?” she asks, joining me. “You’ve been gone for close to two hours. I got so worried that I called Jensen to—”

“I realize that,” I say, cutting her off. “And he’s pissed that he had to come looking for me, apparently.”

She exhales and leans over the kitchen island. “I went next door and no one was there, so I thought maybe you guys left together. He told me he hadn’t seen you and then he cussed and hung up. So, I freaked out and sent Peter to look for you. I *never* asked Jensen to.”

“I’m fine, Veronica. No need to worry. Next time I’ll bring my phone. I just didn’t think I was going anywhere tonight other than next door.” I exhale, feeling bad that I worried her. “I wasn’t thinking.”

“Why is he so pissed? Did something happen before he dropped you off?”

I shake my head. “No. I met some blond guy with a beard and he offered to give me a ride home. I was just about to get on his bike when Jensen pulled up all angry.”

Her eyes widen as if she knows exactly who I’m talking about. “That’s because he’s Jensen’s best friend. His name is Ben. They’ve been friends their entire life. They have a very complicated history,” she adds, sounding uncomfortable. “You were about to take a ride from him when you don’t even know him? What the hell, babe?”

“Clearly, I wasn’t thinking.” I admit. “Douglas has me too worked up to think straight. I’m just so... so furious. He’s made me look like an idiot.”

“I get it.” She stands up straight. “But please don’t accept rides from strangers anymore. I can see why Jensen was pissed. I would’ve been too.”

“I get it,” I say gently. “It won’t happen again.”

“Good.” She gives me a quick hug, before looking me over. “Are you okay?”

I nod. “Yeah. I’ll be fine. Mind if we just watch some Netflix and hang out for a bit? I’m not ready to retire to the bedroom yet.”

“Of course. Peter will probably crash out when he gets home anyway. He’s been up since five. I’ll grab us a glass of wine and make some popcorn.”

“Perfect,” I say softly, still stuck on the way Jensen looked at me before he rode away.

Now, if only I could get that look out of my head. Maybe, just maybe, there’s a side to Jensen that I haven’t seen yet.

That could be a good or a bad thing.

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13

JENSEN

WHEN I GOT THAT PHONE call from Veronica a few days ago, I told myself I wasn't going looking for Cami, but I couldn't get past the fact that she was alone at night without her car or a damn cell phone.

Who the fuck goes out past dark in a neighborhood they're not familiar with? Apparently, sassy-mouthed school teachers looking for an escape. She's not from around here, though. Yeah, she works close by, but that doesn't mean she knows what kind of trouble she could've gotten herself into.

I do my best to rent to respectable people I trust, but I can't control the random people that hang out close by or drive through. Plus, there are a handful of rentals in the surrounding areas that aren't mine.

There are some sick motherfuckers in this world. You never know who you're going to come across.

And after seeing *who* she came across that night, I no longer regret finding her. Ben is a dumbass when it comes to women. He's been breaking females' hearts since the fifth grade without any remorse, and he's only gotten worse with age.

I may be an asshole, but other than Cami, it's always been women coming to me. I never go after a fucking woman just to fuck her and break her heart. I can't say the same about Ben Scott. He's a fucking savage. I've seen him *destroy* a person in the past and she never recovered.

When I saw Cami about to climb on the back of his bike and drive off into the damn night, I lost it. I knew I needed to get her as far away from that prick as I could. The thought of him alone with her had me ready to fire him and then rip his throat out. It took a lot of willpower *not* to do that.

But the worst part is, the moment I left her out front of Veronica's house afterward, I realized that I'm a selfish son of a bitch when it comes to her, because I know she shouldn't be around me, but I can't stay away myself.

Me and Ben are a deadly combination when it comes to the same goddamn woman. There's a lot of complicated shit in our past—some we've never moved on from and other parts we never can.

The only reason he's working for me is because when it comes to my business I need someone I can trust—the only place he *can* be trusted. The second that changes, he's out of my life for good. Doesn't matter that we've known each other practically our entire lives.

"Shit!" I toss the paintbrush down and look around the icy-blue room, realizing it's the same damn color as my eyes. I don't know if it was random that she chose to match her room to the color of my eyes or not, but I sure as fuck know it was random that I decided to paint it this color for her.

I was at the paint store picking up some more white for the kitchen, and suddenly, I was walking out the door with two gallons of her color instead.

It pisses me off. This will be the first and last time that I let a tenant persuade my design decisions. I'm not sure why I let her to begin with.

Walking to the kitchen, I grab a beer, toss the cap aside, and do my best to transfer my thoughts to something else. Any-fucking-thing will do. If I let myself picture Ben on top of Cami for one more second, I'm going to end up at his house doing something I might regret the rest of my life.

"Shit. This is messed up." It's been a while since I've let Ben get to me this way. The prick didn't even have to say he planned on fucking her that night, because the crooked smile on his face when I showed up said it all.

Cami might've thought he was a gentleman to offer her a ride home, but the real ride he had in mind would've come *after* they arrived back at Veronica's.

Not happening.

Needing some air, I step outside and light a cigarette, noticing the lights are off next door and Peter's truck is still gone. It's been gone since last night, so I'm pretty sure Cami is alone for the weekend, and we all know what happens when someone who just got screwed over by someone they care about is left alone.

Fuck Ben.

Douglas is the one who should worry about me now.

Tossing my cigarette, I make my way across the lawn and knock on the door, not giving a shit at the moment about the consequences.

She may hate me, but she doesn't hate my body. I have no problem with her taking that hatred out on me in the bedroom.

"Just a minute!" she yells.

A few seconds later the door opens to Cami dressed in a pair of black, cotton, boyshort panties and a white tank top with no bra. My dick jerks beneath my jeans at the sight of her hard nipples beneath the thin fabric.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" she asks, trying her best to sound as if I'm the last person she wants to see, but considering she came to the door dressed like *that* says otherwise.

"At least I had the decency to knock." I point out, watching as her eyes lower to the bulge in my jeans. "What the fuck were you thinking the other night, Cami? Were you going to let him *fuck* you."

"Excuse me?" She steps outside, bringing her angry green eyes up to meet mine. "What the hell is your problem? Not that it's any of your business, but no. I wasn't going to let him do *anything* to me. He offered me a ride home and I accepted it."

"You don't know, Ben," I say, my voice clipped. "But you were willing to get on his bike and assume he'd take you home without wanting anything in return. He's an asshole, Cami."

"So are you," she says, pointing a finger in my chest. "Or did you forget?"

I take a step closer and stop. She has no idea I'm getting turned on more and more by the second. Her sassy mouth is about to set me off. "Oh, I didn't forget. How can I when you remind me every time I see you?" I move in closer again, this time not stopping until our bodies are touching. "But I'd rather you fucking *show* me."

"You want to see how big of an asshole I think you are? Fine." She steps back and grabs the door to shut it in my face, but I put my arm out and stop it.

She swallows, her eyes locking with mine. I silently step into the house and back her body up with mine until there's room for me to shut the door.

"There are other ways of you showing me, Cami."

"Yeah?" She breathes unsteady as I run my thumb over her bottom lip, watching as it slightly trembles beneath my touch. "How?"

Instead of answering her, I show her by backing her against the wall and pressing my hard cock between her legs. "Show me." I grab her hands and press them against the wall. "Be rough with me."

She looks up at me, her breaths coming out fast and hard, before she yanks her hands from my grip and reaches up to push my jacket off.

Before she can remove my shirt too, I grab her hands, stopping her. I need her to know what she's getting herself into. "You go for my shirt and there's no stopping me. I *will* fuck you, Cami. And the way I fuck is nothing compared to what you're used to with *Douglas*. I guarantee it. I like it rough and deep. Can you handle that?"

I release her arms, and without a word, she reaches for my shirt again, yanking it over my head, our eyes meeting the moment my shirt hits the floor. "After the week I've had... I'm willing to find out. Just this one time," she adds. "*This* will never happen again. Got it?"

"That's the idea, Cami." I place my hand on her stomach and move it down the front of her panties, growling under my breath when I feel how wet she is for me. "Just this once."

She throws her head back and moans out when I slip two fingers inside of her, slowly moving them in and out to get her ready for my cock. After pumping in and out a few times, I squeeze in a third finger and push them in as deep as they will go.

She jumps a little, probably not expecting me to go so deep. "Dammit, Jensen." She grabs my hair and yanks it to the side once I begin moving them in and out. "Two fingers are enough."

"If you can't handle three fingers..." I lean in to whisper in her ear. "You won't be able to handle my *cock*. I think we both know it's not averaged size, Cami. Now relax."

I spread her legs farther apart for better access. With most women, I'd say fuck it and jump right in, but I knew the night I went down on Cami that she's tighter than most of the women I've been with.

Something tells me Douglas is one of only a few. Maybe even none. And there's no way Douglas is as big as I am. There's also no way he fucked her as hard as I plan to.

She's going to want to hurt me once she feels the pain of having me inside her.

I pump my fingers in and out of her a few more times, before pulling them out and sucking my fingers clean. I didn't know it was possible, but

her taste has my dick hardening even more. “Fuck, I love the way you taste, Cami.”

She shivers against me, just as turned on and needy as I am. I yank her panties off and toss them aside. I don’t want anything to hold me back from getting in her. With one hand working her clit, I use my other to undo my jeans.

“Take my jeans off, Cami.” My lips brush hers as she moves in to undo my jeans, but I quickly move away before I can do something I shouldn’t.

Once I’m standing here in only my boxer briefs, I look Cami over, before undoing the three buttons at the top of her tank top and then ripping it the rest of the way open. The fabric is so thin it doesn’t take much force.

She watches me, her perky breasts quickly rising and falling as I grab the condom from my jeans and struggle to roll it over my dick. I hate wearing condoms, because most of them aren’t made for my size. But that’s not going to slow me down when it comes to Cami.

I’ve been wanting inside her since the day she burst through the front door of my property unannounced and demanded I let her move in. I want inside of her more now than ever.

Grabbing her thighs, I lift her up and position myself at her entrance, slowly entering her inch by inch until I’m halfway inside of her.

Fuck, she’s tight.

“Are you ready?”

She nods and digs her nails into my back, preparing for me to take her all the way.

“Shit, I’m going to stretch you, Cami.”

Her nails dig deeper into my flesh at the thought, and it has me so fucking turned on it’s hard for me to take it easy as I slowly push inside of her, stopping once every inch of me is buried inside her pussy.

Stilling my hips, I flick my tongue out to swirl around her right nipple, before sucking it into my mouth and gently biting it. Her thighs squeeze me hard, letting me know she enjoys nipple play. Either that, or it’s just my mouth she enjoys, no matter where it’s at. I’ll take it either way.

I move my hips a little and she releases a small whimper, letting me know that it still hurts.

Gripping her ass cheeks, I squeeze them in my hands and gently bite her neck, wanting to distract her until she’s adjusted to my size.

Once her grip on my shoulders loosen, I begin moving in and out of her, us both moaning out in pleasure as I fuck her slow and deep, rolling my hips in and out.

“Where’s your bedroom?” I question against her neck. As much as I’d like to fuck her in every room of this house, I want to fuck her in the bed she’ll be sleeping in for the next two weeks instead. It may be wrong, but I want her to think about me inside of her when she crawls into bed each night.

I don’t want her thinking about Douglas, or Ben, since that fucker has managed to get her attention. She’s bound to run into him at some point or another if she’ll be renting from me.

“Down the hall,” she says in a breath. “First door on the left.”

I continue to move inside of her, bumping into things on the way to get to her room, because there’s no way I can stop right now. She feels too damn good.

Once we make it to her room, I shove the door open and slam her against the wall, thrusting into her while biting the front of her throat. “I can’t hold back anymore, Cami. You better hold on tight.”

“I can handle it,” she says stiffly. “I’m not as fragile as you think.”

“We’re about to find out.” Not holding back, I thrust into her hard and deep, moving her body up the wall each time I take her.

The louder she screams, the harder I fuck her. I’ve been waiting for this for too long. I’m going to make sure she never forgets the way my cock makes her scream. I want my cock to own her fucking pussy, as wrong as that is. This is supposed to be a one-time deal. That’s how it works with me, yet I don’t want her wanting another man inside of her.

I’m an asshole and I know it.

I move away from the wall and she grips me tighter when she realizes there’s nothing behind her to support her anymore. Her hands are roaming my body. She’s becoming more comfortable with me. The way she’s exploring every inch of my hard body shows me she’s been wanting me as much as I’ve been wanting her.

I love the shit out of that.

“I knew you’ve been wanting to touch me, Cami.” I say with a cocky grin. “Enjoy it while you can.”

“Screw you,” she growls, before pushing on my chest. “Put me down if you’re going to be an asshole.”

“We both know you don’t want that,” I say against her lips. “Tell me what you really want, Cami. I *won’t* judge you.”

“I can’t do that.” She throws her head back and moans when I slam into her. The dirty look on her face confirms she’s still pissed at me.

“Why?” I move my hand up to grip her throat and force her to look at me. “Fucking tell me and I’ll do it.”

She exhales, finally answering me. “I want you to give it to me hard so I can get you out of my system, okay. Happy? You may be the biggest asshole I know, but you’re also the sexiest one too.”

I nod, satisfied, and take a few steps toward her bed, tossing her on top. Before she can yell at me for throwing her, I climb on at her feet and flip her over so her ass is in the air. I take a moment to admire it, and her beautiful pussy, before thrusting into her hard as I push her head down, smashing it into the pillow.

Moaning into it, she grips the blanket and claws at it, her legs shaking when I reach around to play with her clit.

Between me taking her from behind and my thumb rubbing circles over her clit, she can barely stay on her knees. I wrap my free arm around her waist to keep her up.

Her moans become louder the harder I take her, motivating me, so I continue slamming into her and rubbing her clit until she’s coming around my dick and screaming out her release.

“You still haven’t shown me how much of an asshole I am.” I breathe out against her sweaty neck. “I’m waiting.”

I flip her over so that she’s facing me. She looks like she wants to slap the shit out of me for running my mouth, and to be honest, that would only turn me on more. I like the challenge she brings. I crave it.

Sitting up, she pushes my chest until I’m sitting on my heels. With her harsh eyes on mine, she straddles me and slides onto my dick, her whole body shaking from the adrenaline of her recent orgasm.

“That’s a start.” I taunt, gripping a handful of her hair, and then pull her head to the side for better access to her sweaty neck. With a small growl, I run my tongue over it, enjoying the taste of what I did to her.

“You’re a jerk,” she says, as if she feels the need to remind me now that she’s about to ride my dick. “And I’m going to most likely regret this later.”

“Yeah, but right now you love it, don’t you?”

She swallows, and then grips my hair with both hands as she begins moving up and down on my dick.

Her pace is slow at first, and I don't know if it's because she's still sensitive from how hard I made her come or if it's because she's adjusting to me in a new position, but I can feel every inch, and it fucking feels good. My hands explore her body, allowing her to be in control for a bit—something I haven't done with a woman in a long time. I have to admit it's a nice change.

She picks up speed, yanking on my hair harder each time she comes back down on my dick. She pulls so hard it stings at the roots, causing me to bite my lip on accident.

Fuck yeah. She has a wild side. I smile and lick the blood from my lip, liking the way she looks on me. She bounces up and down on my dick so hard she's making herself scream. It's hot as hell.

“Holy fuck.” I'm close to coming, but I want to be the one in charge when I do. Without pulling out, I move her on her back so that I'm on top of her. “Hold on to the fucking headboard.”

Without hesitation, she grabs onto the bars behind her and holds on tight, as if preparing for a rollercoaster ride. I grab her hips for leverage and pound into her so hard and deep she comes for a second time, her pussy pulsing around my dick at the same time I bust my load into the condom.

Both breathing heavily and fighting to catch our breath, I release her hips and look her in the eyes. “Thinking about Douglas now?”

She shakes her head.

“I didn't fucking think so. My body works for all women.”

Just as expected it pisses her off. “Get out.” She shoves my chest twice, harder than normal, before I finally climb off of her and run a hand through my sweaty hair.

She watches me in silence, her chest quickly moving up and down as I pull the condom off and toss it into the trash beside her bed.

I should say something to redeem myself, but instead, I walk away, get dressed, and step outside to smoke a cigarette.

A few minutes later the door opens to a sweaty Cami throwing my leather jacket at my face. “You showed me what you wanted to. Congratulations, asshole. From now on we will work on getting the house ready for me to move into. Everything *will* be professional from here on out, starting tomorrow.”

“Can’t tomorrow.” I exhale smoke and look her over, my dick growing hard again at the sight of her hard nipples. She notices, because she crosses her arms over her chest and narrows her eyes at me. “Sunday afternoon. *Come* when you see me. We both know you will after tonight.”

Without a word, she steps inside and slams the door in my face. I guess she finally got to do it after all.

I don’t blame her for wanting to. I’d slam the door in my face too. It was an asshole move for me to bring up fucking other women right after making her come around my dick, but then again, I’m not much of a gentleman. I never pretended to be, yet she still let me in her bed.

She only has herself to blame.

Just like I’ve been doing to myself.

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14

Cammi

SWEAT IS DRIPPING DOWN MY face and my chest hurts, but I keep on running, needing to release some energy and clear my head.

I wasn't thinking clearly last night when Jensen showed up at the door and now I haven't been able to stop thinking about the way he *fucked* me.

He was right when he said he was capable of making me forget Douglas. With a body of steel and moves as dirty as a male stripper, Jensen is the perfect distraction in bed. Every inch of his chiseled body was on top of me, and as much as I know I shouldn't have enjoyed it—I did. I enjoyed it way too much.

Up until the point he opened his damn mouth, reminding me just how much of an asshole slash man-whore he truly is. I don't know what kind of person brings up past sexual experiences right after screwing someone, but apparently, he didn't see anything wrong with it. It's fucking rude; disrespectful even.

I haven't been able to stop picturing him with other women since the jerk-off brought it up. The same thing is on constant repeat—him taking them rough and wild like he took me. As much as I despise myself for it, it makes me jealous.

What the hell is wrong with you? He's a Grade-A dick to you and here you are wanting more.

I don't even like the guy, regardless of how it would appear. In fact, I hate him. He infuriates me to no end, yet I can't help but to be physically attracted to him. Talk about being messed up.

I stop and bend over to catch my breath when my phone vibrates with a call coming through for the second time. It's likely Veronica. She should be

home anytime now, so I pull out my phone and answer it without checking to see who it is.

“You’re home already?” I ask, out of breath. “How was the trip?”

“What the fuck trip are you talking about?” Jensen’s deep voice questions, surprising me. “Where are you?”

I let out a sarcastic laugh and stand up straight. “Why are you calling me, Jensen? Don’t you have some other girl to use your body on? I wouldn’t want to keep you from that.”

“Someone a little jealous?” The confidence in his voice has me wanting to punch him through the phone.

“That’s never happening.” I walk the bike path that leads back to my car. “Now, what do you want? I’m a little busy.”

“Doing what?” he questions stiffly. “Why are you out of breath?”

“I just got done... exercising. Had to let off a little steam,” I tease. “You know how that is.”

“I do,” he growls. “Just stay away from Baker Street. I’ve got shit to do. Don’t be fucking late tomorrow. It’s going to be a long night.”

“What’s on Baker—”

The phone goes silent before I can finish asking him why the hell I need to stay away from Baker Street. When I drove by earlier there was some kind of Flea Market thing going on with a bunch of vendor tables set up. I didn’t have any plans to drop by and do some shopping myself, but now I’m curious.

Shoving my phone back into my pocket, I pick up speed and jog back to my car. After downing an entire bottle of water and taking a moment to catch my breath, I take off toward Baker Street, ignoring Jensen’s order.

He has no right to order me to do *anything*, and he knows it, yet he feels the need to do so anyway. Well, maybe he should see what it looks like for someone to disobey.

It takes a few minutes to find somewhere to park, but once I do, I get out and walk around, browsing a few of the tables but not stopping to talk to any of the vendors.

I don’t understand why the hell he’d want me to stay away from this thing, but after walking by a few more tables, I have my answer.

A wave of nausea hits me when I spot Douglas and Susan in the baby area, shopping for their unborn child.

I don't want to feel *anything* for Douglas anymore, but seeing them together shopping for their future baby makes everything that much more real. The man I've been in love with for the past five years is about to have a baby with another woman. One he conceived while still *my* boyfriend.

Swallowing, I back up slowly, unable to pull my eyes away as Susan holds up a little white onesie that says 'Little blessing' across the front.

