

# STÜLEN

WHAT DOESN'T  
KILL YOU  
MAKES YOU...

STRONGER SERIES

J. MARIE

# **STOLEN**

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BOOK ONE THE STRONGER SERIES

J. MARIE

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Warning: This story is for mature adults only. It contains violence, mature and explicit content and non-consensual / dubious, graphic sexual activity that some readers may find upsetting.

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*This is for you. For the ones who have suffered. For the ones who have despaired. For the ones who continue to fight every day to simply stay alive. And for the ones who are already lost. It is my greatest hope that you find your way back to us, for I am not done fighting for you...but only you can make yourself stronger.*

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This is just a special thanks from me to you, and not just for reading this story. By doing so, not only have you helped spread awareness, but you helped donate to a charity that supports victims of human trafficking. This horrific industry is very real and is happening every day, all around the world. With a little help, we can chip away at it until it's nothing but a dusty, dirty stain in our history.

## **MORE THANKS**

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Also a super special thanks to these lovely ladies!

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# 1

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WAKE UP

I woke to the sounds of women screaming. The shrill sounds pierced my ears and further aggravated the pain that instantly pounded in my head. It jerked me awake and pulled me from the dark abyss that had consumed me for God knew how long. My body ached; I felt groggy, unfocused, and I knew something was terribly wrong. Fear constricted my movements as though it was a tidal wave threatening to drown me, but I had to surface. I had to converge on something far more important - I was not where I was supposed to be. I was well aware of the unfamiliarity surrounding me and knew better than to draw any attention to myself. But the panic building up inside me was seriously conflicting with my rationality.

*Calm down, breathe...*

*Assess the situation first then react.*

I kept my body still; lying on my side with my arms and legs curled in, I sheltered myself from the unknown danger that I was sure surrounded me. Instead of moving, however, I listened, listened to the terror of uncertainty, to the sounds of scuffling...of crying. I listened to my surroundings for voices, anything I might recognize, male or female. I listened to every waking sound, concentrating on the echoes to ascertain how big of a room I was in, but most importantly, I was assessing any kind of a threat. Even though I had a feeling it had already consumed me.

But while I listened, I felt. I felt the cool, dry air on my skin and the rough patch of cloth beneath me that separated me from the solid ground I

was laying on. But as the hair on my body stood up, I realized something that confirmed my worst fears. I was fucking naked.

Slowly, I opened my eyes just a crack through the bright red locks of hair that sheltered my face. My vision blurred, but it didn't take long for me to realize I was in some kind of cage. It was a small cage, much like a reinforced dog kennel with flat padded bedding beneath me that smelled of sweat and blood. I sniffed the air quietly and immediately regretted it. Body odor and stale air filled my nostrils, and I tried hard not to give myself away with my obvious disgust. Opening my eyes further, I looked ahead of me without lifting my head, noticing more of the same cages lined up next to each other. Each one contained a woman inside; the source of the screaming I heard.

"About time you woke up," said a female voice next to me. I looked up at her as she stared down at me, a broken smile across her face.

*Well, the gig is up.*

Pushing myself up on stiff and sore limbs, I sat up and rested my back against the bars of the cage nearest to the wall. I looked over at the girl who addressed me. My hands reached for the pounding at my temples and rubbed in soft circles, attempting to alleviate some of the pressure.

"Where am I?" I asked, my voice dry and cracking, my irritation evident.

"Hell," she said nonchalantly.

*Fantastic.*

Taking in her appearance, I noticed the faint bruises that covered her body and long narrow face. A swollen lip with traces of blood adorned her features, and dirt and sweat covered her tan arms and legs. She sat up against the back of the cage as I was, examining me as well. She had dirty and disheveled long blond hair that reached well past her shoulders. Beautiful green eyes peeked out through long, thick lashes. But while I was

naked, a short tight black strapless sundress covered her body; I was instantly envious. Why the fuck was I naked, then?

“What is this place?”

“Ever hear of human trafficking?” she asked me.

“Fuck.”

My heart rate spiked into overdrive as I knew exactly what human trafficking was. I had done several projects about the billion-dollar industry while completing my undergraduate study at Wayne State University. I never thought I would end up as a statistic of the subject I had studied.

“How long have you been here?” I asked her.

“About a week, I think. Maybe longer,” she answered. “What’s your name?”

“Jaden,” I said, rubbing my face. “You?”

“Kayla.”

“Nice to meet you, Kayla,” I replied dryly.

“Same.”

I looked around some more, noticing that we were located in some kind of large hallway with glass block windows covered by silver bars, letting in enough sunlight to illuminate my confines. Cages lined either side of me; one after another filled with women as far as I could see. The girl on the other side of me was sleeping; she’d curled up in a tight ball and had dark bruises covering her bare back as well. To my left on the floor of the cage was what looked like a simple hole in the ground, but it turned out to be an opening to a long pipe about the width of a small bowling ball. I turned my head to the side, examining the pipe until I noticed the little roll of toilet paper sitting next to it.

*You have got to be fucking kidding me.*

Shaking the idea of ever having to use their makeshift bathroom, I turned my attention back to my current situation.

“So, where are you from? How did you get here?” I asked her, trying to keep my heart rate at a normal level as I leaned my aching body forward to examine the bars confining me. I needed some conversation to calm down, not to mention some information so I could assess the severity of my new fucked-up situation. It was never good to panic. I knew better than that.

“I’m from Grand Rapids, Michigan. It’s still a little fuzzy on how I ended up here, but the last thing I remember is being downtown with my friends. I went outside for a cigarette then there was some kind of struggle...and then blackness. When I finally came to, I was here. What do you remember?”

“There must be a trafficking trade in Michigan,” I added, as I wrapped my fingers around the thick bars and rattled them. They barely budged. “I’m from Royal Oak.”

She nodded in acknowledgment.

I reached around and grabbed the padlock that locked the door of my cage, jiggling it like an idiot as if I could somehow Hulk the damn thing apart.