Douglas might've told me he wasn't happy with Susan, but from the way his eyes light up when he takes it from her, it's clear he's not nearly as unhappy with her as he made it seem.

My chest tightens with anger as I quickly turn around to get away from them as fast as I possibly can. I don't think I could handle them spotting me here right now. I can't face them, because truthfully, I want to slap a pregnant woman across the face, and that's something I never thought I'd have the urge to do.

As soon as I get to my car, I grip the wheel and squeeze it like I'm trying to break it. My heart is pounding so hard it's causing my body to jerk each time it slams against my ribcage.

Jensen must've saw them when he drove by, and as much as I want to continue hating him for last night, the fact that he cared enough to warn me softens a spot in my broken heart for him.

It proves that he's not as heartless and uncaring as I originally thought. Underneath all the *assholeness* there could be a guy with a heart after all.

I can't help but wonder if he'll give me a little glimpse into that side of him if I'm around long enough. Would I *like* that side of him?

"No," I say to myself. "Absolutely not. Nope. No way." I shake my head and drive off. Veronica will be home soon and she promised me a girls' night to get away from everything weighing me down right now.

I need to shower and block my mind from any thoughts of Douglas or Jensen. This night is about me and Veronica and we're going to have a good time.

No talking about Jensen and how he came over during a time I was vulnerable. Like a fool, I let him into the house and into my temporary bed—one that he almost broke, might I add.

And certainly no talking about my ex who got another girl pregnant. I can't believe he's out shopping in public for baby stuff right now when someone from the school could've spotted them.

WE'VE BEEN AT *SOCIAL* FOR an hour now and my best friend has been looking at me from across the table as if she's trying to figure me out.

I don't know why, but it makes me nervous. Scratch that. I do know why. She knows everything about me, and soon she'll know I slept with Jensen.

"So..." Veronica swirls her finger over the rim of her wine glass, trying her best to keep a straight face. "You going to tell me why I found my favorite candle under the table today?"

I shrug and take a quick sip of my wine. "I don't know what you're talking about. Maybe you knocked it down before you left and forgot."

"Did I also knock the pictures on my wall crooked?" She grins above her glass, before taking a swig, followed by a second one. "I mean, I could guess what happened if you want me to. We both know I'm pretty good with guessing games."

"No." My heart speeds up and I quickly look away from my drink, trying my best to not look panicked. "I'd rather you not. Can we just enjoy a girls' night out together with no drama? It's been a while, and I need this right now."

"Sure." She grins. "But I'll find out sooner or later. I always do."

That's not a lie.

"How was spending the weekend with Peter's parents? His mom still as bossy as she used to be?"

She rolls her eyes. "You have no idea. I've never met a bossier woman in my entire life. Peter is *lucky* I love him as much as I do or I'd give that woman a piece of my mind. She actually made me change my shirt before we went out to dinner last night, because she said black is *depressing*. I felt like telling her that being around *her* is depressing."

We both laugh, and I suddenly feel a little better that I don't have a bitchy mother-in-law to deal with twice a year at least. I'm not sure I could

handle it as well as Veronica does. Mine would've already gotten a piece of my mind in the first month of marriage.

"Are you okay, Cami?" she suddenly asks once our laughter dies down. "Honestly. I know what you're going through with Douglas is hard. You can tell me."

"Veronica..." I down my wine, on edge now that she's brought up Douglas. "I'll be fine. To be honest, I think I'm more pissed that he made me look like a fool and broke my trust. I keep wondering if I would've been hurt at all had he just done the right thing and broke things off first. I would've felt lonely for a bit, yes, after being with Douglas for so long, but I think I would've been okay after a few months, maybe less. I don't know." I exhale and look up to meet Veronica's concerned eyes. "But now everyone will know Douglas cheated on me and I'll look like the idiot that believed his lies. People at school will start talking soon and looking at me with pity. Everyone will be awkward around me. I think I hate that the most."

"I get that. I'd feel the exact same way." She nods at the cocktail waitress when she walks by to see if we need refills. "Yes, please. Actually, bring the rest of the bottle. We'll *need* it."

"We?" I question.

"Yes. We. I can't get Peter's mother's annoying, bitchy voice out of my head. She's so fucking condescending. I'd love to shove this bottle of wine where the sun doesn't shine. Just don't tell Peter that."

"I won't tell Peter if you drop the whole candle and crooked pictures thing," I say, hopeful.

"*That's* not happening, Cami." She reaches over with a huge grin on her face and refills my glass. "Drink up, so you'll spill your guts to me and give me all the juicy details. I needed them like yesterday."

"You know me too well." I lift the glass of wine. "That's exactly why this will be my last drink."

"Oh, come on!" Veronica practically screams. "It was Jensen, wasn't it? You fucked my landlord in my house."

"Shh! Keep it down, Veronica." Embarrassment hits me when I notice a few people looking our way, being nosey. "I never said that."

"You didn't have to," she practically sings. "The smell of his cologne is still lingering in the doorway of your bedroom. I've known Jensen for years and he's always worn that same scent. You let him fuck you good and hard, didn't you?"

I get hot at the memory of just how good and hard he actually did fuck me. I might even be a little wet right now, and I don't mean my mouth from the wine currently filling it.

"Is that sweat I see forming on your forehead, Cami?" She runs her tongue over her lips and grins. "He was *that* good, huh?"

"God, Veronica. You're really going to make me come out and say it?"

"Say it," she pushes. "He had to be a hundred times better than Douglas. I've heard so many stories about Jensen's body. Let me tell you. I just want to know if they're true. As my friend, I expect you to give me that answer."

"I'm cringing inside as I say this, Veronica. You have no idea how much I'd like to tell you that the rumors are false, but holy shit, he was better than good. He was fantastic." I take a drink of my wine and sigh. "I can still feel him inside of me. He made sure I'd feel him for days. I *hate* him for it too."

Her eyes go big at my confession and she appears to be sweating herself. "Well, damn. No wonder an asshole like him still manages to get laid. It definitely has nothing to do with his personality." *Or that mouth...* "He's not nice to anyone anymore."

"Anymore?" I question, now curious to learn more. "He used to be nice?"

"You could say that. But hey..." She shrugs. "Things change and so do we, right? Sometimes we can't help it."

"I guess, but I'd like to think we *can* help it if we want to badly enough."

"Maybe he doesn't want to, Cami."

She says nothing else on the matter. We change the subject, and for that I'm thankful. I already spend too much time thinking about Jensen. I don't need another reason to have him in the back of my mind. He is who is because he chose to be that way. I don't see him changing anytime soon, and even if he does, he's nothing to me but my landlord.

The one I'll be fantasizing about for a long time to come. Except in my fantasy he'll keep his mouth shut and not *ruin* what his body does to me. I think I'll stick to that version of him from now on.

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15

JENSEN

I WAS ON MY WAY to an appointment for gutters earlier when I got stuck in traffic and spotted *Douchebag Douglas* out with *Psycho Susan* at the annual Flea Market. I didn't think much of it at first. Figured Douglas decided to settle for Susan for now until he could come up with a way to get Cami to change her mind and take him back. Then I saw what they were shopping for. I realized then there's no chance in hell Cami will take him back, and he knows it.

Susan had an armful of baby stuff, and to me, it didn't seem like they gave a shit who saw it either.

That explains why Cami finally broke last night when I showed up at her door, hot and ready to fuck everybody except me out of her thoughts. She's been fighting it long enough I knew there had to be a reason.

The real reason makes me feel guilty for the way I acted at the end of the night. It was more reflex than anything. Old habits die hard. I may not owe Cami anything and she may not be *anything* to me, but that has to hurt.

Even if she's over the jerk—I hope to hell she is—the whole damn town will be in her business talking about how her boyfriend got another woman pregnant. It'll drag her down, as if she wasn't enough to keep him satisfied. After getting a taste of her, I know that's far from the truth.

I know more than anyone how small-town talk can fuck a person's life up and make them see themselves differently. Cami doesn't deserve that shit. Maybe I did, but she definitely doesn't.

Running my hand through my hair in frustration, I step up to the bar and look over at Ben as he steps up beside me. The stupid grin on his face when he looks at me confirms he has something to say about the other night when I stopped Cami from getting on the back of his motorcycle. I bet he's been

dying to question me all night, but this is the first chance he's caught me away from the other guys.

"Say it, motherfucker," I say stiffly, nodding at the bartender as she sets two beers down in front of us and offers a flirty wink.

"Who is she?" he asks, before taking a drink from his bottle. He tilts his head, waiting for an answer that doesn't come. "Oh, come on, brother. The way you almost tore my head off confirms she must mean something to you. You never get that way over a girl. What's the deal with her?"

"It's none of your damn business," I growl, getting in his face to make it as clear as possible. "All you need to know is to stay the fuck away from her. That's not a threat either." My eyes still on his, I tilt back my beer and walk away before his bearded ass pisses me off even more.

He's a cocky son of a bitch. I'm sure he's thinking of all the ways she *wanted* him to take her home and fuck her that night. I know it's bullshit.

If this wasn't a work party for my guys where I'm doing my best to get through this shit without a fight breaking out, I'd tell him all the ways I *did* fuck her.

Dirty.

Rough.

Deep.

And she loved every second of me inside her. He doesn't have to know about the part where I opened my mouth like an ass and she kicked me out.

I get ready to head back to the private room where the rest of my employees are when I spot Cami out of the corner of my eye, in a booth, chugging back a glass of wine as if she can't drink it fast enough. I lean against the wall and watch her for moment, picking up on how tense she is.

She looks like she's on edge, and that tells me she didn't fucking listen to me about staying away from Baker Street. "Son of a bitch."

Instead of going back to the party like I *should* do, I find myself standing over Cami, growling down at her. "You didn't fucking listen to me. Why?"

She looks up, eyes wide, as if she's surprised to see me here. Without saying a word, she reaches for the bottle of wine in front of her and pours her glass to the rim. "Not now, Jensen. I can't see you right now, so you need to walk away."

My tongue is on the verge of asking why she can't see me, but I'm too stuck on the fact that she went to Baker Street. "Why the fuck didn't you

listen?" I grab the bottle from her and slam it down on the table, causing her to look up at me.

Angry eyes locked on determined ones, it's a silent staring contest, both of us taking each other in like we want to fuck the shit out of each other right here and now.

Veronica stands up and clears her throat. "I'm going to use the restroom. Looks like you two need a moment alone to... well, I'm not quite sure. But it's a little too hot in this area for me. I'm leaving."

"Wait! Veronica..." Cami stands up like she's going to follow her friend, but I place my hand on her shoulder and guide her back down on her ass. She releases a tense breath and sits back. "I have to use the bathroom, Jensen."

"No you don't." I place my beer on the table and move into her personal space. "I told you to stay away from Baker Street and you went there anyway. Why?" I ask again.

She stands up and pushes me out of her space just like she did to get me off of her post-orgasm last night. Swallowing as she looks down at my hard chest beneath her fingers, I know she's remembering it too. "Because I don't take orders from anyone, Jensen. Including you. You can't just boss everyone around and expect them to obey."

"Most do," I admit stiffly, as she removes her hands. "It was for your benefit. I don't know why you're so pissed at me. I was trying to do you a favor, Cami."

"I'm surprised you know what that even is," she mutters, taking a step back to put more space between us. "You don't seem like the type to *do* anyone a favor."

I shake my head and take a swig of my beer. "Then you don't know me at all. I do lots of fucking favors. Some you'll never begin to understand. Have a good fucking night."

Before I lose my shit and get too deep into thoughts of the past, I walk away. I have to, because I can't do this shit tonight. I have over fifty employees to entertain. Remembering the past will only poison my thoughts and fuck me up.

AN HOUR LATER, THE PARTY spreads out into the main area where there are pool tables and darts for entertainment. The guys have been fed and I gifted each three drinks on my tab, so the rest of the night is on them. They're no longer my responsibility.

Setting my empty bottle down, I nod to the cute bartender to get her attention. "Close my tab out." I toss my debit card down. "Put it on this card."

"Sure thing, Jensen." She offers me a seductive smile, backing away slowly as she looks me over, before finally turning away to run my card.

She's already told me three times tonight what time she gets off, and like an idiot I wasn't paying attention to the time to see it's now.

"Shit," I mutter under my breath and sign the top receipt, leaving the bartender a two-hundred-dollar tip before tossing down fifty in cash. "Give this to the bartender that helped us when you were too busy to. Got it?"

She licks her bottom lip and shoves the fifty dollars into what must be the other girl's tip jar. "I'll be off soon."

"And I'll be gone. Have a good night."

She gives me a shocked look right before I turn to walk away. There's no way I'm making the mistake of taking her home tonight. She can take her pick of any of my guys. I can't promise they'd fuck her like I would, but they'd try.

A for fucking effort.

After saying bye to a few of the guys, I make a turn for the door but stop when I spot Cami sitting in the booth alone. I wasn't expecting her to still be here, so I didn't bother looking for her. I try not to look in her direction, but I end up accepting a beer from George and looking her way every few minutes to see if any of the guys are attempting to talk to her. I can't help myself. And I sure as hell can't leave now. Not while she's still here. I'll fire the first motherfucker that even looks at her for too long. Talk about fucked up.

"Where's her friend?" Ben questions from beside me. I haven't seen the fucker in over twenty minutes and he chooses now to show his face, while I'm staring like an idiot. "Is she alone now?"

"I don't know and I don't care." I lie and pull my eyes away from Cami's direction to hit Ben with a cold, hard stare. "Leave her be. She's had a shit night, and if you make it worse..." I finish off my beer and slam it down on the nearest table. "I'll fuck your whole week up."

He laughs and grabs Harper's waist—the bartender that just got off—as she comes to stand beside him. She looks eager and ready for him to take her back to his place since I turned her down. Or hell. Who knows. Maybe she was hoping to have us both at the same time. “I’m busy tonight, *brother*. Besides, she doesn’t need me to make her night worse when she has you for that.”

Anger rises as him and Harper walk away, but I push it down, glad that the fucker is leaving. It’s a scene I won’t have to cause tonight and one less person to worry about when it comes to Cami.

“Hey, boss.” Austin hands me a fresh beer, his face tense and uncomfortable. “I thought you should know that I saw Lucas and his girl walk in a few minutes ago. I’m pretty sure he’s expecting you to be here since the crew is.”

Fuck. He’s the last person I need to see right now—or ever really. If Cami thinks *she* hates me right now, there’s one person in this room who hates me more, and it’s Lucas Smith.

“Thanks for the warning.” I tilt back my beer at the same time that Cami’s eyes meet mine. I expect her to turn away, but instead, she watches me. I’m pretty sure she wants me to notice too. Wiping my arm over my mouth, I prepare to walk in her direction, when out of nowhere I’m shoved against the wall with a pissed off Lucas in my face.

“You’re a fucking piece of shit, Blake!” He shoves his elbow into my neck and I let him, because I deserve it. “Don’t ever forget—it’s because of you. *You* let it happen, because you were selfish, and still are.”

“You’re wrong,” I grit out, meeting his fierce stare. “I may be selfish now, but I wasn’t then.”

“Yeah...” He pushes his elbow further into my throat, cutting off my air supply. “You continue to tell yourself that, but we both know it’s a lie. The whole fucking town does. You deserve all the unhappiness you feel. You deserve to be empty and alone. Don’t forget that shit.”

He releases my throat and I stand tall, giving him exactly what he wants. Maybe I do deserve everything he said. I definitely deserve what’s coming.

His fist slams hard into my mouth and I stumble back, allowing the table to catch me.

“Feel better?” I run my hand over my busted lip, before licking the blood off.

“For tonight, *Blake*. Only for tonight.”

All eyes are on me as Lucas grabs his girlfriend’s hand and pulls her toward the door to leave. But the only set of eyes I care about right now are Cami’s, which are filled with confusion, and maybe even a little bit of sympathy.

I can’t quite figure them out.

“The fucking show is over,” I bite out, causing everyone to mind their own business.

I look back at Cami. She stands and walks toward the hallway, her eyes letting me know she wants me to follow. No one else in the room matters at the moment. I block them all out and meet her by the bathroom where it’s quiet.

She looks me over for a moment, taking in my busted lip. My heart sinks when she finally says, “Who the hell was that and why did he hit you?”

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16

Cami

MY HEART RACES AS I look Jensen in the eyes, waiting for him to answer my question. Some guy just punched him in the face and he took it as if he felt he deserved it.

I think I've learned enough about Jensen in the two weeks that I've known him to know he wouldn't just take a punch for no damn reason.

"Are you going to tell me?" I push.

"I can't do that, Cami." He runs his tongue over his bloodied bottom lip, a pained look filling his icy-blue eyes that causes a small ache in my chest.

I didn't think it would bother me to see Jensen upset. Not after the way he's acted since the moment we met, but seeing him broken does something to me I don't quite understand. "Why not?"

I swallow as his eyes darken and he backs me against the bathroom door, placing an arm above my head. "I just fucking can't. End of discussion."

"Fine," I say stiffly. "Then don't."

I get ready to walk away, but he grips my arm, stopping me. His eyes meet mine again and the look in them has me suddenly wanting to distract him like he did for me last night. I want to erase whatever the hell is running through his mind making him feel the way he is in this moment.

I'll take *asshole* Jensen over *pained* Jensen any day. I can't handle this.

Before I can change my mind, I wrap my hands into Jensen's hair and swallow to moisten my dry throat. His eyes study mine, and I'm preparing to kiss him when his lips suddenly crash against mine, him kissing me instead—hard. Really fucking hard.

My heart skips a beat the moment his tongue slips between my lips and he releases a deep growl, his body pressing mine against the bathroom door

with force.

He bites and tugs on my bottom lip, the taste of his blood covering my mouth as he kisses me just as hard as he fucked me the other night.

I never stopped to think that Jensen would kiss as good as he has sex, but holy hell this man is skilled in everything he does.

With his lips still pressed against mine, he lifts me up and carries me into the bathroom. He presses me against the wall and reaches between us to undo his jeans. Next thing I know, I'm screaming out as he enters me hard and deep.

"Jensen!" I grip his hair and pull, forcing him to look up at me. "You're such an asshole. You knew that'd make me scream."

"Yeah. Keep doing it," he demands, slamming into me again and stopping. "I want this whole goddamn bar to hear you screaming my name, Cami. I want them to know you're *mine*."

A shiver runs down my spine, but I know he doesn't really mean I'm *his*. Not in that way. But right now. With him inside of me. That's what he means. A part of me likes the way it feels, regardless.

"Hold on, Cami." He growls and thrusts me up the door so hard and fast that I have to hold onto his hair for safety.

It's as if he's taking whatever he's *feeling* right now out on my body. As if he wants me to feel it too. And I do. I feel it with each deep thrust—him filling me completely and making me scream as if we're the only two people in the bar.

I have no doubt at this point that everyone will hear me as he continues to slam into me over and over again, seeming to go harder and deeper with each pump of his hips.

I should care. I should slap him for making it known. But I don't. No one in this place matters at the moment other than Jensen.

My head slams against the door when I yank on his hair, letting him know that he's hurting me. He's deep. So deep. And I'm still sore from the last time he was inside of me.

He slows down and bites my bottom lip as a distraction. His heavy breathing against my mouth as he rolls his hips one more time and stops has me leaning in and kissing him again, *wanting* and *needing* his mouth on mine.

It doesn't matter how much I hated his mouth, because he was right when he said I wouldn't for long. I'm far from *hating* his mouth at the

moment.

“Fucking shit, Cami.” He grabs a handful of my sweaty hair and yanks it to the side as his movement picks back up. “I’m about to come,” he says against my lips. “Do you want it inside of you?”

I should say no. I should push him away and tell him how wrong it is that we’re fucking in a public restroom right now for anyone and everyone to hear. I’m a teacher. I have a reputation to uphold. I’m supposed to lead by example. This is wrong and dirty. Very dirty, yet I can’t control myself because it’s with Jensen.

“I’m on the pill,” slips out before I can stop it.

“Good,” he growls. “I want you to *feel* my cum drip out of your pussy, Cami. But I need you to come for me first. Got it?”

Yanking my head back, he forces me to look into eyes.

“Got it?” he repeats.

I nod, unable to form words at the moment. I’m so incredibly turned on by what he just said that I wouldn’t be surprised if I came the moment he moves.

He slowly pulls out, making me feel every thick inch of him, before slamming into me so deep that I dig my nails into his shoulders, coming harder than I ever have before. My entire body is shaking from my orgasm and I can’t stop whispering fuck over and over. I can’t catch my breath. Holy shit. This man can fuck.

I feel him smile against my lips before he moves his mouth around to whisper against my ear. “Fuck, I love the way you sound when I make you come, Cami. I’m going to have to do that more often.”

My eyes close and my head tilts back as he slowly runs his tongue over my neck. He then bites it and slams into me over and over again until he growls out his release, his cum filling my still throbbing pussy.

We’re both fighting to catch our breath when he grabs the back of my hair and forces me to look him in the eyes. “Watch, Cami, and don’t ever fucking forget what this looks like.”

He makes sure I’m looking down before he looks down himself, and then slowly pulls out of me, growling out his satisfaction at seeing his cum spill from my pussy. It’s so hot and dirty that I find myself sucking in a breath and holding it until the head of his dick comes into view, the last drops of cum spilling out.

Holy hell.

With a deep growl, he sets me down on my feet and yanks his shirt off, using it to clean us both off, before tossing it into the trash.

I should ask what people are going to think of him leaving the women's restroom without a shirt, but we both know what we've been doing in here for the last half hour or so is no secret.

Jensen Blake—the asshole landlord—just fucked me into oblivion for the whole bar to hear.

My eyes scan his hard, sweaty chest as I adjust my panties and dress. “I can't believe we just did that.”

“Well you better believe it, Cami, because it just happened. Let's get the fuck out of here.”

He surprises me by grabbing my hand and pulls me toward the door. My heart jumps when he opens it to a line of girls waiting to use the bathroom. Apparently, some of the banging I heard was knocks on the door and not Jensen knocking me *into* the door.

No one says anything, but from the way every single girl in line eyes his shirtless and sweaty body over, I can imagine they're all picturing him between their legs, and I *hate* it.

Eyes land on us as we make our way through the crowd to get to the door. I expected Jensen to release my hand, but he doesn't until we're outside in front of his truck.

“Get in. I'm taking you home.”

I swallow and climb inside, slamming the door shut behind me. We don't speak the entire drive back to Veronica's house, but I can feel his eyes on me every few minutes, and sadly, it makes me hot and needy all over again, as if he wasn't just inside of me.

That's exactly why the moment the truck comes to a stop, I jump out and head toward Veronica's in a hurry. “Thanks for the ride,” I say, not stopping to look back.

“Anytime,” I hear behind my back, before he lights up a cigarette, most likely watching me like he always does.

Once I'm alone in the guest room, I fall back on the bed and close my eyes, replaying every last detail of Jensen inside me.

Not only that, but every last detail of the way he kissed me and how it felt when he did.

That's what I was expecting the least.

17

JENSEN

MY HEAD HAS BEEN FUCKED all day with thoughts of Cami. There were three mistakes I made last night with her in the heat of the moment. The first—I *kissed* her. The second—I came inside of her. The third, and biggest one of them all, is when I called her fucking *mine*.

I haven't made those mistakes in a long time, and I can't begin to figure out what made me slip up when it came to the sassy-mouthed teacher who hates my fucking guts. She was there and I needed an escape. Something deep to get me out of my head after seeing Lucas. That's the only logical reason I can come up with. Nothing else makes sense. Not a damn thing.

"Fuck!" I send Cami a text and toss my phone down on the kitchen island. I've been here for over an hour and I know damn well that she knows I'm here. There's no way she didn't hear my motorcycle pull up. There's work to be done and I don't let personal shit get in the way of work. Ever.

Thirty minutes gone and still no Cami, it becomes obvious she's not going to show up, so I'm surprised when the front door opens to her looking down at me on my knees as I paint around the fireplace.

"Look who finally showed up." I stand and run a hand through my hair, trying my damndest not to get hard at the sight of her in those skintight jeans and little tank top. "Pick up a paintbrush. You can start on the other side of the room." My words are stiff, because I don't want her to get the wrong idea about last night. I can't have that. It won't end well.

She swallows when her eyes land on the bulge beneath my jeans and I can tell she's still thinking about last night. That's what I wanted, right? For her to think about me inside of her. But then I had to fuck up and call her

mine. “I think I’d rather start on the master bedroom where there’s no one giving me attitude every five seconds.”

She goes to walk away and I grab her arm, stopping her. “Not happening.”

She lets out a humorless laugh and pins me with a hard stare. “Why not? We both know it’s best if we don’t spend too much time in the same room. Nothing good *ever* happens.”

“Is that right?” I step up to her and her eyes skim over my busted lip before moving up to meet mine. “*Nothing* good happened last night then?” I grab the back of her neck and yank her to me so our lips brush together. “It sure as fuck sounded like it was *good* when you were screaming my name for the whole damn bar to hear.”

“Fuck you,” she bites out, yanking my arm from her neck. Her chest is moving fast, showing just how worked up she is.

“Already did.” I point out. “Twice. And if you keep running that sassy mouth of yours it’s about to be a third time.”

“Ha!” She crosses her arms and narrows her eyes at me. “You’re crazy if you think I’ll make the same mistake a third time. I will *never* let you fuck me again and I sure as hell won’t let you kiss me again. *Ever*.”

Everything coming out of her mouth pisses me off. Before I know what I’m doing, I yank her to me and kiss her hard on the lips, shutting her the hell up. I dig my fingers into her hip and squeeze as I bite her bottom lip, wanting her to *feel* my anger.

She lets out a moan, getting lost in my kiss for a brief moment, before she pushes me away and slaps me hard across the face. She can barely catch her breath enough to speak. “Don’t ever do that again. Got it?”

I smile and lick the taste of her from my lips. She tastes of wine, and I have no doubt she had to down a glass or two before coming over here.

Maybe I should’ve downed a few shots myself.

“I can’t believe you, Jensen.” Her anger is growing by the second as she struggles with wiping the taste of me from her lips.

Good luck, sweetie. It’s not that easy to erase me.

“Ugh! You... you. I just can’t with you!” She bursts with anger. “You had no right to kiss me *again*. Especially after I told you not to.”

“Why do you think I did?” I move back into her space, causing her nostrils to flare in anger as I look down at her. “Don’t tell me what I can’t

do, because I'll only prove that I *can*, Cami. You're not the only one that teaches *lessons*."

Her eyes widen, as if she's surprised by what just came out of my mouth. "Why are you such a dick, Jensen? Who screwed you over? Huh?" She shoves me out of her face and gets in mine, backing me against the wall. "You may fuck like a God, but you're a miserable son of a bitch. Either you screwed someone over or you got screwed. It would explain why that guy punched you last night and you did nothing. You took it. Why?"

I flex my jaw, fighting to push back my anger. "It's none of your goddamn business, Cami. You won't get an answer."

"That's a big surprise." She backs away from me and walks away to grab a paintbrush. "Let's just get this over with, so we can get out of each other's hair. Okay?"

Walking past her, I grab a beer from the fridge and unscrew the top, tossing it into the trash. She watches me tilt the bottle back, and I can't figure out if she wants to *slap* me again or *fuck* me again. I'd let her do both right now to be honest.

"Fine. Help me finish the living room," I say, brushing past her to pick up my paintbrush and get back to work. "I'll finish the rest and you can start moving in on Friday."

"And the master bedroom?" she questions, sounding a bit relieved.

"It's already done. I painted it the last time you *didn't* show up to help."

She doesn't have a comeback to that. Good. Because I can't take another peep from her mouth right now without needing to *fuck* my anger out and teach her another lesson.

Cami

I WAS SURPRISED WHEN JENSEN said painting the living room was the last thing I needed to help him with. A part of me was relieved, while another smaller part—the irrational part—was disappointed that we won't have a reason to be alone anymore.

It's ridiculous. When I'm with him, I can't stand the guy. But when I'm not, he's all I can think about.

"Hey, babe." Veronica plops down on the couch beside me and reaches for the TV remote since I've basically been staring at the *Netflix* home screen. "How was your day?"

"Do you really want to know?" I exhale and sit up straight when she nods. "Well, the good news is that I haven't heard from Douglas today. That's pretty much the only good thing about today. Jensen is..." I huff, getting frustrated at the mention of him. "He's incredibly infuriating and I'm so glad the place is almost ready for me to move into. I'm not sure how much more of him I can take."

"That's strange." She smiles, as if she knows something I don't. "You didn't seem affected one bit at the mention of Douglas, but as soon as you brought up Jensen this *fire* lit in your eyes. Even if it wasn't a good flame, it was still *a* flame. That's more passion than I've ever noticed with Douglas."

"What!" I let out a nervous laugh, suddenly getting a bit uncomfortable. "That's ridiculous, Veronica. There's a difference between passion and hatred."

"Is there, Cami? Because I think the lines are blurring when it comes to your new landlord. But hey... what do I know?"

I swallow and snatch the remote from her hand, needing desperately to change the subject. "Shameless it is."

She smiles and shakes her head. "If you say so, Cami. I'll start the popcorn."

"Thanks," I breathe out, relieved that she doesn't push the subject of Jensen anymore. "Sounds like a good plan."

We watch two episodes of *Shameless* before Veronica retires to the bedroom to spend time with Peter. It's only eight and I'm not even close to being tired, so I think I'll sit outside on the back porch for a while and enjoy some fresh air.

It's peaceful out here. Peaceful is something I need after the crap day I had.

“Lucas.” Jensen’s deep voice says out of nowhere, causing me to open my eyes. He’s standing in the dark smoking a cigarette. His eyes are trained on me as he exhales a cloud of smoke. “That’s the guy that punched me. We grew up together. I *took* his punch because I’m an asshole. You said so yourself.”

My heart unwantedly speeds up at his confession. It may not be much, but it’s the first time he’s willingly given me something, and I can’t help but to like the feeling.

“You don’t *have* to be an asshole, Jensen,” I say gently. “No one *has* to be.”

His jaw flexes as he looks out into the night, before finally turning back and saying, “Maybe I do have to be. No more talking about it.” He takes a seat beside me and we sit here in silence enjoying the quietness of the night together.

I look his way every so often. It’s hard not to notice how beautiful Jensen is when he’s deep in thought. I want to know what he’s thinking but don’t ask because I’m enjoying this moment together too much.

A while passes before he stands up. “Goodnight, Cami.” He walks away before I can say anything, and moments later, I hear him ride away on his motorcycle.

I don’t know what made him come back to tell me that, or why he even stayed with me for as long as he did. I definitely don’t know why it makes me want more, but it does. It makes me want to learn about Jensen Blake and why he is the way he is.

I’m so confused. *He* confuses me. When it comes to my new landlord, I don’t know what I want or need, and it’s exhausting.

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JENSEN

I'M NOT SURE WHAT MADE me give Cami the small bit of the truth that I did a few nights ago, but I have to admit, the genuine look in her eyes when I did felt good.

Despite me being a complete asshole to her, Cami still wants to know about me. I've gotten so used to everyone judging me by what they've seen or heard that I've forgotten what it feels like to have someone want to know the *real* me.

Yet, even knowing this, I can't help but shut her out just like I've done with everyone else around me since that night. It's easier that way and ensures I won't hurt her. I can't afford to hurt anyone else. I'm still suffering the consequences of the last person I broke.

But Cami is different. She's not Katherine. They're nothing alike, and the more I realize that the more I fucking want with her. I don't deserve *more* though, and that's something I keep reminding myself *every time* I see her.

"Uh, boss." Kim cautiously pokes her head inside my opened office door. "Thomas Brown is on the line. Says he's going to be late on the rent check. What should I tell him?"

Exhaling, I close my laptop and reach for my keys, about to head home to exercise. I don't have time for this shit right now. My head is all fucked-up with thoughts of Cami and I need to work it off before I go crazy. "Give him an extra week and I want him to personally deliver his check to the office. No exceptions."

She nods in understanding and says, "Yes, Sir. I'll relay the message." She then backs out of my office in a hurry and leaves me alone. I've been

more of a dick than usual since walking through the door two hours ago. I can see why she wants minimum interaction with me. I would too.

“I heard about that motherfucker confronting you at the work party. That’s fucked-up shit and you know it.” I bring my attention back to the door to Ben poking his head inside this time. He flexes his jaw and steps into my office when I don’t say shit back. “He’s lucky I left before he showed up. That asshole is wrong. He had no clue the shit you went through with Katherine. Anyone would’ve—”

“It doesn’t matter, Ben.” I slam my fist into the desk in front of me, before running a hand through my hair, pissed off that he had to go and bring up Katherine right now. I can only handle so much shit in my head at once. “Don’t bring her up again. It’s in the past and I want it to stay there. I have enough on my plate. I can’t do this shit right now.”

He shakes his head and runs his tattooed hand over his blond beard. “That’s what you’ve been fucking saying for the last year and a half. One of these days...” He cracks his neck and looks up to the ceiling. “Your story needs to be told. We may have our problems, because we’re both shitheads, but I’ve always got your back, brother. That won’t change. You’re not the only one who has gotten shit about what happened. I got a piece too.”

I nod and take out my cigarette pack to pull one out. “I know. But it is what it is. I don’t give a shit what people think of me. I haven’t in a long time, and I don’t plan to start now. It seems you feel the same way.”

I place the cigarette behind my ear and walk past Ben, needing to get outside so I can breathe. Once outside, I barely light up my smoke and take a drag before Ben steps out the door and lights up one himself.

He doesn’t say shit and neither do I.

We’re both deep in our heads at the moment, because we both had to deal with some fucked-up shit that cut deep and scarred us both.

He’s the first one to toss his cigarette. “Shit’s caught up here, so I’m out. Call me if you need anything. I’m headed to the garage to finish a bike and clear my head.”

I nod and watch as he climbs on his bike and rides away. Not long after, I finish my smoke and head home in hopes of doing the same damn thing.

Usually, I’d head to the rental to work my fucked-up thoughts off, but knowing that Cami is moving in soon will only make me think about her more. Not to mention every time I step into that kitchen I’m reminded of

how she tastes. And *that* reminds me of how I don't want anyone else getting a taste of her again.

"Fuck!" My legs are shaking by the time I climb off the Leg Press. I've worked my body hard on every machine that I own and I still haven't been able to get control of my thoughts. Cami is still controlling them. I yank off the headphones and toss them against the wall, pissed off.

I look at the time on my phone to see that I have to leave to pick Benny up from school in less than twenty minutes. The same damn school that Cami teaches at.

That should fucking help my shit mood. As much as I try denying it, seeing her always does. Which is why I chose to sit outside with her for a while before I headed home the other night. We didn't even need to talk.

After taking a quick shower, I rush to the school and park outside the fence before jogging to the main door.

Usually, I'd wait for Benny outside, but on the drive here I came up with the stupid idea of going inside this time, because regardless of what I tell myself when it comes to Cami, after not seeing her for a few days, I want to see her. I can't deny that shit anymore.

I know exactly where the fourth-grade classrooms are from when I used to pick up Benny back when he was in the fourth grade. Which surprises the hell out of me that I never once saw Cami. Either that or I was too distracted with Katherine to notice her. With the non-stop shitshow that went on she was my only focus.

After being buzzed inside, I take a left instead of a right, which causes confusion for a few faculty members that recognize me, but they don't question me. I guess mine and Cami's little show in the bathroom at the bar hasn't gotten around the school yet. That's a good thing for Cami. It makes me wonder if Douglas getting Susan pregnant has been made public around here yet. There's no fucking way not one single person from the school didn't see them shopping for baby clothes that day. That's part of why I'm here early to begin with.

I'm not letting Cami look like a fool. People talk in a small town, and I don't want people saying Douglas left her for another woman because she wasn't good enough. Fuck that shit. Once people see *us* together, they're going to assume they either had a mutual breakup and kept it quiet or that Cami left that douchebag for me. Either option is better than the truth—Cami being cheated on.

I make sure a few people see me stop at Cami's door and I offer them a cocky smile, before letting myself into her classroom as if I don't need to ask permission.

Her students notice me before she does, but they're too busy gathering their things to pay much attention to me. After a few seconds one of her students finally says, "Miss Reynolds, there's a boy here to see you."

Her body visually tenses up before she turns around to see who it is. From the shocked expression on her face it's safe to say she wasn't expecting it to be me.

"Class, quietly gather your things and line up at the door. I'll be right back." She motions for me to wait for her in the hallway and then joins me a few seconds later. "What are you doing here, Jensen?"

Her eyes scan over my face, and the moment they land on my lips, she swallows and turns away. She's still thinking about our kiss, which means it still has an affect on her.

Good.

"To make sure people will talk, Cami . . . of what we *want* them to talk about." I step in close and grab her chin, causing her to meet my eyes. "I'll see you on Friday with the contract. Meet me there after school. Don't be late."

Knowing people are watching us, I lean in and press my lips against hers, kissing her quick and hard, before walking away, not looking back.

People can talk about that.

What makes this more interesting is the fact that my next stop is Douglas' classroom. And when I get there, I don't bother to knock either. I step inside to see Douglas at Benny's desk.

"Should be pretty easy, Benny. Perhaps your mom can answer—"

"We both know that can't happen and why," I snap, causing everyone to look my way. "Benny, grab your backpack. Wait for me here."

"But Jensen. I still have a few que—"

"Now."

While Benny is gathering his things, I nod toward the door, letting Douglas know I want to speak to him in the hall. Once we're alone, I get in Douglas' face, wanting to make this as clear as possible. He's damn lucky we're at the school right now with kids around. They're saving his ass from being against the door with my forearm against his throat.

“Don’t ever fucking mention his mother like that again. This is your only warning.” I step in closer, causing him to swallow and take a step back. “Next time there won’t be one. Got it?”

“It was a mistake,” he says nervously. “I have a lot of students and I wasn’t think—”

“That’s your fucking problem, Douglas. You don’t *think*. If you did, Cami wouldn’t be screaming out my name for the whole town to hear.”

His face hardens and he takes another step back until he’s practically against the door. “Look here, Pal. I’ve heard the rumors about that, but that’s all it is. Cami already told me the truth about the two of you. She’s too good to give herself to a guy like you, even if she won’t take me back right now. Leave her alone and find someone else to screw with.”

He turns to walk back into the room, but he stops when I say, “It’s too late, Douglas. There is no leaving her alone now.” I look in the window and motion for Benny to meet me in the hallway. “And thanks to you making the mistake of baby shopping with the woman you hurt her with in public, there’s not a chance in hell she’ll be taking you back. Have a nice fucking day.”

Benny steps into the hall right as the last word leaves my mouth. “I’m ready.”

“Let’s go, bud.” I grab Benny’s backpack and start down the hallway with him at my side. “Pizza or tacos?”

He smiles, seeming to forget about his mom being mentioned. “Pizza!”

“Good choice.”

Just as we reach the main door and get ready to exit the school, I look over to see Cami walking down the hallway with her students behind her. She stops and looks at me, and then at Benny, before looking back at me in confusion.

We stare at each other in silence for a moment, before she pulls it together and leads her students toward the door that takes you directly to the playground. The bell doesn’t ring for another five minutes, but after the stunt I pulled not long ago she probably needs to clear her head. Looks like she’ll have something else to figure out now too.

I knew there’d be a possibility of Cami seeing me with Benny at some point. He’s no secret. At least not to the people that live in this town. Everyone knows our story, but clearly, no one has filled her in yet.

That surprises me since all this town does is gossip. Especially when it involves me. The only problem with talking to her about Benny is what the conversation will lead to. That's a little harder to explain, and if she thinks I'm an asshole now... what will she think once she finds out what happened that night?

She'll think I'm the cold-hearted piece of shit that the town has decided I am. I'm just the empty shell of a good-looking man and a body for women to use, because they're certain after what happened that I can't be anything more.

I'm not sure I'm ready for Cami to see me that way yet.

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Cammi

I TRACE MY FINGERS OVER my lips, replaying Jensen's kiss for the millionth time since I left school for the day. After he walked away, I couldn't think straight, so I decided to let my students go early. I couldn't even catch my breath to talk, so I knew I needed to be alone as quickly as possible.

Jensen was the last person I expected to barge into my classroom unannounced, but the moment I looked up to see him standing there, my heart sped up and I felt butterflies in my stomach.

After not seeing him for a few days, my body *and* heart reacted in a way I wasn't expecting. I didn't think I'd miss being around him as much as I did, and seeing him looking back at me and the way it made me feel all giddy inside proved just how much I had been wanting to see him again.

But that kiss—I wasn't expecting it. And I definitely wasn't expecting it to leave me speechless. It felt so good that I didn't even care about the eyes watching after he walked away. I also didn't care that it was just for show. I *liked* it.