“I don’t remember much,” I said, still examining the cage for any loose bars or screws, “but the last thing I do recall is leaving school sometime around 10 p.m. in Detroit. I was walking to my car in the parking garage...” I thought real hard about what had happened next, but nothing really wanted to appear. It was as if my brain was purposely trying to block out the memory in order to avoid hurting my pride.

Being involved in mixed martial arts since I was six, I swore to myself that no one would take advantage of me. What a fail that was. I trained so hard all those years in Taekwondo, Krav Maga, and Judo, making sure I was as lethal as my instructors would allow, and yet it all seemed like a joke now.

My years of training weren’t the only thing that should have prevented this. I was smart; I always scanned for potential threats everywhere I went,

constantly preparing for an attack until it just became second nature. I avoided situations I knew could end badly, and I always kept to myself. I even went as far as to train with guns and obtain my concealed weapons permit with great encouragement from my boyfriend...Oh, God...

I stifled a gasp, remembering the people I forgot as I finally let go of the bars.

“How long have I been here?” I asked quickly.

“Hard to tell time around here.” She shrugged. “But it was dark when they brought you in with a bunch of others.”

“Shit, my family must know I’m missing by now. God...Jason...”

“Boyfriend?” Kayla asked sadly.

“Yeah.”

“I’m sorry,” she said. “How long have you guys been together?”

“Four years,” I said, wiping away a tear.

“I was with mine for two,” she said.

“I’m sorry,” I replied.

“Doesn’t matter now. Soon, we’ll be sold, and that’ll be it for us.” She sighed.

*Ouch.*

Fuck. That was a harsh reality to accept, but one that she’d obviously already had. I wondered if she had any hope left at all.

“So, what have you learned about this place?” I asked, giving up on the cage and directing my full attention to her.

“What do you mean?” she asked me curiously.

I rolled my eyes. God, I hoped she wasn’t useless.

“Have you ever been outside of the cage? Are there guards? How many have you seen? Are they armed? What kind of security have you noticed? Faces that you’ve recognized? Shit like that.”

I wanted to know if there were any weak points. There might yet be a chance to escape, and I sure as hell wasn’t waiting around for it to fly past

me.

“Oh,” she said, thinking hard now. “There are guards, at least five that I’ve seen, and they are armed. They come in three times a day to bring us food and water. They’re all total assholes, by the way. All high and mighty. They have rules we’re supposed to follow, but I’m sure they’ll explain that during your orientation.”

“What in the hell is orientation?” I asked sharply.

“Basically an introduction to your new position of ‘slave,’” she said, using air quotes for the word ‘slave.’ “They tell you the rules, what to expect, and give you a rundown on how and when you’ll be sold. They have an auction twice a month, I guess. I was brought in on the day of one of the auctions. The guards took eight girls with them and they never came back.”

“Really...” I said angrily. So these fucks were a functioning business, stealing people from their lives and selling them like common animals. Fucking disgusting.

“Yeah. After your orientation, they’ll send you to see their doctor. He’s okay. He does some routine exam, and if you behave during it, you’re rewarded with one of these,” she said, gesturing down and plucking at the “dress” she wore. So that was where they came from.

“Fabulous,” I said, turning my attention back to the bars of my cage and deciding to try something foolish. Bringing my knee up, I slammed my heel into the door of the cage where the lock was located. Pain swarmed my foot, but I didn’t care. Over and over, I kicked the door with every ounce of power I had; I could feel it rattle under the pressure, but the lock never disengaged.

“Fuck!” I yelled in frustration as I rested my foot against my leg and rubbed my now pulsing heel.

“Won’t do any good. Most of us have already tried that.”

“Most of you probably don’t know how to kick properly,” I growled.

Kayla just shied away after that. I didn't mean to insult her, but I was pissed to be in this situation, and rightfully so.

Just then, the doors way down toward my right opened, and three men strode in. All the girls who were awake staggered back into their cages, whimpering and attempting to put as much distance between them and the guards as possible.

*Pathetic.*

No matter what situation I was in, I never showed fear. Never. I was not someone who was easily intimidated. While other girls might cower away in a corner, probably because that's all they could do, I would stare the threat down, pick it apart piece by piece, analyze its weaknesses, and formulate a strategy to strike. I never backed down, no matter what was knocking at my door. It also helped that I was more pissed than scared at the moment.

Heavy boots stomped against the linoleum tile and echoed through the hall as they stormed in, finally stopping in front of my cage. The lead guard leaned over and looked down at me.

He was a scraggly looking motherfucker. Scruffy brown beard, broad bony shoulders, and a long skinny face that told me that he'd probably smoked since the day he was born. More than likely he also did drugs when he was younger. But, for some reason, he did seem familiar to me.

"Hey there, hot stuff. Recognize me?"

I gave him an odd look, furrowing my brows in question as I stared him down.

"Should I?" I asked sarcastically. Obviously, he knew who I was, and I waited for him to return the courtesy.

"Guess not," he smirked. "Don't worry; I'm sure it'll come to you eventually."

Goddamn it, was this son of a bitch the reason for my being here? If that was the case, then there was going to be some serious blood between us in

the very near future.

“So... here’s how this is going to go,” he said, his deep raspy voice pissing me off even more. At least he got right to the point. I fucking hated small talk. “I’m gonna open your cage, and you’re gonna crawl out like a good little slave and put your hands against the wall. Understand?”

I nodded, my bitch face coming up full throttle. Time to test the waters.

The guard then knelt down while taking out a set of keys. He unlocked my cage, pulling open the door. He stepped aside and motioned for me to crawl out. I moved on stiff arms and legs, my body sore and tired from the length of time it’d been in its cramped position. I struggled to stand but refused to let them see and walked forward, placing my hands on the white painted concrete wall.

“Good girl,” the lead guard praised.