That's when I realized how screwed I am. As hard as I've been fighting any feelings for Jensen, the more slivers I get of the *real* him makes me realize I've just been in denial. If I were honest, I'd say I'm falling for him.

Which is why I was so shocked to see him leaving the school with a student today. I've seen Benny off and on over the years, but I don't know enough about him to know what Jensen is to him.

Is he Benny's father?

His uncle?

A friend to his mother maybe?

He can't be Benny's father, right? Not with the way he works nonstop. He's always out late. Doesn't seem to have any real agenda. He does as he pleases. At least I wouldn't think so, but then again, I don't know much about Jensen. Or this child's mother.

I not only want to now, but I *need* to.

After packing up my two bags and only leaving the few things out that I'll need before Friday, I make my way through Veronica's house and peek out of the living room window to see if Jensen is next door.

My heart does this little dance when I see his truck parked out front. I had been listening for his motorcycle since I got back a few hours ago. I hadn't even stopped to think that he might be in his truck.

"What ya doing, babe?"

I close the curtain and turn to face Veronica. I've been struggling all day with whether or not I should ask her for more information, or *hope* that Jensen will let me in some more. Truthfully, I don't think it's something Jensen will willingly talk about. Especially since I was barely able to get out of him who the guy at the bar was.

It's eating at me more than I thought it would... "I saw Jensen at the school today. He was picking up Benny Smith. Who is he to Jensen?"

Veronica's face turns white, as if she wasn't expecting that question. Clearly, it's something she's not comfortable with, and that only makes me more nervous.

"He hasn't told you about Benny?" Her voice cracks on Benny's name.

I shake my head. "I need to know, Veronica. Is he Benny's father? You don't have to tell me anything else. I just want to know if he has a kid. It seems like something he should've told me after... Just answer the question. Is he?"

"Jensen isn't Benny's father. The father has never been in Benny's life or Katherine's really. It's a very long, complicated story that not many around here talk about anymore. But I can tell you this—he's good to that kid, Cami. Jensen may put up a front and act like an asshole—the biggest one I know—but there's more to him. A lot more." She walks over to peek out the window, before offering me a small smile once she sees what I was just looking at. "I can see why you two would be good together. If you knew the old him, you'd see it too."

"What?" I let out a nervous laugh and wipe my palms down the front of my jeans, my heart pounding from all of the information she just gave me.

“We’re not together, Veronica.”

“That’s not what I hear,” she sing-songs. “I heard Benny wasn’t the only reason Jensen was at the school today. Just saying.”

“Wow.” I rush to the kitchen and pour a glass of wine, my nerves getting the best of me. “Well, that sure got around fast. You don’t even work at the school. And it wasn’t what you think. He said it was so people would talk. I wasn’t sure what he meant by that.”

“Yeah... well.” She stops and pours a glass of wine for herself. “Word travels fast when Jensen Blake is caught kissing a girl in public. People will talk about that over Douglas getting Susan pregnant any day. It’s easy to say it’s not a sight this town sees very often when it comes to Jensen. Unlike most guys, kissing *means* something to him. And doing it in public for people to see is a huge deal, yet for whatever reason, he did that for you. *That* says a lot. A *whole* lot.”

There goes my heart again. If there’s one thing Jensen does, he keeps my heart beating at a faster than normal rate on a daily basis. I’m not sure how good that man is for my health, but I think I’ll be finding out.

“I’ll be back.” I set my wine glass down and Veronica watches me with curious eyes as I walk past her and to the living room.

“Where are you going, babe?”

I stop at the door and close my eyes, preparing myself for what I’m about to do. “Next door to see Jensen. I owe him a thank you. Wish me luck.”

“You don’t need it,” she says, right before I walk outside.

I don’t know about that. I definitely feel like I need some luck as I make my way next door.

I’m not sure if I’m about to make a huge mistake or not, but just like the first time I barged through this door, nothing can stop me at the moment.

Without knocking, I let myself inside, my sight setting on Jensen as he looks away from the pull he’s currently changing on one of the cabinet doors.

“What are you doing, Cami?” he questions stiffly, setting the screwdriver down. “I told you I didn’t need your help anymore.”

“That’s not why I’m here.” I swallow and look him over, taking in the way his black shirt and jeans form to his hard body. Everything on him is perfection. Especially those lips that I’m now staring at like a fool. “There’s something I need to do.”

“Yeah?” he questions, taking a step toward me. “What is it, so I can get back to work.”

Without answering him, I walk over, grab him by the back of the neck, and kiss him hard and deep just like he did to me earlier today.

I’m nervous of his reaction for a split second, until he tangles his hands into my hair and pulls me in deeper until I’m practically on top of him.

“Fuck, Cami.” He breathes against my lips once we break apart. “What was that for?”

“To say thank you for earlier,” I whisper through heavy breaths. “You didn’t have to do that for me—”

“I know I didn’t have to, Cami.” He clenches his jaw and leans against the wall. “But the thought of Douglas doing anything to hurt you more made it an easy decision for me. That son of a bitch should’ve given it more time before being seen out in public with Susan shopping for baby things. Fuck, a public breakup first would’ve been key. I know how people around here talk. It would’ve been all over school, stressing you out. Now people will know you and Douglas are no longer together. They’ll know you’re mine.”

My insides heat up at hearing him call me his again. “That’s the second time you’ve called me that, Jensen.” My heart pounds fast inside my chest as he moves in closer, studying my eyes. “You have to stop calling me that.”

“Why?” He brushes his bottom lip over mine. “What if I want you to be but I’m fucking *terrified* to break you?”

“I...” I swallow and close my eyes when his lips slightly brush mine again. “Why are you afraid of breaking me? What happened, Jensen? Is it because of Benny’s mom that you can’t let me in? What happened to her?”

He stiffens and releases me so quickly that by the time I open my eyes he’s back inside the kitchen grabbing for his tools again. “I have shit to do, Cami. It’s time for you to leave.”

“You can’t just do that, Jensen.” I walk over and snatch the screwdriver from his hand. “You can’t just say what you did and then push me away like it never fucking happened.”

“You don’t understand, Cami, and you never fucking will.” He backs me up with his chest, not stopping until my back hits the wall. “I *break* people. I can’t do that to you. I won’t.”

I swallow, my heart beating hard against his chest. I'm not as easily broken as he might think. Plus, I'm already down. How much worse could I be hurt? "Try me."

His eyes meet mine as he grips my face and studies it. "You have a good career and a good life. You have kids that depend on you. You don't want me screwing that up for you, Cami."

"So do you." I point out. "You have Benny depending on you. You can't be as bad as you say you are. Open your eyes and see that. I already have."

Something in his eyes change the moment those words leave my mouth, and the next thing I know his lips crush mine so hard that it knocks the breath right out of me.

My heart soars as his mouth captures mine over and over again, as if he can't get enough of me. I can't help but think about what Veronica told me about Jensen when it comes to kissing. He doesn't do it unless it means *something* to him. I'm not sure what this means... What we are. But knowing I mean *something* to him is good enough for now.

His kiss deepens and I moan out when I feel his erection press between my legs. This man has a way of making me want sex all the time. Doesn't matter what time of day it is or where I'm at, I *want* him.

He growls against my lips and his fists tighten in my hair as he pulls away, us both panting and fighting for air. "I need to show you something." Grabbing my hand, he guides me down the hallway to the master bedroom, my heart racing with anticipation the whole way there.

Once we reach the door, he steps inside first and turns on the light, before pulling me into the room with him. My heart skips a beat once I notice the color of the walls. "You did this?" I ask in awe, completely surprised that he'd do this for me. "When? I thought you wanted to keep the walls white?"

"Why did you pick this color, Cami?" he questions, his icy-blue eyes meeting mine. "Tell me the truth."

I never thought the day would come that I'd admit this to him, but things have changed since the day I chose this color for my bedroom. "Because it's color of your eyes and you have the most beautiful eyes I've ever seen. The moment I met you, I couldn't stop looking at them. I thought having my bedroom the same color would help with that problem."

He grins and grabs my hip, pulling me against him. "I knew you couldn't keep your fucking eyes off me when we met, Cami. You tried so

hard, but it wasn't happening, and it won't be happening anytime soon."

"Is that right?" I question against his lips. "You're so sure of yourself, aren't you?"

He nods and bites my bottom lip. "Hell yes I am. You make me that way. Even though I *knew* you hated me, you couldn't hide the fact you still wanted me inside you."

"You're an asshole," I whisper.

"So you keep telling me. But..." He runs his tongue over my bottom lip, causing my heart to speed up.

Everything he does is so incredibly sexy that I'm not sure I can handle it. "You want me to sink between your legs again, Cami. You want to feel my cum drip down your thighs. You will too. You're the *only* one who will or *has*. Just not tonight."

Holy fuck... If I wasn't wet before, I for sure am now.

JENSEN

AS BADLY AS I WANT to sink between Cami's legs right now and fill her with my cum again, I hold back, because I want her to see a small part of me I've kept hidden since Katherine.

I wasn't always sex material. I was boyfriend material once. Would've even made a good husband until one mistake changed everything that I was and left me the man I am now. A cold-hearted asshole afraid of letting anyone in for fear of breaking them just as I broke Katherine.

"I think I need some wine," she says, her face heated from my admission. "A lot of wine, actually. I should go."

"I figured you'd say that. Come."

She follows me into the kitchen and I pull out one of the bottles of wine I stocked her cabinet with a few days ago.

“How many bottles are in there?” she asks, sounding amused.

“Ten,” I say, pouring her a glass and scooting it in front of her. “I guess you can call it a housewarming gift.”

She smiles and brings the glass to her lips, taking a sip. “How did you know what kind to buy?”

I open a beer and bring it to my lips, before speaking. “I asked Veronica.”

She seems surprised and impressed by my answer. “I never would’ve expected that. Thank you.”

I nod. “I was feeling generous that day. It’s not something that happens very often.”

A smile spreads across her face. “How long have you had your two businesses? I’m hoping you’re feeling generous enough today to give me that?”

I laugh and set my beer down. “I started *Blake Construction* shortly after my twenty-second birthday and *Blake Rentals* on my twenty-fifth. It’s been eight years since I started my first business.”

“That’s very impressive. You were so young. There’s not many who can do that at such a young age.”

“I started working at the age of thirteen and busted my ass for years to save money. *Blake Construction* started out small at first. Three guys, two of my best friends and myself. Once everyone realized how trustworthy and reliable we were, we got more and more requests from customers and it grew from there until *Blake Construction* started building homes. That’s how my second business started.”

“Wow!” She gets ready to refill her glass, but I grab the bottle before she can and do it for her. “Thank you. I think I like you when you’re pouring me wine. Don’t stop.”

“With the wine?”

“With the stories, Jensen. I like it when you *talk* to me. You’re smart, driven, and successful. You should be proud to talk about your life.”

I swallow and toss my empty bottle away before grabbing another. I’m going to need a few of these to keep talking. “There *are* things I’m proud of, Cami. But those aren’t the only things that matter, and that’s what makes it hard.”

We sit in silence for a few moments before she clears her throat. “When I was younger, I used to think I’d be a writer someday. I surprised the hell

out of myself when I realized my real passion was to teach. I wouldn't change it for the world. I love my students and I feel joy when teaching them something new."

"I know that feeling," I say, not thinking. "I get that same feeling when Benny learns something from me. It fills me with pride. I love that kid more than life."

Her face softens when I turn to look at her, but she doesn't speak for a moment. "I should get back and finish grading papers. It's getting late and I'm sure you don't want to be here all night working."

I watch her as she takes one last sip of her wine, before wiping her palms down the front of her jeans. I notice she always does that when she's nervous. I'm opening up to her and apparently, it's getting to her.

Well... me too.

"Yeah." I exhale and walk her to the door. "I'll see you soon, Cami."

"Yeah," she whispers, before walking outside when I hold the door open for her. "Goodnight, Jensen."

I step outside after her and light up a cigarette as I watch her walk through the grass to the next house. Once she reaches the porch, she stops and turns around to look at me. She offers me a small smile and I nod, before she disappears inside.

Now, hours after Cami left and she's still on my mind, consuming my thoughts as if she were right here in front of me.

I know I shouldn't go next door, but moments later, I'm standing on the porch. This may be a mistake.

Fuck it.

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20

Cami

“I BREAK PEOPLE.”

Jensen’s words replay in my head for the hundredth time since I arrived back at Veronica’s. I let it go when I was next door, because he’s the perfect distraction and he knows it. The moment he used his body and mouth on me, I let the subject go instead of pushing for answers about Katherine.

Where is she?

Is she in Benny’s life still?

Does she still love Jensen?

Does he still love her?

There are so many questions I *need* to know. It’s driving me crazy, and it will until those questions are answered. I don’t understand what can be so bad that he’s not willing to talk about her. People hurt people. Whether or not we want to or mean to, it’s going to happen at some point regardless.

It saddens me he doesn’t believe he deserves to be forgiven for whatever happened between them.

A light knock sounds on the bedroom door in the middle of me going over assignments from the other day, before Veronica pokes her head inside.

“Hey, babe. We’re turning in for the night. Want to tell me anything? *Anything* at all?” She pushes.

“Not unless you can answer a question for me.” I sit up, hopeful, and her expression turns uneasy.

“I don’t know, babe. What is it?”

“Can you tell me who Lucas is?” It’s not the answer I need, but it couldn’t hurt to know. Whoever the guy was he felt the need to attack Jensen in a roomful of people.

She exhales and nervously taps the door. "Lucas is Katherine's older brother. He used to be one of Jensen's best friends. It was Jensen, Ben, and Lucas, all day every day. They were practically inseparable back in the day."

"And what about..." I change my mind before asking anything else, because as hard as I know it's going to be to get any answers about Katherine from Jensen, I feel it's best if I learn about her from him. "Never mind. Thanks, sweets. Appreciate you telling me about them."

She smiles. "Night, babe."

"Goodnight."

I finished working over an hour ago and crawled into bed for the night, but no matter how much I toss and turn, I can't get comfortable.

"Dammit." I sit up and run my hands through my tangled hair. Jensen is still next door, and I can't help but wonder what he's doing or why he's there so late. As far as I could tell there wasn't much left to do next door.

I wanted to stay longer tonight, but the truth is, the more he talked and opened up to me about his life, the more drawn to him I became. The more I wanted for him to be more than just my landlord.

He made it loud and clear, though, that he's not cut out for a relationship anymore. That he was terrified of breaking me, and I suppose, a part of me is terrified too. I've already had my heart broken once, I'm not sure I'd be able to handle it being broken by the hands of Jensen Blake.

The hot-as-sin town asshole.

I lay down and attempt to get comfortable again, but right as my head hits the pillow, there's a knock at the front door, causing me to sit up again. "Seriously?"

The guest room is closest to the front of the house, so I'm positive if I barely heard it, Veronica and Peter weren't able to. I climb out of bed and head for the door, hoping and praying that Douglas hasn't decided to show up to talk.

He texted me earlier asking how I was. I ignored it. He doesn't deserve to know how I'm doing or what I'm doing.

When I reach the front door, I stand on my tippy toes to peek through the peephole, but whoever is outside is standing too close to get a good view. I'm too tired to really give a crap anyway. All I want is to get some sleep, so I unlock the door and open it.

My heart does a little dance inside my chest when my eyes land on Jensen standing there in his leather jacket that I love so much on him. He's so dangerously sexy that he takes my breath away for a moment, before I'm finally able to speak.

"Jensen. What are you doing here?"

His eyes lower to my lips before he steps in close. "I didn't give you a proper goodbye earlier, Cami."

"What do you mea—"

His mouth crashes down on mine, stealing my breath away for the second time within a minute. This man is dangerous for my health and this proves it.

His hands tangle in my hair and his hard body presses into mine as his kiss deepens, his mouth owning mine in a way it never has before.

This kiss feels different somehow. Like he's giving me a piece of him, but all this does is make me want it all. Town asshole or not. I *want* Jensen Blake, and he just made sure of that in this moment.

He pulls away, his teeth tugging my lip playfully, before he releases it and presses his forehead to mine. "I'll see you soon, Cami. I'd say try not to miss me too much, but we both know you will now."

I swallow and fight to catch my breath as he walks away and jumps into his truck, driving off.

He's such an asshole. He came over here and kissed me to make sure I'd miss him. I'm not sure whether I should be pissed or flattered.

I'm a little of both at the moment, to be honest.

Shutting and locking the door, I close my eyes and run my fingers over my lips, the heat of his kiss still burning on my skin.

If I wasn't thinking about him before, he made damn sure I will be now.

I CHOSE TO PLAY CATCHUP today while my students are at lunch, because unfortunately, I forgot to pack one, and don't want to risk running into Susan or Douglas in the teachers' lounge.

I'm okay when I don't have to see them or hear their stupid voices, but I'm absolutely still pissed at them both. Anyone would be. Doesn't mean I still care. I thought I would, but truthfully, if I only think about Douglas

when I see him, that's a sure sign I'm over what we had. Five years together and it took me just over two weeks to get over him. That says a lot.

Jensen was right when he said Douglas did me a favor. Who knows how things would've turned out if we had gotten married and started a family like we planned. My love for him wasn't as deep as I thought it was, and it took leaving him to figure that out. We would've most likely been stuck in a loveless marriage for the kids. Maybe I should be *thanking* the two of them for screwing behind my back.

Holly Moore's paper is in front of me on my desk, my current being graded, when the sound of the door opening and closing has me looking over to see who entered my room. Jensen is standing by the door with a paper sack in hand. It's from a little fast food joint that I recognize, and I instantly get my hopes up that there's something in there for me.

"Jensen." My heart does the usual silly little dance when his eyes land on mine as I stand up, surprised to see him. "Is that lunch?" I ask, when he holds the sack up.

"Yeah. A good thing too since you're sitting there empty-handed on your lunch break. What the hell, Cami?" His eyes harden as he sets the bag down in front of me and pulls out two burgers. "What would you have done if I hadn't come with food? Not eat?"

I shrug and open the burger wrapper, my mouth practically watering from the smell. "I forgot to pack a lunch and I'm too busy to run to the teachers' lounge for food. *Thank* you. Oh my God, thank you."

His lips curl up into a satisfied grin as I dive into my burger like I haven't eaten in a month. "Fuck, Cami. You owe me later for this."

"Anything you want." I let slip out.

"*Anything*, Cami?"

My body burns with need when he grabs my hips and pulls me flush against his body. "I-uh..." I swallow when his mouth brushes my neck. "How did you know it was my lunch break?" I ask, changing the subject.

I can't let his mouth or body control my thinking right now. *I'm in my classroom. At the school. Stay strong, Cami.*

He grabs my burger from my hand and tosses it on my desk, before moving his lips up my neck, speaking against it. "I called the office and they told me."

"Is that right?"

He nods, backing me against my desk.

“I’m going to have to remember to tell the office not to give that info out in the future.”

“Doesn’t matter, Cami.” He moves his lips around to brush mine. “I’ll just show up whenever the fuck I want to then. *Everyone* here knows me and *no one* will stop me.”

With his thigh, he spreads my legs and moves in between them. His erection pressing against me has me barely able to think. I’m losing any and all self-control and he knows it.

“Well, then I’ll just have to remember to keep my classroom locked.” I close my eyes and swallow when his hand wraps around my throat and he nips my bottom lip with his teeth. “I should’ve locked it today,” I whisper. “Dammit, Jensen. We can’t do this. Not here.”

“That only makes it more exciting, Cami. Because now when I leave... you’ll be thinking of all the ways I could’ve fucked you against this desk instead of just doing this.” He moves his lips around to my ear, his fingers sliding up my dress to dip into the front of my panties. “I guarantee Douglas would be able to hear it from across the school. Do you want to test that theory?”

I bite my bottom lip to keep from moaning out when he slides two fingers inside of me and slowly pumps them in and out. “Jensen...”

“Relax, Cami. I already told you how many times I’d make you come. I didn’t say where or when.” He growls against my ear as his movements pick up and I can hardly take it for much longer.

“This isn’t right, Jensen. Someone could walk in.”

“Let them.”

I grip his shoulder and squeeze when he shoves his fingers in deeper, not giving a shit about getting caught. “Oh shit,” I pant, about to come around his fingers any second. “Jensen... Oh my God. I’m about to...” My orgasm rocks through me so hard that I yank on his hair, needing something to grip onto.

He smiles against my lips as I hold onto him for dear life, in fear of falling over if I let go. “Now eat your lunch.” He removes his fingers from my throbbing pussy to suck them clean with his mouth. “I’ve got work to do.”