I could practically feel their eyes on me as they scanned my naked body. I hated my vulnerability, and I wanted nothing more than to shield myself from their burning lustful gazes, but I knew there was nothing I could do about it. Lucky for me, I was big on fitness and worked my body to be strong and dependable, so my confidence was usually pretty fucking fierce. I let it shine like the fucking sun, not giving them the satisfaction of seeing my discomfort. And then, a slow, low whistle slipped from one of the guard’s lips.

“Damn, this girl is ripped,” the whistler commented.

I had to admit, my four pack was visible from a mile away. My biceps, though small, were rock hard, my shoulders defined, and my legs lean and powerful. I worked hard to keep my body in perfect condition, and now, I would find out if all my training had paid off.

“She should fetch a pretty good price with that body and red hair,” the third guard said. “She’s got a real pretty face, too.”

“Yeah, a rarity always brings in the best dough,” the other guard commented.

*Fucking animals.*

Looking over the guards, they were all dressed similar. Black cargo pants, dark jackets, and AK-47s strapped to their backs. If I could just get a hold of one...

“Eyes forward, sweetheart,” the lead guard said.

I turned my head back to the wall and stared at my hands, now realizing I had bruises with dried blood on my knuckles. How had I not noticed that earlier? I must have put up one hell of a fight.

*Not good enough, Jaden.*

Yeah, my inner warrior was pissed.

The lead guard leaned up against the wall and sighed. “This isn’t standard procedure, but considering the damage you did to some of my men the other night, you’ll understand why we have to take certain precautions.” He smirked at that, looking down at my knuckles.

If I was such a fucking risk, why bother taking me? Wouldn’t they want girls who wouldn’t put up as much of a fight as I did? I didn’t fit the profile, but what the fuck did I know about their slave qualifications? I had tits and a vagina. Good enough.

The lead guard then turned to stand behind me, taking my hands from the wall and placing them behind my back, binding them with whatever he had pulled from his pocket. It felt like zip ties. It was so hard to let him cuff me, but right now, I wanted to get the layout of this compound. I needed to determine how many men guarded it, where their posts were, and any other little secrets I could pick up. I figured my real chance would come later. But hell, for all I knew, they could be unknowingly leading me to my freedom. Guess we’d find out.

The lead guard then took my arm in a vise grip and turned me to face him. “You try anything and I will personally chain you to the wall and beat your ass till you can no longer stand. Got it?”

I gave him the glare of death but nodded. Apparently, that wasn't good enough. Dissatisfied with my answer, he grabbed my throat and squeezed slightly.

"'Yes, sir,' would be the correct answer, bitch," he said, his face a few inches from mine.

With his ugly mug so close to me, the familiarity of his face grew and grew, but I still couldn't place it. I squinted as I studied his face, but the recollection of his identity never appeared. He then squeezed my throat a little tighter as I had yet to answer him.

I thought about kneeing him in the balls at that moment, but considering his height and the fact that they had me outnumbered with my hands bound behind my back, I decided against it. I would need more than my legs in that situation.

"Yes, sir," I finally croaked, lacing my words with a bit of malice.

"Good girl," he said again, pulling me along at his side.

I cringed a little at his word choice of approval. I wasn't a fucking dog, but who the fuck was I kidding? I'd been sleeping in a kennel for God knows how long.

He hurried me toward the steel double doors as I awkwardly walked at his side, doing my best to keep up with his stride. Normally, it wasn't difficult for me to keep up with men. My boyfriend was six-foot-three, and after so many years, I had grown accustomed to his stride and pace. Shaking my head, I buried the thought of him in the back of my mind. Thinking about him made me want to cry, and I needed to stay focused for this.

As we neared the door, I noticed a black camera dome stationed in the left-hand corner of the wall. I'd have to make my attempt quick.

Once we were past the doors, we walked down a hallway that looked similar to the one I had just come from. We took a right turn and walked through another set of steel double doors, coming to a short set of stairs. I

noticed more black dome cameras; they were mounted on the walls in just about every other corner. Pulling me along up the stairs, the other two guards remained close on my heels, never taking their eyes off me. I smirked at their need for higher security around me. If I hadn't been so pissed off, I might have taken it as a compliment.

Past the stairs, we walked by a few doors on the right-hand side and finally came to a pair of silver elevator doors. The lead guard pushed the button and the doors opened. Without even thinking about it, I hesitated slightly as he tried to pull me in. It was stupid, but I honestly didn't want to be in any tightly closed spaces with the likes of these men.

"Move," the lead guard said, easily pulling me into the elevator.

He pushed me to the back, while the other guards followed in, turning their backs to me and keeping me pushed tight against the elevator walls. Stupid, in my opinion, not to keep their eyes on me, but I was obviously no threat to them as I was restrained and outnumbered.

*Know your limits, Jaden. Be smart. Observe. Then make your move.*

Being stuck behind them put me at an enormous disadvantage. I wouldn't be able to see anything ahead of them; I was too goddamn short. That was my one limitation. My only true weakness; I was a short little fuck, and I knew it. I hated admitting it, and the very idea of someone thinking I was small made me want to punch them square in the face, proving to them that size didn't mean shit. Topping out at five-foot-three, I really didn't look like much of a threat, but that was fine. It gave me the element of surprise, which was a great advantage.

When the doors finally opened, we were up to the third level, and when we exited the elevator, carpet touched my bare feet as the guard dragged me along. We took a left and finally came to a set of wooden oak doors. The lead guard then stopped and looked down at me.

"When we go in here, you'll follow me in. Wherever I stop, you'll get down on the floor and sit back on your legs. Eyes always on the ground

unless directed otherwise, understand? This is the one place I would seriously advise that you not fuck up if you want things to go smoothly for you.”

“Got it,” I said, irritated as fuck, not even bothering to look at him.

“What was that?” he challenged me, leaning forward.

“Yes, sir,” I replied through clenched teeth.

“That’s better.” He nodded and then knocked. After hearing some form of acknowledgment, he opened the door and pulled me in.

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L ooking around, I realized that we were in some kind of office.

The carpet beneath me was burgundy red and soft against my feet. Dark wood paneling adorned the walls, and bookshelves dominated the corners from floor to ceiling. Elegant black leather chairs rested nicely in front of a large roaring fireplace and a bar, garnished with full crystal decanters, stood off against the wall. Toward the back of the room, nearly front and center, was a large dark wood desk with two leather chairs across from it. Someone was sitting behind the desk, but I couldn't see whom it was just yet.

The lead guard stopped in the middle of the room and released me. Begrudgingly, I lowered myself to the floor, sat back on my ankles, and kept my eyes on the ground. I still paid close attention and cataloged everything that I could see in my periphery. He hadn't said anything about that.

"What have you brought me today, Jared?" said a deep voice from behind the desk. It was smooth and rich, like dark chocolate, and alerted my senses. The lead guard now had a name, yet it gave no light to the memory that remained trapped in the shadows of my mind.

"New meat," Jared said, waving his hand at me.

"Is this the one who caused all that trouble the other night?" His voice was like low rolling thunder, giving warning of the storm that felt not far behind. It was strange that the sound of his voice was distracting me from the actual words he was speaking.

Clearly, I must have put up a serious fight last night, judging by the state of my hands and knuckles. Even my elbows felt a little sore as I lingered on the thought.

“Yes, sir. Thought you might like this one,” Jared said enthusiastically.

*What the fuck was that supposed to mean?*

“Well, I’d better have a look then, huh? It’s not every day that my men come back from hunting with busted ribs and broken noses from a little girl,” the voice said with slight agitation.

*Little girl? I didn’t look up, but fuck if I didn’t scowl. No one called me little if they wanted to keep their teeth.*

The man behind the desk got up from his chair and walked over to where I was kneeling. I could feel his presence moving throughout the space in the room. He felt larger than life as a thick intensity radiated from him in massive waves that permeated the room. I could have sworn I heard the guards suck in their breath and hold it as he moved. But as he did, I felt something dark following him - like a shadow of death that demanded fear in his presence, and for some reason, I was beginning to feel it.

When his feet reached my line of vision, I couldn’t help but notice the expensive leather shoes he wore, so black and shiny with zero scuffs. He also wore black slacks that screamed luxury. I could see out of the corner of my eye that his hand came down to his hip and he motioned for me to look up.

I slowly raised my eyes and then my head all the way up to look at the monster who was most likely in charge of all this bullshit. But when I did, what stared back at me was not what I expected to see.

Eyes as blue as the deep, dark ocean, menacing and domineering, washed over my body, leaving me drowning in a tsunami of toxic ice. His stare burned into me, yet left me cold and stiff, frozen in place along with every second that passed. I could feel my soul shrink up inside me in an attempt to hide from the intensity of his penetrating stare as I felt as though

he could see right through me. It made my heart race, and my stomach clenched into tiny knots that threatened to rip me apart. Not only was this man practically eating me alive, but he was also drop-dead fucking gorgeous.

He seemed young, yet aspired the look of a man, probably in his very early thirties. He had dark brown hair with natural highlights from the sun gelled back to perfection, and a hard chiseled jaw with a five o'clock shadow starting. With a straight nose and perfectly proportion lips, he could easily grace the cover of *GQ* or any other magazine for that matter. His mouth formed into a slight smirk as he looked down at me, making more knots form in my stomach. The smell of his cologne flowed through my nostrils; the clean musky scent filled my lungs and fogged my mind. But where his face was captivating, it was his body that truly impressed and honestly intimidated me.

Broad shoulders filled out his obviously custom tailored black suit, while a wide, powerful chest rested beneath a white dress shirt and blood red tie. His massive biceps bulged under the sleeves of his black jacket and large hands rested just inside his pockets. Everything about his appearance screamed dominance and power, as if he knew he was in complete control of everything and everyone around him. He was truly the epitome of male perfection. Fuck him.

As I looked up into his looming dark blue eyes, I craned my neck to do so. He continued to smirk down at me and folded his arms across his chest. Something struck me funny about him as our eyes continued their little competition. Though he was handsome and fit, my internal radar screamed danger at me, sensing an air of evil around him...and it terrified me. I could tell this man was dangerous, could feel it in my bones, but yet I refused to back down. I wouldn't give him the reaction he was probably used to getting.

“What’s your name?” he finally asked me, his deep voice thrumming through my ears, smooth and demanding. The mere sound of his voice addressing me sent a chill up my spine, but I did my best to ignore it.

“Jaden,” I replied confidently. Though I had to admit that I was horrified inside, I would never show it and I would never let it rule me. Rationality and keeping the fuck calm was the key to decoding this situation.

“Jaden what? I want a last name, sweetheart.”

I really didn’t want him to know my last name just in case they tried to go after my family, but I was sure they had my identification from my purse anyway.

“Jaden Wilder,” I finally told him, my brows furrowing from my admission. He smiled a little.

“Well, Miss Wilder, welcome to your new temporary home,” he said, holding his arms out with enthusiasm. “By now, I’m sure you’ve figured out what’s going on, so I’ll be brief. I’m the owner of this establishment and during your stay here, we have three simple rules we expect you to follow. The first rule is pretty easy, just do as you’re told. If you can do that, you’ll survive this just fine.”

Survive? Easy for him to say. He wasn’t bare ass naked and waiting to be sold to the highest bidder. Ignorant motherfucker. He’ll be lucky if he can survive me!

“The second rule is you’ll refer to all the men here as ‘sir’ and nothing else. Respect is important around here, so do not forget it. And the last rule, you will never speak unless spoken to. Understand?”

His voice was so strong, commanding, and never wavered for a second as he stared down at me, almost as if he was daring me to defy his rules. I slowly gave an irritated nod, keeping myself calm as I listened intently to every word he said.