“You’re leaving already?” I ask, not ready for him to go. “You’re not going to eat first? You just stop by, give me an orgasm, and leave? Just like that...”

“Just like that, Cami. I didn’t get any food for myself. I didn’t know how hungry you’d be, so I grabbed two burgers to be safe,” he answers, walking for the door as if he didn’t just finger fuck me behind my desk. He stops once he reaches it and turns back around. “Come by later to sign the contract.”

He exits the classroom. I sit here fighting to catch my breath and wrap my head around what just happened. He just randomly shows up at my place of work to bring me food and get me off?

Jensen Blake may just be the sweetest asshole I know.

After taking a few moments to calm down and catch my breath, I manage to eat my now cold burger and part of the second one. Right as I’m wrapping the half-eaten one up, there’s a knock at the door.

Panic sets in for a moment, afraid that someone walked by and saw us and sent the Principal to call me out, but that panic dies down the moment I notice Mrs. Peters’ poufy gray perm through the window.

She’s an older lady who’s been working as the school Librarian for over twenty years. She likes to talk a lot, about *everything*. She’s harmless.

Pulling myself together, I stand up and call out for her to come in. She does, offering me a friendly smile. “Afternoon, Cami. Hope you don’t mind me stopping by.”

I shake my head and clean the garbage from my desk to keep from looking her in the eyes. I’m paranoid that she’ll be able to see how hot and bothered I still am by Jensen’s visit. “No. Not at all. How can I help you?”

“I couldn’t help but notice Jensen Blake bringing you lunch.” She walks over to join me at my desk, her smile genuine. “That makes me happy, because I was worried about what I heard the other day about Douglas and Susan. I’m glad to see you’re dating someone new. I was concerned for you.”

My heart speeds up at the mention of Douglas and Susan. I was wondering how long it would take before people around here started talking. I force a smile and sit back down at my desk. “I’m great, Betty. I appreciate you thinking of me.”

“You know...” She moves in close as if to make sure no one is listening. “I never really cared much for either of them, to be honest. I think you’re better off without him if you want my opinion. Let people talk, because it’ll stop once they see you’ve captured the handsome young Jensen’s heart. It’s been a while since anyone has been able to do that.” She winks and fixes

her perm. "I better get back to work. I have a library full of books that need fixing."

"And there's no one better at that than you, Mrs. Peters. Thanks for stopping by."

After she's gone, my lips curve into an unstoppable smile. Not even the fact that people are talking about mine and Douglas' breakup is enough to stop me from smiling right now.

Jensen chose to go out of his way to bring me lunch, and he might not think it's a big deal, but to me it's huge. My walls are breaking down when it comes to him. Little by little he's working his way into my heart and it feels good.

I feel good. Better than I have in a long time. Jensen gives me butterflies that Douglas was never able to. He both excites and terrifies me, and I think I like it. A lot.

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JENSEN

FUCK, I'M A SELFISH ASSHOLE. Anyone could've walked into Cami's classroom earlier and caught us being inappropriate, yet my need to satisfy her kept me from keeping my hands to myself.

I didn't plan on making Cami come. I was supposed to bring her lunch and leave. Truth is, I wanted to do something nice for her after all those times I was a complete jackass. I wanted to show her the guy I once was back before my reputation changed to the town asshole.

The moment I laid eyes on her, though, to see how stressed she looked behind that desk, I wanted to relax her and make her *feel* good.

I wanted to do so much more than just fingerfuck her. I wanted to make her scream so loud that Douglas could hear her. It took a lot of restraint to hold back. Good thing too, because the moment I stepped out of her classroom, two sets of eyes were on me. Cami would've lost her job, no doubt.

"Hey, boss," Austin calls from the roof, causing me to look up. "Thanks for bringing lunch. We're about to take a break here soon and the crew is starving. You know you don't have to do this every day though, right? I mean shit, I don't want you to stop, but that shit adds up."

"I'm not worried about it, Austin. Labor takes energy and energy takes food. It's a cycle I depend on. I want my guys fed and you guys earn it. So, until you don't..." I nod and jump into my truck and take off to the next jobsite to drop off food.

It takes a good hour to make it around to all eight of my crews, but as much as these fuckers piss me off on the daily, they're hard workers. I may be an asshole most of the time, but buying them lunch is my way of showing them I appreciate them. It's not breaking my bank account.

Once all of my guys have food, I head to the office and have a quick lunch while working on payroll.

Cami will be home in a few hours and I'm anxious to get to her, which is something I haven't felt in a long time. Usually, I want to bury myself in work, so I don't have to think or deal with anyone.

The fact that I *want* to be around Cami says a whole lot, and that scares the shit out of me. I know I shouldn't let her get too close, knowing I could break her, but when it comes to Cami, I'm a selfish prick.

I don't think I could stay away at this point even if I wanted to. I know I should. But that isn't stopping me anytime soon, and that's enough to make me hate myself.

IT'S PAST SIX BY THE time I make it to the rental property, due to being held up at the office. Cami's car isn't parked next door, so I grab Peter's attention when I see him step outside with the trash.

"Where's Cami?" I stop beside him and he looks surprised for a moment, before he shakes his head.

"Her and Veronica went to *The Home Barn* to look at furniture." He tosses the bag into the trashcan and narrows his eyes at me. "What's the deal with you and Cami anyway? I hope you don't plan to come along and hurt her. She's already been through enough with Douglas. You may be the guy I pay rent to each month, and I respect that, but that won't stop me from protecting family."

"Hopefully you won't have to." I flex my jaw and run a hand through my hair, just the thought of hurting Cami angering me. "I have to go."

Rushing to my truck, I hop in and head to the furniture store, hoping to catch Cami there. When I pull up, though, her vehicle is already gone. I run inside anyway to get details of her order.

Ryan Hannington is at the desk when I walk in and offers me a nod and a forced smile. "Hey, Jensen. Can I help you with something?"

"I need some info on an order someone possibly just placed. I want all the details."

He gives me a questioning look, but starts typing something on the computer. "You know I could get in trouble for this, right?"

I lean over the desk and look him square in the eyes. “And you know you still owe me from three years ago when you skipped out on two months’ worth of rent, right?” He nods. “Good. Her name is Camille Reynolds. Tell me what she ordered.”

It takes him a few minutes to pull up her info. “Looks like she bought a queen bedroom set and two lamps.” He scrolls down some more, squinting his eyes to see the details on the computer. “And she put a couch and a chair on a six-month payment plan.”

My stomach knots up at the idea of Cami not having any damn furniture in her house. I’m tempted to find Douglas in his home and kick the shit out of him. This isn’t her problem. She shouldn’t be the one struggling to start over.

“Cancel the payment plan.” I toss a handful of cash onto the desk. “How much?”

Twenty minutes later, I’m loading my truck up with the items she couldn’t afford and heading back to the rental property. Cami’s vehicle is still gone when I get back and I’m glad.

She’d probably kick my ass for going behind her back and paying for her furniture, but I don’t give a shit. I’d let her do anything she wants to me. There’s no way in hell I’m letting her sit on the floor while Douglas is all cozy in *their* old home.

Not happening.

After setting up Cami’s furniture, I kick back with a beer and look the house over to see if I missed replacing anything on the list. I’m in the master bedroom looking at the blue fucking walls when I hear Cami’s little car pull up next door.

I go to the porch and light up a smoke, watching as Cami steps out of her vehicle, her eyes landing directly on mine. She looks stressed, and I hate that look on her.

Moments later, Veronica steps out of the passenger side and they both walk to the trunk as it opens. I notice Cami pull out a box and I immediately toss my half-smoked cigarette and rush over to her before she can make it to Veronica’s porch.

“That’s not going in there.” She gives me a surprised look when I grab the box from her hand. “It’s going in your house where it goes.”

She flashes me a tired smile, before yawning. “Are you sure? It’s not moving day yet and I’m too tired to have to move these boxes more than

once. If you're going to give me trouble, I'd rather wait."

"I said they're going to your house, Cami. Don't question me." I flex my jaw and exhale, hating that she thinks I'm here to fuck with her. "And don't touch any more boxes. Get some food and let me handle this."

"Jensen—"

"Dammit, Cami." I grab her chin and force her to look up at me. "Let me take care of this. This isn't the time to fight me."

She stares at me in silence for a moment, before nodding her head. "Okay. Thank you."

"And tell Veronica not to touch any of the boxes either." With that, I make my way across the yard to drop off the first box. It takes me a good thirty minutes to unpack all of the boxes from the trunk, and since I want to give Cami time to eat and relax, I spend the next hour giving the house a final cleaning.

I'm in the middle of drying my hands and look over when I hear the front door open, followed by Cami's light footsteps as she steps into the living room, her mouth hanging open in surprise.

"Wait? What?" She walks around the couch, running her hand over the soft fabric. "How did this get here? I didn't... Did these get delivered by accident?"

I shake my head and wrap an arm around Cami's waist to pull her against my front. "These aren't here by accident, Cami. I delivered them."

"What?" She spins around in my arms, her eyes moving up to meet mine. "I don't understand. How did you—"

"I have my ways. All you need to know is that you're taken care of, Cami. Fuck sitting on the floor because you can't afford furniture."

Her face hardens, as if she's embarrassed that I found out. "It's not that I... You know what, never mind. Take it back. I can figure it out myself, Jensen. I'm not a fucking charity case that you need to feel sorry for. I will never be that. I..." She points to her chest. "Can take care of myself. Take it with you when you leave tonight. I mean it."

She goes to walk away, but I grip her arm and yank her to my chest, hard. "I didn't fucking say that and that's not what I meant. I don't expect you to be able to afford everything at once after just moving into a damn house. So stop arguing and fucking accept the furniture, because it's not leaving this house."

"You're an asshole," she whispers.

I smile and run my thumb over her bottom lip. “Yeah, but you like it. Admit it.” I move in closer and hover my lips over hers. “And you’ve been thinking about me since I left the school this afternoon. Say it.”

“Maybe I haven’t.” She tries to lie, but her voice shakes, giving her away. “Maybe I haven’t thought about you at all today.”

Growling, I grab the back of her hair and move my lips over hers. “We both know that’s a fucking lie. You’ve been thinking about me just as much as I’ve been thinking about you.”

Her eyes soften as they study mine. “You’ve been thinking about me?” She looks completely surprised that I’d be thinking about her when she’s not around.

Hell, I am too.

I nod and kiss her bottom lip. “So fucking much, Cami. You’re *all* I’ve been thinking about, and it’s driving me fucking mad. Why do you think your living room is furnished? I’m losing my fucking mind.”

Her eyes scan mine for a moment, before she yanks me to her and kisses me hard on the lips. When she goes to pull away, I grab the back of her head before she can get too far. “How much is left at Douglas’? I want to be there for the next trip.”

She shakes her head. “None. I don’t want anything that was *ours*. I want a fresh start that doesn’t remind me of the five-year mistake I made. I have my clothes and everything that is important to me and that’s all I need. Veronica has already offered to give me some things she doesn’t need for the kitchen. Everything else I can just buy along the way.”

“Are those things packed?”

She nods. “The box is sitting in her kitchen.”

After pressing my lips to hers, I walk away to get the things she needs from next door. I want to help her get as settled in as we can right now, and since her bedroom set doesn’t arrive until tomorrow, unpacking the kitchen is a start.

“I hate that you did this, Jensen. But...” Cami smiles at me from her new couch when I walk inside holding the box of kitchen utensils. “This couch is incredibly comfortable. Wow. It truly is amazing.” She runs her hands over the dark fabric as if she can’t get enough. “I’ll pay you back every cent. Even if you have to charge me extra for rent. I promise.”

“You paying me back is the last thing I’m worried about, Cami. That shit isn’t happening until you’re all settled in and this house is completely

furnished.” I set the box down on the kitchen island, before ripping the tape off. “Then we’ll discuss it.”

She joins me in the kitchen and we both dig into the box to start putting things away. It feels natural to do this with her, and I’m not sure how to feel about that. It’s not like we’re going to live here together, but maybe in some fucked-up way I know I’ll be spending a lot of time here.

“How was work?” she questions from the silverware drawer. “Busy day?”

“Every day is a busy day. I can’t remember a day that I’ve been able to relax and just say fuck everything. But I wouldn’t have it any other way. Guys like me need the distraction.”

“What do you mean guys like you? Good guys that go out of their way to help people? Because that’s what you did today.”

My chest tightens. It’s been a long time since I’ve been referred to as a ‘good guy’. “I’m not all good, Cami.”

“You’re not all bad, either.” She grabs the plate I’m about to put away from my hand, grabs my shirt, and pulls me to her. “Even if you want me to believe that. I can’t. It’s bullshit, Jensen. And you know it.”

“Is it?” I ask stiffly. “What makes you so sure?”

“I can feel it,” she whispers against my lips. “I feel it in my heart and soul *every time* you kiss me. Stop hiding from me, Jensen. Stop being afraid to break me. You’re not a monster.”

My heart races from the way she’s looking at me, and before I stop myself, I’m yanking her to me so I can kiss her long and hard and claim her as mine.

Fuck, I love kissing her.

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Cami

GOING TO DOUGLAS' HOUSE TO grab the rest of my things yesterday was harder than expected. Not because I miss Douglas. That's definitely not it. There's not one thing I miss about that jerk.

It just felt weird knowing that after living there with him for five years I'll no longer be going back to that place. Not even to visit. It became familiar to me. It was my place of comfort, and now I have to start all over again somewhere new.

If it wasn't for Veronica being right next door, I'm not sure how long it would take me to get used to living in a new place, and alone on top of that. It's going to be lonely at first, but I know with the help of my best friend and her husband I'll get over it pretty quickly. She even offered to stay with me for the first few nights, but I told her no, because I don't want to take her away from Peter. They've both done more than enough for me already.

I owe them both so much. Even if it means cooking tacos for them every day for a whole year, I'll do it.

Stepping out back, I hurry toward my car, anxious to get to my new place and wait for my bedroom furniture to arrive. I know it won't be there for a few more hours, but that doesn't stop the excitement I feel at knowing that today is officially moving day. Jensen promised to be there with the contract, and even offered to help put the bedroom set together since the furniture store doesn't offer assembly.

"How about some ice cream?"

My heart jumps when Jensen's deep voice comes from out of nowhere. It's not until I turn around that I realize while lost in thought, I walked right by Jensen's truck. He's standing there with his arms crossed and Benny at his side. They're both looking at me as if they're up to no good.

“Ice cream?” I ask with a smile.

“Yeah, Miss Reynolds. This new ice cream place is *the* best! Jensen took me there when it first opened. You have to come. You won’t regret it.”

I cross my arms and focus my attention on Jensen, who now has a full-on grin on his face. “Is that right? I won’t regret it?”

“You definitely won’t regret it. Especially since you get to go with us. We’ll make sure you pick out the right stuff.” He messes up Benny’s hair.

“Hey!” Benny laughs and fixes his hair. “I worked hard on this style today. Just like how you taught me.”

Jensen laughs and opens the backdoor of the truck for Benny to jump in, before opening the front door and nodding for me to join them. “Get in.”

I uncross my arms and narrow my eyes at him. “Okay. But only because Benny asked,” I tease. “He’s too cute to refuse.”

“Cuter than me?” Jensen questions, brow raised.

“Yes. Even cuter than you.” I give his chest a light push and prepare to climb into the truck, but he grabs my waist and pulls me in for a kiss. My heart soars the moment his lips capture mine, and when he pulls away my legs feel shaky.

“I’ve been waiting all day to do that. Now you can get in.”

I can’t stop the smile on my face as I climb into the truck, and Jensen closes the door behind me. Things have changed between the two of us, and the more time we spend together, the more it starts to feel like we’re a real couple. I should be scared of getting my heart broken by him. Especially with the way he keeps saying he’s going to. *Terrified* in fact, but it’s not enough to keep me away. I’m drawn to Jensen unlike I’ve ever been to anyone else in the past. He somehow found a way to have me thinking about him from the very first day we met to now, no matter how hard I tried not to. And boy did I try.

The ice cream place is only a few blocks away, so within minutes we pull up and Benny jumps out in a rush, yelling for us to hurry as he runs toward the door. With a carefree smile, Jensen grabs my hand and guides me across the lot with him.

“About time. Jeez! All the good stuff is going to be gone soon.” Benny uncrosses his arms when we finally make it to him, which is only seconds later, but he makes it seem like it’s minutes. “Come on. Let’s go!”

Jensen shakes his head and opens the door for us. “You better save me some brownies this time, Benny. Don’t be stingy this time.”

“Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.” Benny is at the counter ordering his ice cream before the door even has a chance to close behind us.

We all order the same thing and spend the next twenty minutes or so laughing and joking around while we eat it. Seeing the way Jensen is with Benny only has me falling deeper for him. Seeing this side of him is truly a beautiful thing, and the fact he is letting me see the two of them together is huge for both of us.

“...heck yeah. I kick butt at that game,” Benny brags with excitement when Jensen mentions a videogame he bought for Benny a while back. “Grams let me play it the other night and I won three out of four times. You should’ve been there to see it.”

“I’ll see what I can do next week. Maybe Grams will let you come to my place for the weekend and you can teach me how to play. How does that sound?”

“That would be so awesome!” Benny high fives Jensen from across the table before turning to me. “Are you good at basketball, Miss Reynolds? I don’t know if girls are any good or not. I’ve never seen one play before.”

I laugh and shake my head. “I can’t say that I am. *But* maybe I’ll have to learn someday. Some girls are good at it, though.”

“I can teach you like Jensen taught me!” Benny jumps up and starts pretending like he’s dribbling a basketball before throwing it into an invisible hoop. “Nothing but net.”

“Don’t be a show off,” Jensen teases. “Or I’ll eat the rest of your ice cream.”

Benny quickly sits down and grabs his bowl, pulling it to him. “I don’t think so. I’ve been waiting all week for ice cream. I’ll show off some other time.”

I can’t help but smile at Benny and Jensen as they continue to joke with each other. A smile hasn’t left Benny’s face the entire time, until Jensen pulls up to his Grams’ house to drop him off. It’s easy to see the disappointment on both of their faces when Benny climbs out and walks to meet his Grams in the driveway.

Jensen is silent for a while after dropping Benny off, so I don’t question him when he heads to the house instead of back to the school where my car is.

“Benny is a great kid,” I say when we get to the porch. “You’re good with him. *Really* good, in fact.”

He nods and pulls a key from his pocket, handing it to me. "This is yours. I have duplicates inside on the kitchen island." He crosses his arms and smiles when I do. "Congratulations. You're officially *fucking* your landlord. How does it feel?"

His words cause a surge of heat through my body, but I do my best to play it off. The thought may have me wet, but he doesn't need to know. "Not as hot as I thought it would, to be honest."

"Fuck that." He pushes me through the door and slams it shut behind us. "Don't make me have to remind you just how fucking hot it is, Cami. I don't give two shits that your bedroom furniture is arriving any minute now. I'll remind you right here against this fucking door if I have to."

My face breaks into a smile and he flexes his jaw, clearly annoyed that I'm pretending sex with him isn't the hottest thing I've done in my entire existence. "You're not officially my landlord until I sign the contract. Maybe it'll be *hotter* once that happens."

"Fuck, Cami. Sign it and let's find out." He grunts and heads to the kitchen as if he's in a hurry to test the theory. Right when he grabs the pen to hand it to me, the doorbell rings. "Son of a bitch." He pushes down on his erection, before adjusting it and gripping the counter in annoyance. "Answer the door."

With a laugh, I answer the door and stand back as Jensen shows them where everything goes, as if he's going to be living here too. It makes me feel safer for a moment, until I realize that tonight will be my first night *alone* in this big house.

"This is going to take hours for me to put together," he says, once we're alone and standing in the master bedroom. I hope you're ready for a late night. I might not be leaving here for a while."

"I'm okay with that," I admit. "I'd rather you didn't anyway." It's true. I sort of want him to stay. Until it's time to go to bed anyway. "I'm going to run next door and see if Veronica wants to have some wine and help me unpack. Be right back."

I hurry and take off, so I don't have to see the look on his face at me wanting him to stay. I don't know how he feels about that and I'm not sure I want to know. I just want to pretend that he wants to be here as much as I want him to be.

All it takes for Veronica to agree to help is a bottle of wine and two clean glasses to drink them from. "You're lucky you're my best friend and

you have wine. Lots of fucking wine. Holy shit, you alcoholic. Ten bottles?"

"I didn't buy them," I answer above my glass. "Jensen did."

"Well, damn. He asked me what kind of wine you liked. I didn't expect him to buy you the whole damn case." She pokes her head out of the walk-in closet, most likely to see if Jensen is listening, before she turns back to me. "He seriously let you paint the bedroom the color you wanted? I'm so damn jealous. I wanted to paint ours maroon and he flat out told me no. Jerk."

"Then paint it maroon," Jensen says from outside the door. "And yes, I can hear every fucking word you two say in that closet. It's not sound proof and you've already finished off a bottle of wine. You're not whispering anymore. More like shouting about my dick and how good I *fuck* Cami. I heard that shit too."

"Well, shit." Veronica rolls her eyes, while pouring another glass. "I seem to forget how to be quiet after a few glasses. I need to remember that."

We both burst out in laughter when Jensen pokes his head into the closet with a cocky grin. We're both buzzing and enjoying ourselves, and for once he seems to be enjoying himself too, even though he's been stuck putting my bed together for the last hour.

"Bed is put together. I'll put the drawers in the dresser and nightstand after a cigarette break. Try not to talk too much about my amazing sex skills when I'm not around to listen. Got it?" With his eyes on me, he pulls out a cigarette and places it between his perfect lips. I can't pull my eyes away until he finally walks away.

"Holy shit, Cami. You have it bad for him, don't you?" She sits straight up on her knees, as if she has to get higher to say this next part. "And he totally has it bad for you. Look what he's done for you. He doesn't do things like this for *anyone*. Not anymore anyway."

"Not since Katherine?"

Veronica clears her throat, before standing to her feet. "Yeah. Has he told you about her yet?"

"No. It's like he doesn't want to talk about her. I just don't understand what could be so bad. I mean he's still there for her kid even though she doesn't seem to be around. Clearly, she's the bad guy, right?"

Veronica's face turns white and my heart drops. "You need to ask him about her again. You have the right to know what happened, but it's not my

story to tell, Cami. Make sure he tells you before you get in too deep with him. I'm not saying he's a bad guy, but that doesn't mean he doesn't think differently. *That* can keep him from being a good one. Just... just talk to him. Okay?"

"Okay... I'm really nervous now. Should I be nervous?" I stand up and grab the wine from her hand when she hands it to me.

"I don't know, Cami. But I think I should go. I'm suddenly feeling queasy."

I feel queasy myself the moment I'm standing alone in my new closet. The one I was very much enjoying before the conversation I just had.

"Everything good?" I look over to Jensen standing in front of me now. "I ordered a pizza. Hope you like pepperoni."

"I do." I force a smile and tell myself to forget about what Veronica said for the night. Jensen has worked his ass off for me today, and I don't want to ruin the night by forcing him to talk about his ex. "It's my favorite."

By the time the pizza arrives everything is together and put away. Veronica and Peter said I could borrow the TV they had in their guest room until I can pick one out, so Jensen hooked it up and I connected it to Veronica's Wi-Fi, so I at least have Netflix to keep me entertained until I can set up cable service.

We're in the middle of eating pizza and watching TV when Jensen pulls out the contract for me to sign. "Here's what you've been waiting for."

I sign it and push it back to him, excitement filling me. "Looks like you're finally my landlord."

"Maybe I want to be more," he says, surprising me. "But I need to know what you want, Cami. I need to know that you can handle it if things get ugly and don't work out. I can't..." He exhales and runs a hand through his hair. "I just need to know that I won't break you."

"You won't," I say without thinking. "I won't let you." I say it, hoping to believe it myself, but I'm not very convinced. "All I know is that I want you too, Jensen."

"Good. I was hoping you'd say that." He pulls me into his lap and pulls the blanket that I borrowed from Veronica's guest bed down on top of us. Tomorrow I plan on shopping for a few things. Like I told Jensen, I didn't want anything I shared with Douglas. Blankets included.

I don't know when it happened or how, but next thing I know I'm falling asleep beside him, and the last thing I remember before everything

goes black is how good and safe it feels being in his strong arms.

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23

JENSEN

WAKING UP BESIDE CAMI FEELS so much better than I imagined. I never planned to spend the night last night with her, but knowing it was going to be Cami's first night *alone* in a big house, the thought of her sleeping alone bothered me.

I had this *need* to protect her and make her feel safe. It's a feeling I haven't had with a woman in a long time, and one I was afraid I'd never have again. But Cami is different. Fuck, how she is different. She has me feeling alive again. It's terrifying, yet something I want more of. So much fucking more.

"You stayed the whole night?" Cami sits up and tiredly looks around. "When did we get to my bed?"

"About three in the morning. I thought you'd be more comfortable here." I climb out of her bed and grab for my jeans. "Want some breakfast? I have to run to the office real fast. I can drop some off afterward."

She shakes her head and joins me beside the bed, wrapping her arms around my waist. "Or you can just grab some on your way back here? I'd rather eat breakfast *with* you, Jensen. Unless you're busy."

I had a whole day of work planned, and skipping out on it isn't something I usually do, but when she looks at me the way she is right now, like she *wants* me around, my fucking chest aches at the thought of leaving.

"I don't have shit to do. Not shit that can't wait, at least." I cup her cheeks and pull her in for a kiss, feeling the *need* to kiss her. I've been feeling it a lot lately I'm learning. "What are you in the mood for... other than me?"

"I knew you were going to say that." She laughs and playfully pushes my chest before walking away to search for something to wear. "Glazed

donuts. Lots of them.”

I nod and button my jeans, before reaching for my shirt with a grin. “I know just the place.”

When I arrive with the donuts, Cami is freshly showered, sitting on the couch with wet hair. My dick instantly hardens at how incredibly sexy she looks wet, but I push down on it, not wanting this moment to be about sex.

She looks up at me and excitedly jumps from the couch to grab the box of donuts from me. “Thank you! I swear I could eat about a dozen of these by myself.”

I smile, loving how happy and grateful she is over something as simple as a box of donuts.

“Here.” She holds up a donut. “You better have one, because I can’t promise they won’t all be gone within minutes. I’m stingy when it comes to donuts.”

“I’m stingy when it comes to you,” I admit, pulling her to me. “I tried to avoid it, but I can’t help myself when it comes to you.”

“Then don’t,” she says gently. “I like spending time with you, Jensen. I *wanted* you to stay last night, and when I thought you were leaving this morning, I was missing you before you could even walk out the door. I know it sounds silly, but it’s true.”

“Shit, Cami.” I grab the back of her neck and press my lips to hers, loving the way she tastes. This woman just keeps surprising me by making me feel more and more with each moment we’re together. “I wanted to stay last night too. I didn’t think I would, but I did.”

She takes the donut she’s still holding and hands it to me. “So the guy that works nonstop is taking a day off. Does that mean Hell has frozen over?”

“I’m pretty sure it did the day you walked into my life.” I take a bite of the donut, thinking of all the shit I thought would never happen again before she came storming into my fucking life proving me wrong. I could make a whole damn list.

“What does that mean?” she questions.

“It means a lot of shit has happened that I never thought was possible. Like the fact that I’m here right now and don’t plan to leave anytime soon. I *want* to be here. With you.”

“I like that.” She smiles and takes a bite of her donut. “Because I was hoping you’d stick around for a while.”

“Good.”

I was hoping you'd say that.

CAMI HAS BEEN SETTLED INTO the house for over a week now and I have yet to sleep in my own bed since that first night we fell asleep together on the couch.

It wasn't planned this way. I never expected I'd be spending so much time at one of my own rental properties, but falling asleep with Cami in my arms has been the best sleep I've had in a while. Being with her feels so natural now that the thought of *not* being with her terrifies the fuck out of me.

We've eaten lunch and dinner together every day, have slept together every night, and have woken up beside each other every morning. I know this is a dangerous game, because the moment she finds out what happened to Katherine she's going to look at me the same way the rest of this town does. With judgment.

Katherine had a lot of issues. Ones that I tried to fix over and over again *after* I broke her to begin with. The first time I broke her we were seventeen. We dated for three years and I loved her with *everything* in me, which made the thought of ever hurting her crippling. My fear of that made it hard to be happy together. We had a lot of trust issues, so I let her go before something worse could happen. She was my first relationship and we were both young. I thought it'd be easier that way, but it wasn't. Not for her, and I wish I would've known that back then.

“Did you seriously cook dinner?” A smile spreads across Cami's face when we walk into my house to the smell of lasagna wafting through the air. “I didn't even know you *could* cook.”

“I can do a lot of things,” I say with confidence. “I'm pretty fucking good at most of them too. Especially cooking. My mom taught me everything she knew about cooking when I was twelve. Now sit down.” I pull out a chair for her to sit, before grabbing the plates to set the table.

“Where are your parents now?” she questions while I'm cutting the lasagna and fixing the plates. “You haven't brought them up. Do they still live around here?”

I shake my head and walk away to grab a bottle of her favorite wine. I figured we'd need a stock at both places now. "They retired a few years back and moved to Florida. Bought a house near the beach and they're loving life more than ever."

"That sounds amazing. I'd love to be like them some day. Be madly in love and spend every day together just enjoying the easy things of life. Maybe have a few grandchildren running around. I'd love that. Do your parents have any grandchildren?"

Exhaling, I take a seat and look across the table at her. "No. I'm the only child. Now eat."

Instead of giving me attitude, she smiles and digs into her food. Apparently, she's so used to me being demanding that it doesn't bother her anymore.

"This is amazing! I love your mom already for teaching you to cook like this. I may never leave now." She looks up and clears her throat, looking nervous. "I didn't mean that. You don't have to worry."

"I'm not," I admit. "And you're a pretty damn good cook yourself. Those were the best tacos of my life."

She smiles and goes back to eating, clearly satisfied that I finally admitted to loving her damn tacos. I should've told her sooner, but I was having too much fun pissing her off and getting under her skin.

After dinner I have her pick out a movie while I throw everything into the dishwasher.

"Thanks for dinner," she says from the kitchen doorway a few minutes later. "Do you have any Aspirin or anything for a headache? My students were extra loud and hyper today, and since I came straight here, I haven't taken anything yet."

"You're welcome for dinner." I walk over and gently press my lips against hers, pulling her into my arms. "I'll check the kitchen drawer. Get comfortable and wait for me on the couch."

My heart skips a beat when she wraps her arms around my neck and pulls me in for a kiss. I could get really fucking used to her wanting to kiss me every day.

In fact, I have, and I'm not sure I can do without now.

Cami

DESPITE MY POUNDING HEADACHE, I can't stop the smile on my face as I disappear into the bathroom and close the door behind me. I have to admit that it's been a long time since I've been this giddy about someone. Everything Jensen does fills my stomach with butterflies.

A lot has changed over the past nine days that we've spent every free moment we have together. He's shown me the side of him that I knew existed under all of the assholiness he was hiding behind. This sweet and caring side that I long for now. After the way things started, I never thought the day would come where I'd completely fall for him, but I *have*. I have fallen for him hard. There was no stopping it no matter how much I fought it, and I did. I fought it hard and lost.

After washing my hands, I look in the mirror, realizing it's a medicine cabinet. I don't know how I missed that the other times I was in here, but relief hits me. "Ah ha! Please be in here." Opening it, I move around items in search of some painkillers. Jensen didn't seem too confident that he had some in the kitchen.

I spot a little white bottle in the back, hiding behind a prescription bottle, so I go to reach for it but stop when I notice the name on the bottle in front of it.

Katherine Smith.

My heart pounds as I reach for it, because I know being nosey is wrong. I shouldn't be snooping through Jensen's things, but I've spent some time wondering about his ex and where she is. I just haven't brought her up again, because things have been so good this past week. So damn good, and I didn't want to ruin it by asking him to talk to me about something he clearly hasn't been comfortable enough to talk to me about yet.

Exhaling, I hold the bottle in my now shaky hand as I read the label. I recognize the name right away as something taken for severe depression. I

know, because my dad was on medicine for a while after my mom left him. He only took it for a week before he tossed it and began drinking.

I swallow as I run my hand over the label. The date on the bottle is from almost two years ago, so clearly, she must've left these here when she took off, right? Why else would he be holding onto it?

"What the fuck are you doing?" My heart stops when I look behind me to Jensen's angry face. It reminds me too much of the first time we met. I was hoping to never see that look on him again. Especially when looking at *me*. "I asked what the fuck you're doing. Give me that." He snatches the bottle from my hand and punches the wall, making me jump. "You have no right going through my shit, Cami. Fuck!"

"I was looking for painkillers. I didn't mean to—"

"Get the fuck out," he demands, backing me against the wall with hate-filled eyes. He seems like a different person right now. Surely not the Jensen I've grown to know recently. "You need to go, Cami. You should've never touched my personal shit. This..." he shakes the bottle in my face, before squeezing it so hard that the plastic cracks. "Is none of your fucking business. None!"

Angry, I push him out of my face. He has no right to treat me this way. "Don't you ever yell in my face again, asshole. Ever!" I push his chest again to give me some space. "Tell me what happened to her. Fucking talk to me. You can't just come into my life, make me fall for you, and then push me away without telling me why. Now tell me!"

"You were never supposed to fall for me, Cami. That was never the fucking plan!" he screams, throwing the bottle across the room and then slamming his fist through the wall for a second time. "I said go. Don't make me say it again."

"Tell me what happened to her, Jensen. Why did she leave? I'm not leaving here without answers first. You can be an asshole all you want, but I at least deserve an answer."

"She didn't," he says stiffly, looking over to meet my eyes. His eyes are dead, no life to them. "She's dead. Now get the *fuck* out of my house and my life. You can let yourself out."

I can barely breathe as I walk away, and the moment I step outside, I fall against the door, fighting back tears. My heart is beating faster than it has my entire life. I will not cry over Jensen. I will not allow him to break me. I

told myself I wouldn't do this, but as I'm driving away I physically feel my heart breaking in two. Not only for me, but for him.

She's dead?

How?

What happened to her?

He said he broke her. He told me so himself.

What does that fucking mean?

I can't stop my thoughts from going wild the entire drive back home, and I feel physically ill. I'll never forget the look in his eyes when he saw me with that bottle in my hand.

It was pure hatred, and that *kills* me so much. I wish he would talk to me. I wish he would let me in.

Getting out of my car, I'm headed for my house when I change direction and end up on Veronica's porch instead. I want answers. I *need* answers.

Veronica is on the couch watching TV when I step inside and pauses it to look up at me. "Hey, babe. How did—"

"Tell me what happened to Katherine. Now." I slam the door closed behind me. "I'm tired of no one giving it to me straight. I want answers, and I want them now, Veronica." I know I shouldn't be taking my anger out on her, but I can't go another second without hearing the truth. "I know she's dead. I saw the pills. Tell. Me."

She turns off the TV and meets my eyes. "It's a long, complicated story to tell, Cami. It's not that easy. It's not my story—"

"Yeah. I know. It's not your story to tell. I guess I'll never find out then, since Jensen just kicked me out of his life." A tear rolls down my cheek, but I quickly swipe it away in hopes Veronica doesn't notice.

I'm filled with so many mixed emotions right now that I don't know what to do or say. I just need to be alone. I need to get away from everyone before I say something I'll regret.

"I need to go to bed."

"Cami, sit down and stay with me." She stands up and reaches for my arm, but I move it from her reach. "Please."

I shake my head and back toward the door. "No. I can't. I need to be alone right now. I can't fucking think straight, and the last thing I want to do is be pissed at my best friend."

She opens her mouth to speak, but I put my hand up, stopping her, and then let myself out, angrily making my way next door to be alone.

It takes me less than an hour to down a bottle of wine and pass out on my couch. At least Jensen helped me get through this night in some way. Just not the way I was hoping.

I was right all along. He is an asshole.

A huge one.

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Cami

3 WEEKS LATER

I HAVEN'T SEEN OR HEARD from Jensen since the day he kicked me out of his house and out of his *life*. I'll admit that it hurts a lot more than I thought it would.

It took me almost four weeks to fall for Jensen Blake, and it's proving it's going to take longer to get over him. Every time I allow myself to think about him, my heart hurts and my chest feels heavy. All he had to do was talk to me.

I hate that he lost someone close to him. I hate that he had to go through that kind of pain, but the fact that he didn't trust me enough to let me in and tell me what happened only proves that he didn't care about me as much as I had hoped, and definitely not as much as I cared—or care—about him. The only thing keeping me from going to him is the look of hatred in his eyes that night when he forced me to leave.

I'm not sure I'll ever be able to get over that. I've tried. I tried to convince myself it was just in the heat of the moment, that it wasn't me he hated but the situation at hand. But what if he never meant for me to find out the truth about Katherine?

That's not something you do to someone you want to be with, and definitely not something you do to someone you're falling in love with. Maybe I was a fool, and the only one doing the falling. But it felt like so much more to me. I'll never know now, and it pains me so much.

The bell rang over an hour ago and I have yet to bring myself to move from behind this desk. I've been doing everything I can to take on extra

projects to keep myself busy, so I don't have to think about Jensen and how much I miss him. Or the little things he did, like bringing me lunch just because.

It doesn't help that my first rent payment outside of the deposit is due today, and since Jensen is no longer a part of my life, I have to go to the office to drop off the check. I may just be putting it off for as long as I can today, in hopes he won't be around the office. I know seeing him will only crush my heart more.

"Knock. Knock. Can I come in?"

I look at the door to see Douglas' head poking inside. He's the last person I want to deal with at the moment. "That's not a good idea, Douglas. I don't want to see you."

"I get that," he says gently. "I understand why you don't want to talk to me, and as much as it hurts, you have every reason to hate my guts. I hate *myself* for what I did to you, but I can't take it back."

I huff and shove my students' papers into the desk drawer. "What do you want, Douglas? I was about to head out. Make it quick."

He steps farther inside my classroom, but leaves the door open. *Smart move, buddy.* "I just wanted to let you know I'm here for you. I knew that asshole would screw up before too long. He didn't deserve you, Cami. I didn't either. You're good. Too good for us."

My stomach twists into knots at the mention of Jensen. *Why did he have to bring him up?* I blow up before I can stop myself. "My personal business is no longer any of your fucking concern, and I don't know what makes you think he screwed up. Just worry about yourself and Susan. Leave me out of your thoughts from now on, Douglas. Don't come anywhere near me or you'll regret it. Got it?"

He shakes his head and crosses his arms. "It's clear he screwed up, Cami. You don't have to hide it from me. It's kind of odd he spent so much time here, then all of a sudden he shows up today after not coming around for almost three weeks. The asshole screwed up. It's obvious."

My heart speeds up at hearing Jensen was here today. "He was here?" I try my best to act calm, but my stupid voice has to break, giving away my emotions.

"He still is." He taps the door before grabbing it. "But I don't see him in *here* with you. So, my offer to talk stands for as long as you need it. Even if you're no longer together, you don't just stop caring about someone after

five years. You may hate my guts now, but I'm hoping that will change. Until then, I still care about your feelings."

"It won't. Thanks, but no," I say stiffly, pissed off that he had to point out how Jensen is avoiding me. He's here picking up rent checks and he doesn't even have the decency to see me. It's as if I don't exist to him anymore, and it fucking hurts so bad. "Now get out of my classroom and mind your own damn business."

"All right, Cami. I guess I'll see you around then. But please, do yourself a favor and don't fall for that jerk again. This time, you're dealing with it. Next time you might not be so lucky."

I don't know what the hell Douglas means by that, but I'm so pissed off at everything right now I just want to be alone. I abruptly get up and close him out of my classroom, ready to get him out of my sight before I blow up.

IT'S PAST FIVE BY THE time I finally leave my classroom for the day to head to *Blake Rentals* to drop off my rent check. I wanted to be sure to avoid seeing Douglas again since he'd been lingering around after I kicked him out of my classroom.

Seeing his face around school is bad enough, but having to hear him talk about mine and Jensen's falling out was too much to handle. I wanted to strangle him right there in my classroom with the Principal just down the hall.

Stepping out of my car, I run my sweaty palms over the front of my jeans and head for the front door, ready to get this over with. A pretty brunette is the first person I see when I step inside. My heart races at the sight of her, because I can't help but to wonder if Jensen has slept with her since we stopped talking. The thought kills me, but I push it aside and reach into my purse.

"Good afternoon. How can I help you?" she asks, looking up from the desk once I stop in front of it.

I force a smile and place the envelope with my check in it in front of her. "I'm here to drop off a rent check."

"Sure thing. Let me get some info and I'll get it marked in the computer. Name?"