“When I ask you a question, I expect a verbal answer. Is that also understood?” he practically growled.

“Yes, sir,” I said, suppressing my annoyed sigh.

This man might be beautiful, but that did not make him above pissing me off to no end. I would not be one of those girls who couldn’t function properly in front of an attractive man. I needed to remain calm and focused.

“Good girl. Now...if I were to tell you to crawl on your hands and knees over to Jared and suck his dick, you’d say?” he asked me intently, turning his head to the side.

*Go fuck yourself?*

“Yes...sir,” I said looking away. I really hoped that wasn’t a literal command.

“Good answer. Now, should you ever break any of these rules, the result will be immediate punishment determined by me. And believe me, Miss Wilder, you don’t want to break any of my rules. But, if you’re a good girl and obey them, you won’t have to worry about any of that and we’ll give you some clothes to wear. Sound fair?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied.

*What the fuck ever.*

“Good. Now if you want to be sold to someone who might actually take care of you, I strongly suggest behaving. The ones who act up get marked up and ultimately end up being sold to people who will continue the same abuse, so...something to think about for the future.”

I just blinked at him, imagining his throat being ripped open by an invisible force and spilling his blood all over the pretty Persian rug he stood on.

“The next auction you’ll be participating in will take place in about a week. Basically, we’ll put you in the showcase, the bids will start, and when they end, the highest bidder will collect you in the next room. It’s all up to your buyer from there. Make sense?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good,” he said walking around to stand in front of me. “Now, there is still the matter of you damaging my men. That is a big mistake around here, and I simply can’t have that.”

I glared at him then, uncertainty clouding my gaze.

*Was he seriously going to hurt me for defending myself? What in the fuck?*

“Are you fucking kid-”

“I don’t believe I gave you permission to speak, now did I?” he practically roared down at me, causing my heart to skip a beat as a twinge of fear roiled in my belly. I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t terrified from the moment I first opened my eyes, but I trained myself to turn my fear into anger and aggression, which gave me the courage to stand up to my threats.

I stayed silent then but glared at him something fierce instead.

“Stand up,” he commanded, a hard expression on his face.

Though I was sore and stiff, I stood easily, one knee rising at a time and balancing my weight to offset my restrained arms. Now that I was at my full puny height, I got a better idea of how tall and big this fucker really was. His shoulders reached well above my head, which meant he was probably six-foot-five, and judging by his sheer size, I was willing to bet he was well over two hundred pounds, probably a lot more. Fuck, I’d have a hard time cracking this one, but if it came down to it, I wouldn’t hesitate for a second.

He took my shoulders in his ridiculously large hands and led me off to the side, facing me in front of him. The moment his hands landed on my skin, I wanted to shrug him off and bolt. It sent strange vibes into my belly as heat inflamed my skin under his touch. Still, I went with it, allowing him to direct me where he wanted me. But God help him if he tried to hurt me. He then stood back and looked at me. I hated the fact that I was naked and restrained, so much so that I wanted to shrivel into a ball and hide, but I

didn't show any fear. I flexed my abs a little bit to give them more definition as I waited for his next move.

Slowly, he started circling me, like a lion studying its prey before the kill. I stood as still as I possibly could, my ears listening intently for all of his movements, my heart beginning to pound hard enough I was afraid he could hear it.

The first thing his hands went for was my hair. He gently rubbed the natural bright red strands between his thumb and fingers before placing them behind my shoulders with the rest of my tangled mane.

"Is this your natural hair color?" he asked me as he stood to my right.

"Does it matter?" I asked in annoyance.

"Wrong answer."

I then felt his hand grip the roots of my hair and jerk my head back, sending little jolts of pain through my scalp and causing my stomach to roll into more knots. My breath left my lungs as I resisted him, but his thundering voice made me want to abandon my resolve.

"What are you supposed to do when I ask you a question?" he growled into my ear. I winced as he tightened his grip on my hair but kept my breathing even.

"Verbal answer," I replied through clenched teeth.

"Then answer me properly," he snarled.

"Yes, it's my natural hair color, *sir*," I bit out.

"Good girl," he said, releasing my hair roughly.

At that moment, a thousand different attacks came to mind as I fantasized about killing him. Maybe taking his head and forcing it into my knee a hundred times until his nose caved into his brain. Or kicking him in the balls until they were nothing but broken stones on the floor, or striking him in the neck with a punch straight to his Adam's apple and cutting off his air supply while I kicked his knee caps in. So many ideas that I wanted to turn into realities, but with my hands behind my back and three guards in

the background, my chances of making those wishes come true were slim to none.

“You have some ink,” he said to my right, bringing me back to my nightmare and tracing his thumb on the side of my ribcage. I had a breeze of black feathers with overlapping watercolors flowing from my ribcage and curving up to my back. It was my tattoo for myself, for my belief in being free to be yourself and to always find color in the dark. How ironic that was now. “And here.” He bent down, noticing the large navy blue anchor on my left ankle. It was for my father, the anchor of my life before cancer finally took him from me four years ago.

The owner finally came full circle and stopped in front of me. “You have an amazing body,” he said to me. “One I can honestly respect and appreciate. I can tell you sport a lot of pride for your obvious hard work.”

I nodded. I worked hard so I could be strong; to show the world I wasn’t someone worth messing with. Apparently, that didn’t mean shit anymore.

“But you are a tiny little fuck, aren’t you?” he smirked, continuing his uncomfortable analysis of me.

My shoulders slumped a little at his acknowledgment, and my breath came out heavy in annoyance through my nose. I almost rolled my eyes at him, but I thought better of it. Hearing that from someone of his size made me feel even smaller, and I wanted to show him exactly how much size didn’t matter when it came to my abilities. He chuckled at my body’s response.

“This must be tough for someone like you to accept. You have the determination, that’s clear, but you lack the size to advocate it.”

“You don’t know shit about me,” I said quietly, looking up into his eyes. No fear.