I clear my throat and run my hands over my jeans again, anxious to get out of here. There's an office less than twenty feet away that has Jensen's name on it, and I can't stop the thoughts occurring about him that I shouldn't be right now. "Camille Reynolds."

She stops doing whatever she's doing on the computer to push my check back in front of me. "You're marked in the computer as already paid, Miss Reynolds. You're set for May."

"Are you sure?" I ask, confused. "I didn't make a payment. Please check again."

She offers me a nervous smile and looks at the screen again. "It says here your payment was made two days ago. Perhaps you gave it to Jensen or Ben and forgot? Either way, I can't accept your check before checking with them first."

I shake my head and shove the check back into my purse, heated. "Thank you for the information. Have a great day."

I'm raging mad when I step outside and climb into my car, slamming the door shut behind me. First Jensen kicks me out of his house, then avoids me for three whole weeks, and now has the balls to mark my rent off as paid for the month. I don't know who he thinks he's messing with, but I'm not having it.

With shaky hands, I reach for my phone and begin typing out an angry text. But nothing I say sounds right, so I keep backspacing and starting over, until finally, I grunt and toss it into the passenger seat, annoyed that I can't find the words to say.

I haven't been able to for three weeks now.

My anger doesn't dwindle the whole drive to my house; quite the contrary actually, intensifying the moment I pull into the driveway to see a delivery truck parked out front. Workers from *The Home Barn* are carrying things into my house without my permission.

"What is all this? What are you doing?" I stop one of the workers coming out of the house when he attempts to make a trip back to the truck. "How did you get inside my house?"

He shrugs. "I just work at the place. I do my job and don't ask questions. Ask Derrick. He's in charge of the paperwork."

I grunt and yank the screen door open in search of this *Derrick* guy. There's only one person other than Veronica that has a key to my house, and Veronica would never let someone in without asking first. Her car isn't next

door, so I'm going to assume she doesn't know there are strangers carrying things into my house right now.

"Excuse me," I say stiffly when I find the guy in my guest room setting up a white futon. "What are you doing in here?"

"Setting up a futon, a desk, and a bookshelf like I was told by my boss. Is there a problem, ma'am?"

"Is there a problem?" I question, annoyed. "Yes. How did you get inside? I didn't order any of this, and I was told a month ago that you guys don't offer assembly of the furniture, so as you can see I'm very confused and frustrated."

He shrugs and moves to put together another part of the futon, as if I'm not standing here losing it on him. "We don't," he says, annoyed. "Jensen ordered these things and demanded that we put it together *today*. He let us in and left. That's all I know, lady. Now, if you'll excuse me... I have work to do before I get fired due to a pissed off Jensen coming into the store because I didn't finish my job on time."

I'm shocked and pissed at the same time. Jensen is really pushing me today. He has no right to do these things after pushing me out of his life. And as soon as these workers leave, he's going to find out just how pissed I am.

Over an hour later, Derrick and the other worker step out of the bedroom and Derrick hands me something to sign. Despite being pissed off, I sign it just to make sure these guys don't lose their job. If it weren't for that, I would've torn the paper up and tossed them out the door the moment I found them here.

I don't even take a moment to check the bedroom out. I jump into my car and head to Jensen's, ready to give him a piece of my mind. What the hell kind of person forces you out of their life and then goes and buys you off? How dare he hurt me and then do this shit? He's got some explaining to do, because my mind is on overload right now, and I'm about to lose it if I don't get an explanation, and fast.

I pull into Jensen's driveway, my heart slamming against my ribcage the moment my eyes land on his motorcycle parked in front of the garage. It's been weeks since I laid eyes on it after getting so used to seeing it everywhere I went.

The sight of it and the memories it brings of the times we spent together softens me for a moment, until I remember why I'm here. I can't let my

feelings for him and the fact that I miss him like crazy stop me from doing what I came here to do.

That's to give Jensen a piece of my mind and remind him that he's out of my life.

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JENSEN

I TOOK CARE OF CAMI'S rent and ordered the furniture she wanted for her guest room, because I knew I needed to piss her off to get her to come to me. Looks like it worked too, because she's stepping out of her car looking pissed as hell.

The three weeks has been fucking torture without her, and just as expected, I was the one to fuck it up. Telling her the truth is going to be hard. I know that. I can feel it in my bones. It's going to hurt possibly both of us, but she needs to know what happened with Katherine. She deserves the truth. She has from the beginning, but I wasn't ready to give it. I'm still not.

But she's what's important. *Cami*.

I take a deep breath and slowly exhale, before opening the front door right as Cami steps onto the porch, looking angry and beautiful as ever. Her heated eyes land directly on mine as she grabs something from her purse and roughly slams it into my chest, pushing me back until we're inside the privacy of my home.

"Here's the rent payment, asshole," she seethes, looking like she's ready to strangle me. She should be. I deserve every ounce of anger she throws my way. "How *dare* you fucking do *anything* for me after you kicked me out that night as if I was *nothing* to you. You have no right to comp my rent, and you sure as fuck had no right to furnish my guest room. I'm nothing to you, Jensen. Nothing but your tenant, which is how it should've been to begin with. I was stupid to let you in. It was a mistake."

She stops to catch her breath, but she's apparently so angry that she's having a hard time, and it's only pissing her off more. "Dammit, Jensen! I can't believe I let you get to me this way. I knew you were an asshole from

the very first day we met, yet I let you get under my skin. I let you in, Jensen. I allowed myself to fall for you, despite what I knew, and in the end I turned out to be *nothing* to you. From here on out, let's keep it professional, so we can both move on. No more buying me things or giving me free rent, because I'll give it right back. Got it?"

She turns to walk away, but I grip her waist, slam the front door shut, and back her against it with my body. "You're not fucking going anywhere, Cami."

"Move, Jensen!" She shoves my chest, and I let her, repeatedly, until she finally tires and gives up. "Get the hell out of my way, so I can leave. Now!"

"No." I move in closer until our bodies are flush. I want to be face to face when I say what I have to say. I want her to look into my fucking eyes, so she *feels* every word that leaves my damn mouth, because I'm not letting her leave here until she does. "You may be a lot of things to me, Cami, but *nothing* isn't one of them. Fucking hell! You should know better. I never want to hear you say that shit again. I mean it."

I cup her face and keep it steady when she attempts to turn away, as if looking me in the eyes is too painful. I fucking hate that with everything in me. "You're far from being *nothing* to me. Why do you think I reacted the way I did? It's so hard for me to tell you something that might change the way you look at me? I'm terrified you'll see me the same way I see myself. That you'll hate me just as much as I do. And *that* would fucking kill me, Cami. It'd fucking *kill* me."

"That's a fucking lie, Jensen." Her heart beats fast against my chest as her eyes look into mine, searching for answers I still haven't given her. "If you cared about me at all..." She shoves my chest a few more times, creating some space between us. "You wouldn't have kicked me out of your life when I found those pills in your bathroom. You *hurt* me. Broke my fucking heart, Jensen." Her voice shakes, her emotions taking over, and it kills me that she's fighting not to cry. "You had the power to prevent that, but you chose not to. All you had to do was tell me the truth, because no one else in this damn town will. And let me remind you that it's the *same* truth everyone else *already* knows, but you can't even respect me enough to do that, and I'm not sure you ever will. Without that I can't be around you. I need honesty. No matter how much it hurts to be away. I'm going to go. Stay *out* of my life. You're the one that wanted it this way."

An ache hits me straight in the chest, because the last thing I ever wanted to do was hurt Cami. I can't let her go again. I can't let her leave here thinking she's nothing, because that's furthest from the truth. "Fuck, Cami. Get back here." Being careful not to hurt her, I press her against the wall again, but hold her hands above her head this time, showing her she's not fucking leaving me. "It's because of me Katherine was on those fucking pills to begin with. Do you get that? That's what makes me a monster. *That's* what makes me an undeserving asshole. You're too good for me and I know it. But that hasn't stopped me from wanting you every second of every fucking day. That's why you need to know what happened. That's why I'm telling you. I know it's a little late. I just hope it's not *too* late."

Cami stops struggling to get free from my grip and looks me in the eyes. Her chest is heaving against mine as she stays quiet, waiting for me to keep talking. She's willing to let me explain. I don't deserve it but I take the opportunity anyway.

"We were young, and fuck, did I love her, Cami. I couldn't spend a minute without her, but when we were together, we were toxic. We both knew it, but I was the only one to admit it. As much as I loved her, I knew we wouldn't work. We both were hurting, and I refused to hurt her anymore, so I broke things off, thinking that'd be best. I thought she'd be better off, but I was wrong."

I swallow back the pain taking over and move my hands down to cup her face. I try to stop them from shaking, but I can't. Thinking about what I did to Katherine always turns me into an emotional wreck. But as much as it pains me to speak the truth out loud and relive that night, I'm choosing to be the man I need to be for Cami right now.

"Katherine fell into a deep depression after I broke things off. Said she'd never love anyone the way she loved me and she couldn't live without me no matter how hard we fought. When I refused to give in, she turned to heavy partying and random hookups, looking for something she was missing. Something she was fucking missing because of me, Cami. She needed medicine to make it through the day, because of *me*. *That* still screws with my head."

Cami swallows and places her hands on my mine, her eyes telling me to continue. I do, even though the worst part has yet to come.

"One night she hooked up with my best friend Ben, hoping it would make me jealous. They dated for a while after that. Until she found out she

was pregnant and the baby wasn't his but some random guy she hooked up with while drunk. Ben broke things off and wanted nothing to do with her. She cried and begged me to take her back since she no longer had someone to pretend with. She told me she couldn't take care of Benny on her own and I knew that was true. I got back with her for Benny's sake, but no matter how hard I tried to take care of Katherine, she kept getting worse. She was crying all the time, saying things like she knew I didn't really love her, and that I was only with her for Benny's sake. It was true. She *felt* that, Cami. I didn't want to be with Katherine anymore and I was horrible at hiding it."

I squeeze my eyes shut and punch the wall, my emotions taking over. It's been years since I've talked about what happened that night. I was hoping to never have to talk about it again. I never planned to have to explain it anyone.

When I go the punch the wall for a second time, Cami grabs my face. "Look at me, Jensen. *Look* at me."

Exhaling slowly, I open my eyes and look into Cami's, the look in them comforting and soothing, giving me the courage to go on. "I was working late one night. I knew Katherine had been upset that day. She sent me multiple texts about how much she needed me and couldn't live without me. I kept reassuring her throughout the day that I wasn't going anywhere. That I would be there for her and Benny, but it wasn't enough anymore. She knew my heart wasn't in it."

I swallow back the lump in my throat and run my thumbs over her cheeks when I notice the wetness. "I came home and found her on the bathroom floor. She'd taken almost the entire bottle of pills I just picked up from the pharmacy for her that day. Benny was sleeping. I had no idea how long she'd been lying there, but I dropped down on my knees and tried to save her anyway."

Tears wet my cheeks now, but I focus on clearing hers away, wanting and needing to take care of her first. "Even after the ambulance showed up and they pronounced she was dead, I yelled and demanded they save her. That they keep trying, because she needed to be here for her son. That's when Benny woke up and saw two of them holding me back while the others carried his mom away. He kept yelling her name as they took her away and I was powerless. The only thing I could do was hold Benny and

cry. I failed him. I failed them both, Cami. That's something I can't forgive myself for. I've tried. I've tried so fucking hard."

Her tears come out harder and she does nothing to hide them from me. She looks me straight in the eyes and pulls me down until my forehead is against hers. "You're not a monster, Jensen. You need to stop beating yourself up when you did *everything* you could to be there for her. Do you know how many other men would've sacrificed their happiness to take care of her? Do you?"

I lean my head back and look toward the ceiling, but she pulls my neck until I'm looking at her again. "Not many. That's a rare thing. If anything, it makes you selfless. It makes you a good person, Jensen. If others can't see that then they're the problem. Not you. Where was her brother through all that? Where were her parents? Her friends? It sounds to me like you were the only one there for her when she needed someone."

I nod my head, confirming, and press my hands against the wall. "Not there."

She runs her fingers over my damp cheeks and leans in to speak against my lips. "But you *were*, Jensen. How could you expect me to *hate* you for what happened?"

"Because I hate myself for it," I answer simply. "I should've left work early that night. I should've been there for her and I wasn't. Because of that Benny was left without a mother. If only I had gotten home sooner, she'd still be alive to see her son grow up."

She wraps her arms around my neck and hugs me hard, pulling me against her as if she can't get close enough. "It's because of *you* Benny had a mother for as long as he did," she whispers. "And it's because of *you* he knows what having a father is like. I truly believe that. I wish you would too. You're *not* to blame. *Nothing* will change my mind to make me think otherwise either."

It's the first time anyone has ever those words. I needed to hear them more than she'll ever know or understand. I've gone all this time blaming myself and living up to the asshole everyone made me out to be after that night.

"Fuck, Cami." I kiss her hard on the lips, before picking her up and carrying her to my bed. She's not going anywhere. Here with me is where she belongs, and I'll never make the mistake of letting her think otherwise again.

“I meant every word I said, Jensen.” She curls up in my arms when I crawl into the bed beside her. “I need you to believe that.”

“I do,” I whisper into her neck. “Now let me hold you, Cami. I need to hold you.”

I hold her in my arms until we both fall asleep. And for the first time in forever, I feel like I am enough for her. I want to show her that I am, and I’m making a promise to do that from here on out.

Cami

I WAKE UP IN THE middle of the night, wrapped in Jensen’s arms. He’s holding me tight, as if he’s afraid of letting go in fear I’ll run away in the middle of the night.

It hurts my heart for him to even think that. I’m not going anywhere, anytime soon. I may still be pissed at him for what he did today to get me here in the first place, but he apparently knew pissing me off would get me right where he wanted me, and it worked.

“You okay, baby?” Jensen’s voice is deep and scratchy as he sits up and pulls me into his lap. “What are you doing awake?”

“Just thinking about you,” I admit. I turn in his arms until I’m straddling him. “Why did you want me to come to you? Why didn’t you just come to me?”

He flexes his jaw and cups my face. “Because I was an asshole for kicking you out of my house. You *belong* here with me, and I wanted you to be here when you learned the truth. It’s the only way it would’ve felt right. You’re *mine*, Cami. I’m *yours*, and will never fucking kick you out of my house again. That’s a promise. I’ll let you kick me out of my own fucking house before I make you leave again.”

Hearing him say he's mine makes my heart skip a beat. It's the best thing I've heard in a long time. "I like the way that sounds."

"Which part?" he questions against my lips.

"All of it. But especially the part where I'm yours and you're mine. That part sounds the best. I've missed you, Jensen."

"I've missed you too." He sucks my bottom lip into his mouth, before kissing it. "I'm *yours*, Cami. All fucking yours for as long as you'll have me. And you're sure as fuck mine. Now let's get some sleep."

Kissing me once more, he lowers me down to the mattress beside him, before cuddling up behind me and pulling me in as close as we can get.

I've missed this at night, and after feeling it again, I don't think I can go without it. He was right. I'm sure as fuck his, and that won't be changing anytime soon.

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Cami

I STEP INTO THE KITCHEN to find Jensen sitting at the table in front of a box of donuts. He smiles tiredly and pulls me into his lap the moment I get close enough for him to reach.

“Morning.” His voice is deep and sexy in the morning. So damn sexy. “I didn’t want to wake you. Got us donuts.”

“Morning,” I say, wrapping my arms around his neck as he turns me around, so that I’m straddling his lap. “Did you get much sleep?”

He shakes his head and kisses my forehead. “Nah. I was a complete asshole to get you here and it kept me up off and on last night.” He runs his thumbs over my cheeks and looks me in the eyes. “I’m sorry, Cami. I’m sorry for being an asshole, and I’m sorry for pushing you away because I was too scared of losing you. I promise if you let me, I’ll make it up to you.”

I smile and reach for a donut, placing it in his mouth when he opens it wide. “These donuts are a nice start,” I say, before pulling it from his mouth and taking a bite. “Glazed donuts are my favorite. Don’t forget that. It’s valuable information.”

“I know, and I can’t,” he says. “I remember everything you say, Cami. It’s been that way since the first day I saw you. Even when I *didn’t* want to listen to you, I did.”

“That’s sort of sweet in a way,” I joke.

He leans in and sucks the glaze from my bottom lip with a moan. “So is your fucking mouth.” I laugh when I go to take another bite of the donut, but he snatches it with his mouth and spits it across the room. “Did you like your guest room? I know you’re pissed at me for it, but hopefully you liked it, because it’s not going back.”

“Jensen,” I say firmly.

“Did you like it?” he asks again. “Answer the question, Cami.”

“I don’t know,” I admit. “I didn’t look when it was all put together. I jumped in my car and drove here on a mission. I was seriously pissed.”

Jensen stands up, picking me up with him. “Grab another donut. We’re going to your place.”

I reach for a donut, but he keeps pulling me back before I can grab one, so I slap his arm and yell at him until he finally gets close enough. Right as I grab the donut, he rushes us through the house, not even bothering to change first.

Once we hop into his truck he leans in, takes a bite of my donut, and then takes off as if he’s in a hurry to get to my place.

He’s lucky he’s being so cute right now or I’d yell at him the whole ride there about how he should’ve never bought the furniture to begin with. How the hell am I supposed to do that when he’s acting this way? I can’t and he knows it.

When we get to my house, he rushes me to the door and unlocks it with his own key. “You keep my house key on your keyring?” I ask, surprised. I’m not sure why it surprises me. He’s Jensen Blake, after all. “Do you keep a key for all of your rentals on you?”

“Fuck no,” he says, pushing the door open. “This is the only one I plan on spending my time at. Now get your sexy ass in the house. Now.”

“Yes, Master,” I tease, feeling playful.

“Mmm... I like the sound of that.” He follows me through the house, keeping his hand on my waist the entire time to the guest room.

My eyes widen when I look inside the room to see that everything he ordered is white just like I said I wanted. I knew the futon was white, but I figured that was just a coincidence. I didn’t think he was listening that day we painted together. Apparently, he was telling the truth when he said he listens to *everything* I say.

“I’m still mad,” I say, turning to face him. “But I love it at the same time. I’m not going to lie. It’s exactly how I pictured it, Jensen.”

“Good.”

He pulls me into his arms, but right as he goes to kiss me Veronica pokes her head into the room, scaring the crap out of me. “Holy shit, Veronica. You scared me. Don’t do that ever again.”

My best friend looks us over with a smile. “I was wondering why you never came home last night. I was praying with everything in me that you were with Jensen and not Douglas. You have no idea how cute you two look together. I mean, it’s sort of weird, but I *get* it.”

I expect Jensen to be his usual grumpy self when it comes to everyone else, so I’m surprised when he smiles and says, “Damn straight we look cute together.” Veronica and I both laugh. “Oh, and for the record, you will *never* find her at Douglas’ house,” he adds.

“Good.” Veronica smiles, and begins backing her way out of the room. “You two have fun. I should get back to the stove before Peter’s breakfast burns. Again.”

“Good idea, Veronica.” I say as Jensen backs me against the wall. “Tell Peter—”

I’m cut off by Jensen’s mouth capturing mine.

“Okay, good talk. I’ll tell him just that,” Veronica says, before disappearing.

“I’ve gone too long without you. Don’t think for one second I’ll be sharing you for a while.”

“Well, good thing for you I’m off for the weekend. You have me to yourself for two days. Better make it worthwhile.”

“Oh, I will. But I don’t need to tell you this.”

JENSEN

I REFUSED TO LET CAMI leave my sight for one fucking second yesterday. I went three weeks without her. Three fucking weeks, so you can believe I made the best of our first night together.

But today is our last day before we both have to go back to work, and as much as I don’t want to share her with anyone else, she deserves a nice

night out for me to wine and dine her.

I'm usually not the suit-wearing, flower-buying type of guy, but for Cami, I'll be anything and everything she fucking deserves. Okay, so I'm not wearing a suit and I didn't buy any flowers, though I would've if she wanted me to, but she didn't.

There's this new restaurant that opened up tonight, and as soon as Cami mentioned it me to last night I called and pulled a few strings to get us a table. The excitement in her eyes when I told her where we were going made my entire fucking week. Hell, it made my entire year.

"Ready, babe?" I ask for the third time in ten minutes.

"I think so," she yells to me from the bathroom. "My stupid hair is not cooperating tonight."

"Then leave it down." I step into the bathroom and my hands instantly go to her hips. "You look incredibly sexy in that dress. Fuck the hair. I like the freshly fucked look on you better anyway."

She laughs and slaps my chest. "Is there ever a time that you don't think dirty?"