I felt the air shift around him and it made me regret my decision to open my mouth, but it was too late now. His hand quickly reached out and grabbed my jaw, tilting my head up to look at him. Instinctively, I tried to

pull away, but he wasn't giving me an inch to move. His stare penetrated me all over again and my gut wrenched inside as panic raced through me.

"Wrong again, sweetheart," he drawled smoothly before bringing his lips to my ear. "I see right - fucking - through you." More chills made their way down my spine creating an icy waterfall that refused to thaw. My only response being the scowl that I was sure would remain a permanent fixture on my face.

Releasing my jaw, his hands then went to my shoulders and slowly progressed down my arms, feeling my skin and leaving behind little goosebumps. Never in my life had I administered such self-control to remain still and not flinch. No one touched me without my permission and those who did were met with an unkind reciprocation. But something strange happened as his skin came into contact with mine. The warmth that radiated off his hands as they passed over my flesh was enough to send my brain into a frenzy of emotions. Fear, rage, and uncertainty flooded my mind like a broken dam washing away everything that had threatened to deviate its path. All I could focus on was this very moment, right here, right now.

His hands trailed further down, stopping just below my breasts. They slowly guided themselves up, cupping each one in his hands. Holding back the bile that rose up in my throat, I closed my eyes and pretended they were Jason's hands. Rage was building up higher and higher, threatening to boil over as this monster felt me up to his satisfaction.

The smile on his face as his thumbs traced over my nipples sent disgusting little jolts of electricity through my body. It took everything I had to simply control my breathing and keep my breasts from bobbing in his hands. I was so close to raining elbows down on his face it nearly made me shake, but the zip ties keeping my hands in place behind my back only made it a fantasy.

When he finally released my breasts, all I could feel was an electric current passing through my body that hummed something fierce...and I didn't like it. He continued to trace his fingers down over my abdomen, smiling as he did, and just when I thought I couldn't bare it anymore, his fingers lightly skimmed over my freshly waxed sex. I held my breath, hoping this was a dream and I'd wake up in my bed next to Jason, but I knew that wouldn't happen. The more I tried to deny the situation, the harder it became to ignore his hands as they continued their voyage over my body, making my skin crawl in their wake.

“You keep it trimmed,” he said. “I like that.”

It was bikini season. Of course, I kept it trimmed.

Finally, he let go of me and took a few steps back, thankfully severing whatever electrical wires connected us while a big evil grin formed on his lips.

“How much you guys think she weighs?” he asked them, cocking his head to the side. I narrowed my eyes in confusion. Did these men enjoy guessing games? Well, they could guess which one of them I was going to stab first.

Just as they all started to laugh, the owner swiftly turned his body and threw a reverse sidekick right into my chest, sending me crashing several feet away and falling back against the wall.

“I’d say she’s about a buck ten, considering how far she flew,” he answered himself. Everyone just laughed like it was the funniest fucking thing they’d ever heard.

As soon as I hit the floor, my body instantly convulsed as the severe pain in my chest exploded throughout my entire being. I tried to suck in as much air as I could but forgot how to inhale as I tried to get myself to breathe properly.

“Son of a bitch,” I muttered under my breath.

Holy fuck, I had never been kicked like that before in my life. I've taken some tough hits in the past but never like that. He must have had some serious training to be able to control his power the way he did. Considering his size, had he used even just a little more force, he would have broken my collarbone and shattered my sternum.

In and out, in and out, I tried to force the air into my lungs and bite back the pain that threatened to draw tears. I would not cry. No fucking way, but goddamn that hurt. I should have seen it coming, but he was much faster than I had anticipated. Trying to keep myself together, I could feel the bruise begin to form on my chest. I knew it would be in the perfect shape of a man's shoe.

I looked up to see him standing there, watching me, his mouth twisted into a sadistic smirk as I fought against the pain. I wanted him to know I could take it. I could take anything he threw at me and then spit it right back out in his face.

"Try a buck twenty, asshole," I croaked out, correcting him.

Turning my head to give him my glare of death, he beelined toward me; kneeling down and grabbing a fist full of my hair, he yanked my head up to face him. My gut flipped over as his eyes burned into me with an intensity that made me want to cower and hide, but I refused. I refused to fully give in to my fear.

"You ever attempt to fight with my men again, and I will turn you into my personal punching bag, you got that?"

I didn't answer him; I couldn't force the words out of my mouth. My brain was a little busy trying to get my lungs to work.

"Do not make me repeat myself," he warned, gripping my hair even harder. I winced in pain and tried to focus.

"Yes, sir." It barely came out as a whisper.

"Good girl." He then got up and turned to his men. "Get her up and take her to Sid. Make sure she's clean and put her back with the others."

“Yes, sir,” they all said in unison.

The two other guards reached down and lifted me by my arms. I got to my feet and attempted to steady myself as they practically dragged me across the floor. The pain was still excruciating, but I’d make sure this asshole knew I could take whatever he threw my way. I could feel his dark eyes on me as I walked out of his office, my head held high as I went to find out who this “Sid” was.

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### **Now that was interesting...**

All I could feel was the electricity in the air. It hovered long after she walked out of my office, the current creating a wave of energy unlike anything I had ever felt before. It was like an invisible lightning storm that set my senses alive, craving more. Even her rosy scent lingered. Absolutely intoxicating.

I hadn't anticipated that. I'm not one for surprises, but this one was unlike anyone I had ever seen. She radiated confidence as if it ran through her blood. Even though she was reduced to nothing like the rest of them as she kneeled on the floor before me, defiance was still clear as day in those beautiful amber eyes of hers. But there was something else that she was hiding behind those eyes; something she thought I couldn't see. But I always found it. Fear. And fuck if it didn't turn me on.

Fear was my companion. My ally in all things. It was what motivated people, and it was always the first and last thing lingering in a person's eyes right before I ended them. Bullet or blade, it didn't matter. The fear of death unveiled the true essence of a person, and I relished in discovering the cowards among men, breaking them down for what they really were before crushing them into nothing.