"Do you want there to be a time?"

"I'm going to go with no." She gives up and lets her hair hang down when I yank her to me. "I love your mouth, Jensen. It grew on me."

"Something else is about to if we don't leave now. Like right now." I pull her in for a kiss, before guiding her outside to my truck. If we stay here for one more second, we'll lose our reservation and end up in her bed.

When we pull up at the restaurant, it takes close to five minutes to find a place to park, as expected. There's a line outside of people waiting for a table, and I can't stop the cocky grin that takes over when one of those people we walk past to get inside is Douglas.

He takes one look at my arm around Cami and loses his shit on the inside. I know that look, because I'd do the same if it were *him* with Cami.

She doesn't even notice him. She's too busy looking at me with a smile that could light up this whole fucking place. If that doesn't how him that she's happy without him then I don't know what will.

Cami is *my* girl, and no one will be getting a chance with her again. The look of disappointment on Ole Dougie's face says that and more. He's not happy that he lost her, but he's even more fucked over the fact that she's mine.

We're halfway through dinner when Cami leans against the table to grab my face. "*Thank* you. Oh my God. You have no idea how much I love this food. Can we eat here every night?" she teases.

"If you want to." I'm serious, and from the look on her face she knows it too. "Anything you want, Cami. I'm serious."

"I don't even know what to do with you."

"That's not a problem, because I know what to do with you, Cami."

"Oh yeah?" She smiles and sits back in her chair. "What is that?"

"Keep you," I say gently.

She looks me in the eyes, taking a swig of her wine. "I'd like that. A lot."

"I'm counting on that." I look away for a second to get the attention of our waiter when I see Douglas and Susan are finally at the front of the line. He's looking directly at Cami, and Susan is looking directly at him, looking at her. I have to hold back my laughter at how pathetic the fucker is.

"Oh God." She sets her wine glass down and leans in to speak quietly. "How long has Douglas been staring at us? The look on his face is creeping me out."

Without a word, I stand up and walk to Douglas, giving his shoulder a tight squeeze. I put on a smile so that everyone around us suspects I'm saying something nice. "You're going to stop staring at *my* girl, Douglas. She wants nothing to do with you, and if you attempt to show up at her classroom again or catch her in the parking lot of the school, I won't only kick your fucking ass, but I'll also make sure you get transferred to a different school district." His eyes widen at the last part. "Do I fucking make myself clear?"

He swallows and nods.

"Good, Dougie. Have a great *fucking* dinner. That's if your girl doesn't leave before you make it to a table. Keep your eyes *off* Cami. Don't make me come over here again." I slap his shoulder a little too hard before walking away to join Cami at the table again.

"He's not looking this way anymore. What did you say?" she asks, sounding relieved.

"What I had to." I pull her chair to me and kiss her, taking my time to enjoy the feel of her lips on mine. I went too long without this feeling and I'll never let that happen again. "How about some dessert?"

“I think I just had it, Jensen.” She smiles against my lips, before backing away and running her tongue over her lips. “But I have room for more.” The way her eyes light up when I hand her the dessert menu makes me want to buy her to the whole damn restaurant.

After Cami finishes her second dessert—the glazed cake I made her order because I knew she’d love it—I pay the bill and exit the restaurant.

Everything about tonight has gone perfectly. Then Lucas and his girlfriend get out of his Mazda and head our way. He’s looking at Cami, so I pull her close to me. “Stay behind me,” I whisper.

I have some shit to say to Lucas. Shit I wouldn’t say if it weren’t for Cami opening my eyes the other night. I’ve let that piece of shit walk all over me since the night his sister died. I’ve let him put the blame on me and make me believe it myself, all because he was grieving for his sister.

That’s changing tonight.

“*Blake*,” he seethes, eyeing me over with his usual hate. “You might want to keep walking.”

“I don’t fucking think so, Lucas.” I crack my neck and get in his face, backing him up with a bump from my chest. “You blaming me for what happened to Katherine ends right now. We both know I did everything to help your sister. Every *fucking* thing, and it still wasn’t enough. If I hadn’t been there for those seven years looking after her and helping her with Benny, taking her to meetings and getting her the care she needed, we both know what would’ve happened. So *fuck you* for getting in my head and making me believe her death was on me.”

“You’re pushing it, Jensen.” He pushes my chest to create some space between us, but I immediately move back in, closing it. “You have huge fucking balls to say this shit to me and not think I’ll lay you out.”

I let out a humorless laugh and look him directly in the eyes. “Give it your best shot, Lucas. You got in my head and I took your shit, because I thought I deserved it. I thought I deserved the emptiness I felt, but not anymore. I’m not the one to blame. Where were you all those years? Huh? We all did the best we could. It just took me a long damn time to see it. Like me or hate me, but I’m *done* hating myself. So stay the fuck out of my way.”

Lucas doesn’t say shit as I grab Cami’s hand and walk away. He doesn’t know what to say, because deep down he knows I wasn’t to blame. He just wanted someone else to blame other than Katherine.

When we get to my truck, I grab the steering wheel and squeeze, trying to keep my shit together. Bumping into him has me on edge, but it felt good saying what I had to say. We were best friends once. Then enemies. Who knows after tonight. But at least he knows I'm not the one to blame, and maybe one day he'll admit it.

Cami gently touches my arm, before placing a kiss on it. "You did good, Jensen. Really good. Look at me." She grabs my face and I look at her. "You're a good person and a great fucking man. I'm lucky to have you as mine. I want you to know that."

Her words squeeze my cold heart, warming it more than she already has since coming into my life almost two months ago. I run my hands through her hair, before leaning in to kiss her on the lips. "My place or yours?"

"As long as I'm with you, it doesn't matter."

"I was hoping you'd say that."

Cami has no idea what she's done to me. She has no idea just how much I fucking love her.

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Cami

AS MUCH AS I LOVED Jensen taking me out tonight, after such a long day it feels good to be alone with him. I like having him to myself. I don't care what we do or how we spend the rest of the night as long as we're together.

I feel closer to him than I have since we met, and I'm close to slipping up and telling him how I truly feel. I'm not sure how much longer I can go without letting him know I've fallen in love with him. I've fallen in love with Jensen Blake, the asshole landlord, and I wouldn't change the way I feel for anything.

I'm in the middle of unzipping my dress and slipping out of it when Jensen appears in the doorway and leans against it, his strong arms crossed.

He looks incredibly sexy, and the way he's looking at me like he wants to claim me as his has me slowly undressing for his pleasure. When he looks at me, I feel sexy and wanted, and that's something I never truly felt when I dated Douglas. Jensen is everything Douglas never was and everything I never knew I wanted.

"Shit, Cami." He steps into the room and unbuttons the top of his black button-down shirt. I can't pull my eyes away from his firm chest as he slowly continues his way down to the last button. "You have no idea how good I'm about to make you feel."

"Show me," I whisper. "I want *all* of you, Jensen." With my eyes on him, I continue to undress myself, but before I make it to my panties, he picks me up and lays me on the bed. He slowly spreads my thighs and runs his hands between them, checking to see how wet I am for him. It's something he loves to do, and just like always, I'm soaked.

“Fuck me, Cami. You *have* it. You have for a long time now.” He grabs my panties and slides them down my legs, kissing my body all the way down to my feet. “I love everything about you.” He works his way back up my body, stopping on my breasts. “You have no idea what you’ve done to me. You got my heart beating again.”

I cup his face as he moves up my body to lay between my legs. The moment his eyes meet mine I’m a complete mess of emotions. His icy blues do things to me. They have since the beginning. “I can say the same about you,” I whisper.

“You made me fall in love with you, Cami.” My heart stops and I forget how to breathe for a second. “I mean that. I hope you’ll let me show you.” He cups my face and locks eyes with me. “I want you to *feel* how much, Cami.”

“Show me.” I close my eyes and dig my fingers into his shoulders when he slides into me and stops, wanting to make sure he’s not hurting me. It’s like he wants to be gentle this time. He’s never been gentle before, and it has me turning to complete mush.

“I love you too, Jensen,” I whisper against his lips. “We belong together. I believe that with my whole heart.”

Unlike any time in the past, he makes love to me this time. Sweaty, hot and panting love. Nothing about this moment feels dirty. Everything about it feels just right. From the way he slowly enters me over and over again to the way his mouth never leaves mine for longer than a few seconds.

He enters me deep each time. His mouth hot and demanding on mine, showing me just how *his* I am. Each time he stretches me, I dig into his flesh and moan into his mouth, him catching my moans and growling out his own pleasure.

We’ve spent the entire night with our bodies tangled together as he takes me over and over again, like he can’t make love to me enough. And I feel the same way. He possessively fills me with his cum each time, and each time I want more and more of this man.

I would spend the rest of my life in this moment with him if I could, and the way he’s taking me and owning me so deeply, I know he feels the same way.

Jensen Blake now owns me completely, and I wouldn’t change it for anything.

EPILOGUE

JENSEN

2 YEARS LATER

IT'S EARLY IN THE MORNING—too early to be awake—so when I wake up to find the spot beside me empty, I head down the hall knowing exactly where to find Cami. It's where I've been finding her for the last few months whenever she wakes up before me.

My heart fucking squeezes when I get to the doorway to see her folding the pile of clothes she's gone through a million times now but can't get enough of. She's so fucking beautiful doing it too. It's moments like these I love and live for. It's *her* that I love and live for. Every fucking moment with her softens my heart and heals me day by day.

Her long blonde hair is piled high on top of her head with little strands falling over her glowing face as she goes to reach for another item of clothing. She stops and smiles when she notices me leaning against the doorframe, watching her like I always do when I find her here. "What are you doing awake, gorgeous? It's early."

I uncross my arms and step into the room, grabbing her by the hips to pull her against me. The warmth of her body instantly melts my heart. I swear I can't get enough of this woman. Each day we're together, I love her more and more. My love for her is so strong that it fucking hurts my chest sometimes. "Looking for my fucking *wife*. Again."

Her smile widens as she reaches up to wrap her arms around my neck and pull me in close. From the way she's looking at me, it's clear her love for me runs as deeply as mine does for her. Good. Because she's stuck with me now, and I make sure to remind her of that as often as possible. "Miss

me already, *Husband*? I'm not going anywhere that's *not* in the same home as you. *Ever*. That's a promise. You're stuck with me," she teases, before I can say the very same line.

Wrapping my hands into the back of her hair, I lean in to brush my lips over hers. She really has no idea just how much I love her. No words will ever be enough to describe it. But I sure as hell plan to spend the rest of my life showing her. "I always fucking miss you and you know it."

I grab the pink onesie out of her hand that's still hanging over my shoulder, and drape it over the crib railing. "I miss *her* too." I place my hand on her swollen belly. She's eight months along. The day I found out she was carrying my child was the best day of my life, outside of her agreeing to marry my demanding asshole self. "You know I don't like waking up without my girls close to me. I can't handle that shit, Cami. I need you close to me so I can protect my girls."

"From what?" She laughs, while playing with the bottom of my hair, her green eyes studying mine. "From this big, beautiful house that you helped build for our family? There's no safer place in the world for us than here with you, my husband. The best one I could ever ask for. I love you so damn much it hurts, Jensen." Her eyes close when I brush my lips over hers. "I truly do, and I don't know what I'd do without you. You do so much for us," she whispers. "You're going to be a great father, Jensen. The best in the world, and I can't wait for us to meet our baby girl."

I tilt her chin up and suck her bottom lip into my mouth, gently nibbling it before releasing it. "Fuck, I love it when you say that, baby. Say it again," I push, needing to hear it from her, because her thoughts and opinion mean more to me than anyone else's.

"You're going to be a great father," she repeats. "But you've been so great with Benny I already knew that. There's never been a doubt in my mind. You're going to put all other fathers to shame with the way you love us."

"Thank you," I whisper against her lips, my heart feeling full. It always does because of her. My wife, the woman I'm going to spend the rest of my life loving and taking care of. She's proven to me that I'm husband material after all. Always fucking have been. I just needed the right woman to come along and break down my walls. "Now come back to bed. We have a houseful of people to entertain in less than..." I look at the clock to check the time. "Six hours. Come lay down, so I can take care of my wife."

She nods. "I think I can handle that." She runs her hands over my bare chest and lets out a sexy little growl. "You really need to stop working out every day. Do you have any idea how hard it is to look at you and not want you every second of the day?"

I nod and bite my bottom lip, my eyes devouring my beautiful wife. "Trust me, I know the feeling. Too bad I'm too much to handle in bed."

She slaps my chest and laughs. "Still so damn cocky. I was crazy to think that'd ever go away."

"Did you want it to?" I ask, looking her in the eyes.

"Never," she admits. "It's who you are and I wouldn't change it for the world. I love you exactly the way you are. Your cockiness is part of the man I fell in love with. A *huge* part," she adds. "A very huge part."

"Say huge again," I tease, before nibbling her shoulder and placing kisses over it. "I love it when you describe me with words like huge."

"Seriously, Jensen!"

She laughs and goes to walk away, but I grab her hips and move in close behind her, closing the distance between our bodies. "I need you to know something," I whisper against her ear.

"What's that?" she asks, quietly.

"You're the most beautiful woman I've ever met, and you carrying my child is the most beautiful fucking thing in the world. You deserve everything I do for you and our baby. You've earned it all, baby." I place a kiss on her neck. "I owe you the fucking world, and now I want to give it you."

"You're going to make me cry," she whispers. "Are you trying to make me cry?"

I move around to look my wife in the eyes. "Never. My goal is to *never* make you cry. Not sad tears at least. Never sad tears. It'd hurt me too damn much."

She grabs my face and kisses me hard on the lips, stealing my breath away. She's the only person whose ever been able to.

The moment we crawl into bed, I make sure Cami is comfortable while I spend the next couple of hours rubbing her feet and any part of her body that will relax her. There's no better part of my day than this, and that's the damn truth.

Cami

THANKS TO JENSEN I'M COMPLETELY relaxed by the time our friends arrive for the cookout. He didn't let me lift a finger even though I fought him over and over again, wanting to do something to help.

It's probably a good thing I lost that battle, because it doesn't take much to exhaust me these days. I'm four weeks from popping out our baby girl, and he makes sure to remind me of this every time I try to do anything, even the slightest straining of a hand muscle.

"Hey Cami!" Benny says excitedly the moment he and Lucas come through the sliding kitchen door to meet us outside. "Is it cool if I swim before we eat? I brought extra shorts."

I smile and hug him back when he moves in for a hug. "Yeah. Of course, it is. Jensen spent all morning cleaning it for you."

"Sweet!" He rushes off to change, leaving me standing in front of his uncle.

"Hey," Lucas offers. "Want me to pick him up in a few hours or does Jensen want him for the night? It's up to him now. Benny said he wants to stay."

"He can stay," Jensen says, coming from out of nowhere, pulling me close to him. "As long as it's okay with you and his Grams you know Benny is always welcome here. That will never change."

Lucas nods and runs a nervous hand through his hair. Him and Jensen have talked a few times since that night he stood up to him, but I wouldn't consider them friends. I'm not sure it will ever get back to that point, but at least they're civil now. That's what's best for Benny. "Okay, cool. I'll pick him up around noon tomorrow. I'll let him know on the way out."

"Sounds good, man." Jensen nods and Lucas turns to leave. "You can stay for the cookout if you want. As long as you don't plan on being a giant dick, that is."

Lucas turns back around and exhales. I can't tell what his answer will be, but after a few seconds, he nods and walks to grab a beer from the cooler.

A small smile takes over Jensen's face before he kisses me on the lips and goes back to manning the grill. Baby steps. It's all about baby steps. It was the same way with Ben for a while, but eventually they became close like they were before things with Katherine happened.

Having Ben in his life has been good for him. Same with having Peter. It took a few months for them to really warm up to each other—mostly because Jensen isn't the easiest to get along with—but have become good friends, which is fantastic for Veronica and I.

"Hey, sweets!" Veronica squeaks, looking down at my humungous belly. "I'm excited to meet my niece soon, which you guys have still failed to give us a name for. Is today the day? *Please* tell me it is, because I'm going nuts. Plus, I have something to tell you, but you owe me first."

Excitement takes over as I bring my eyes down to her little baby bump. "You found out the sex?!"

She nods her head. "Yup!"

The guys look our way, our loud squeaky voices most likely giving away what we're talking about.

"Hey!" Jensen yells from in front of the grill. "No giving away secrets until after we eat. Got it?"

"Yours is so bossy," Veronica mumbles. "He's lucky he's cute as hell."

"Very lucky," I add.

Waiting until everyone is done eating is torture, because I've been dying for weeks to tell everyone the name we chose. It took forever for us to come up with a name, but when we did, we both knew right away that it was *the* one.

"Spill it," Peter yells, holding his beer up. "Veronica has been driving me crazy trying to guess. I need it to stop."

Jensen laughs at Peter's misery, which is something that happens often. Apparently, men get a kick out of their friend's torture.

"Go ahead, baby. You deserve this moment." My heart speeds up as Jensen pulls me into his arms and kisses me, before taking a moment to look me in the eyes. This man truly has no idea how much I love him. He's the best husband in the world, and he's proven that to me over and over again since the day we got married. "Tell them."

Jensen keeps his arms around me as I focus my attention on our friends. I'm so excited I can barely stay still. After it being so hard to choose the perfect name, this moment feels incredible. "Okay. Here it goes... Our baby girl's name is..."

"Tell us already!" Veronica yells. "I can't take the torture!"

I laugh and roll my eyes at her. "Her name is Brooke Claire Blake."

"Oh my God!" Veronica says, teary eyed. "She has my middle name. I think I'm going to cry."

"Hell yeah. That's a good name, brother." Ben slaps Jensen on the back, before tilting his beer back and going back to his and Lucas' conversation.

"I like it," Benny adds from his spot at the picnic table, where he's stuffing his face with dessert. "It starts with a B like mine, which makes it even cooler."

Once everyone is over talking about Brooke's name, everyone returns to swimming and playing games, but I'm going crazy, needing to know what my best friend is having.

"Okay," I say excitedly. "It's your turn, babe. Please tell me it's a boy! You need to have a boy, so he can protect little Brooke from boys at school."

Veronica laughs. "Oh, I'm sure Jensen will be there doing that, no matter what age Brooke is. He's going to be one protective dad. I feel sorry for the boys that want to date Brooke when she grows up. Especially since..." She smiles really big. "We're having a *boy*, so they're definitely going to grow up and get married. Just sayin'."

"I knew it!" I throw my arm around her neck and pull her in sideways for a hug. It's the only way we *can* hug at the moment. "I told Jensen it was going to be a boy. I just had a feeling. I'll be back!"

I turn around excitedly and get ready to yell Jensen's name, but he's standing right behind me, watching me with the most loving smile. "Shit, I love seeing you smile," he says, pulling me to him. "And I heard. Peter just told me. But I'll let you tell me again if it keeps you smiling like this."

"It's a boy," I say, keeping my smile. "And it's *you* that keeps me smiling like this. Always."

"Mmm..." He growls against my lips, before kissing me. "I love to hear that."

"I love you, Jensen," I say wholeheartedly, my eyes locked on his beautiful blue ones. They're the most beautiful eyes in the world and I hope

like hell that our daughter gets them. “You’ve made me the happiest woman in the world. Saying yes to you when you got down on one knee was the best decision of my life. I hope you know that.”

It’s true. I love Jensen with every breath in my body. I never knew it was possible to love someone the way I love my husband and unborn child. They complete me. They make every day I’m breathing worthwhile.

“I do, but you better fucking believe I love hearing you say it.” He smiles against my lips. “Should we end the cookout early, so I can take you back to our bed? I *want* my wife so fucking bad right now.”

“Get a room!” Veronica yells.

“Yeah!” Benny adds, before cannonballing into the pool, splashing his uncle, who finally breaks a smile.

This is our life. This house. Our friends. Us. Our unborn baby girl. And I wouldn’t change any of it ever. My heart is full. It’s so full of love, laughter, and happiness, all because I *had* to have that rental property. Bursting through that door and demanding for Jensen to let me rent his property was a little crazy at the time—thanks to the wine—but it ended up being the beginning of the rest of my life.

THE END

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Victoria Ashley grew up in Rockford, IL and has had a passion for reading for as long as she can remember. After finding a reading app where it allowed readers to upload their own stories, she gave it a shot and writing became her passion.

She lives for a good romance book with tattooed bad boys that are just highly misunderstood. When she's not reading or writing about bad boys, you can find her watching her favorite shows.

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