This girl would be no different regardless of how much of a handful I knew she'd be; hell, she already had been since the night my men randomly

decided to pick her up. She had fought them with everything she had, delivering some serious damage, and leaving quite the mess in her wake. My men had gravely underestimated her right from the get-go, but I knew exactly what she was. She was a fighter, and the best kind at that, as her type did not break easily. She took my kick to the chest like a champ, and that was something worth admiring.

She had the body of a warrior goddess and, my cock could barely contain itself as it marveled in all her delicious glory. Her skin was the softest I had ever felt, my fingertips suffering from withdraws already. Combined with her stunningly bright red hair, she was easily the most beautiful creature I had ever seen. Solid as a rock, she practically mirrored my own physique, and the ink in her skin confirmed her lack of fear when it came to a little pain. I looked forward to changing that.

But there was something more to the tough-as-nails Jaden Wilder. Something I had never experienced before. I couldn't figure out exactly what it was, but it was enough to spike my intrigue.

There was one thing I did know; something I recognized right away. This girl was among that rare breed of wild horses that refused to break, the challenge I loved. Piece by piece, I delighted in breaking them down until there was nothing left but a shell, eager to be filled with the need to please and avoid pain. Jaden would be no exception. She would accept the same ultimatum just as all the others before her had been given. She would break or die.

The fun I was going to have with her...

**A**s the double doors closed behind us, we walked further down the hallway and took a right turn. Jared opened the third door on the right and shoved me in. It looked much like a medical room with a medical table, sink, and cabinets, and other recognizable machines. The two guards stayed outside as Jared closed us in.

“Have a seat,” he said, plopping his hand down on the table. It was not an easy feat with my hands still tied behind my back and what felt like an iron plate in my chest, but somehow, I managed. “The doctor will just do a regular physical exam, take some blood, and we’ll be out of here.”

I didn’t acknowledge him, just kept my eyes on the door and focused on my breathing. A few moments later, a short older man with white hair wearing jeans and a bowling shirt walked into the room.

“Jared.” He nodded toward him. “What have we got here?” he asked, looking me up and down.

“New slave needs the routine exam, Sid.”

“No problem; let me wash up.”

*Oh, like it was no big deal. Just another naked girl, kidnapped and waiting to be sold. Better make sure she’s up to snuff. Fucking fucks.*

I knew what this exam meant. He was going to poke and prod me in my most private of places, and I wasn’t about to have any of that. As the doctor turned toward me, drying his hands off, he gave my arms a good once-over.

“You know I can’t examine her with her bound like that,” he said, turning to Jared.

“I don’t know, Sid; this is a wild one. Can’t be too careful,” Jared replied. As his words left his lips, they echoed in my ear like ripples from a pond, giving life to a memory that had been shadowed by darkness.

*Can’t be too careful...*

It came back to me now, in small scenes, but I could see Jared’s face clear as day. It was from a day ago. I had met my best friend, Jordan, at a bar in downtown Detroit, had a few drinks with her, and had a pretty damn good time. But when we were ready to leave, she decided to use the bathroom one last time before heading out. I waited for her at the bar. That was when I remember Jared...drunk as shit and attempting to hit on me as I waited -rather crudely, I might add. Of course, I shot him down, and I didn’t remember him taking it lightly. When Jordan finally returned, I stood from

the barstool...and then I remembered him grabbing my ass and telling me that I should “learn how to take a compliment.” That was when I grabbed his pinky finger, twisted it painfully along with his wrist, and jerked his arm into his back, forcing his face down to the bar as he grunted in pain.

“And you should learn to take a hint. You ever touch me again; I’ll break it off,” I snarled into his ear and released him, heading for the door with Jordan.

“You better watch yourself,” he slurred after me, and I turned my head to glare at him from over my shoulder. “Can’t be too careful out there with such a pretty little thing like you!” He then raised his glass to me and winked before taking a sip of his beer and returning his attention to the bartender.

*Son of a bitch!*

This motherfucker was trying to get back at me for turning him down at a fucking bar!? How in the hell could one person do that to another? To completely rip them from their lives and toss them into hell all because they couldn’t deal with a little female rejection? I swear to God, men were pathetic. How dare I, a woman, shoot another man down when I am already committed to another? Fucking pigs.

“Well, you’ll just have to be extra alert then, won’t you?” Sid’s voice broke me from the memory.

Jared stood and turned toward me then, flipping a switchblade out from his pocket. It wasn’t very big, but if I could get my hands on it, it would do just enough damage.

“You try anything,” he said, pointing the knife at my face. “And I’ll make you wish you’d never been born.”

“Yes, sir,” I lied, anxiously waiting for my chance to strike. I might have looked calm and collected, but inside, I was seething like a volcano ready to explode.

As soon as he leaned behind me to cut the ties and release my hands, I took my opportunity. Rules and threats went out the window as I went for my biggest threat first. I instantly grabbed his arm and shoulder, locking him in place behind me, keeping a close eye on the knife. Quickly, my knee struck him right in the balls, and as I felt his body slacken, my elbow slammed into his Adam's apple and sent him gasping for air. As his grip on the knife loosened, I twisted it out of his hands and stabbed him in the abdomen without a moment's hesitation. I dug the knife deep into his flesh and practically spat in his ear, "I remember."

I then retracted the blade and sliced open the back of his thigh and he fell back on the floor with a loud cry. After hearing his grunts and seeing the doctor cower in the corner, I took off for the door, remembering the two guards who waited outside.

As I practically threw the door open, I held onto the door frame and kicked the guard to my left right in the face with a hard roundhouse kick, forcing his head to slam back into the wall and nearly knocking him out. I then turned my foot back into a hook kick and slammed my heel into the eye of the guard to my right. I then blasted both my fists backward into their groins as they tumbled over and finally took off, knife still in hand. I should have grabbed their guns, probably should have stabbed them, too, but I didn't have time to struggle with them. The knife would have to do.

I ran down the hallway as fast as I could, ignoring the protest of my muscles as I forced them to work harder than they ever had. I was determined to make it to the elevator and get myself the fuck out of here. Abandoning the pain in my chest, I could hear the yelling of the guards behind me as my legs pounded away, driving me faster and faster away from this fucked-up nightmare. My heart was hammering away inside my chest as adrenaline pumped through my veins, giving me the drive I needed to make my escape.

Just as I was about to turn the corner to the elevators, a long, large arm stuck out from behind the wall, slamming into my already sore chest, effectively clotheslining me. My feet flew up in the air, and I landed hard and firmly on my back, the wind completely knocked out of my lungs... again.

Coughing and panting, I looked up to find that beautiful son of a bitch staring down at me, a slight grin in the corner of his lips. My heart froze and my stomach twisted into one giant knot as he stared down at me.

*Fuck.*

“I’m confused,” he said, reaching down to grab the knife out of my hand and crossing his arms in front of his chest. “Didn’t I just tell you not to fight?”

“Like you’re surprised,” I coughed, trying to breathe and attempting to roll onto my side.

I gave him a little smirk. It didn’t matter what I said or did now, I was probably as good as dead. Surprisingly, he actually smiled back, but his words were ice cold.

“Not in the slightest,” he said dangerously, bearing down on me.

“Yeah, fuck you,” I told him, not giving a shit. It pissed me off when people tried to intimidate me. It never worked, but that was probably because no one had ever followed through on their words. I should have known better that he always would.

“That can be arranged,” he said darkly, and my heart skipped a beat.

Just then, the men I had attacked slumped up behind me.

“Sorry, sir, she just attacked out of nowhere. We just—“

“Save it,” the owner said, holding up his hand. “Get her up and bring her to my room.”

*Fucking fuck, fuck, fuck.*

The two guards reached down and picked me up from the floor. They rebound my hands in front of me this time with another set of zip ties,

pulling them so tight I could feel them cutting off circulation.

*Good, I thought. The tighter, the better.*

They then practically dragged me down the hall back into the asshole's office. I didn't see Jared leave the medical room, so I must have really done a number on him with the switchblade. Served him right.

We caught up to the owner as he unlocked a door near the right corner of the office that I had not noticed before. Following him through the doorway, the guards pushed me in and closed the door, leaving me alone with *him*.

Quickly looking around to assess my surroundings, I was in what seemed like a bedroom. There was a queen-size four-poster bed covered with silky navy blue bedding with large pillows hiding the wooden headboard behind them. There were also a few dressers, a leather sofa, and a doorway that led to what I could only assume was a bathroom toward the left side of the room. More of the dark burgundy carpet laid under my feet, and a dark chocolate brown painted the walls, giving the room a very masculine vibe.

"Not more than fifteen minutes after having the rules explained to you, and you're already breaking all three of them. That's quite the record here, Miss Wilder," the asshole finally said, his voice slow and deep as he turned toward me. I looked down, noticing he still had the switchblade in his hand covered in Jared's blood. "I think you may need a little more motivation to truly understand your place here."

"A better idea would be to just let me go. I'm more trouble than I'm worth."

He then took off his jacket and tossed it on the dresser next to him, chuckling as he did.

"I have no doubt of that, but that just makes this all the more fun."

"Makes what all the more fun?" I snapped.

"Breaking you," he said behind cold striking eyes.

“Good luck,” I challenged, darting my chin out and looking him head-on.

Narrowing his eyes on me, he started walking toward me with the knife in his hand and a look of fierce determination on his face. Not waiting another second, I immediately brought my hands up high over my head and slammed them down against my abdomen with as much force as I could, breaking the zip ties and releasing my hands. Bringing my fists up to protect my body from the owner’s advances, I readied my legs, staying light on the balls of my feet and slightly bending my knees. I turned my body to the side, giving him less of me to make contact with. He stopped in his tracks when he saw the break of the zip ties and started laughing when he realized what I was doing.

He chuckled. “Very impressive, but you really think I’m going to fight you like this? That wouldn’t be very fair now would it?”

“You wanna talk fair?” I practically shouted at him. “How about having your life taken away to be sold to some sick fuck with twisted needs and then generating profit for the fuck who stole you in the first place? Yeah, sounds real fucking fair to me!”

“It’s a vicious world,” he countered, smiling and leaning forward, spreading his arms.

He made no apologies, just acknowledged the evil that lurked in the daylight as well as the darkness. I knew right then that this man knew exactly what he was doing; he knew the depths of his sins but lacked the empathy to repent. That made him more dangerous than I was willing to admit.

“Well, allow me show you how vicious *my* world can be,” I seethed.

He smiled at me like a snake until a low roll of laughter echoed from his mouth to my ears.

“Because you’re in such a position to be delivering on that little threat,” he said, glaring down at me and moving closer.

I moved again, refusing to allow him to corner me and circled the room, my eyes never leaving his stupid perfect body.

“You have no idea who you’re fucking with,” I said back to him, my voice full of rage and confidence. “You’re gonna regret taking me on.”

“Likewise,” he stated and charged.

In two long strides, he came at me like a tank, closing the distance between us faster than I had anticipated. I pushed my foot out to kick him in the stomach, but he just bulldozed into it and sent me flying against the wall. His hard body pressed up against mine and with the wall at my back, he’d effectively trapped me. His hands came down to rest against the wall at either side of my head, with the knife now safely tucked away in the small of his back. I didn’t give up, though. I twisted and turned and tried to get my footing back, listening to him chuckle above me as I struggled.

*Fuck this.*

I quickly shot my fingers into the tender side of his arms and pinched the soft skin as hard and as fast as I could. He barely even winced. I had hoped it would cause him to take a step back, but all he did was grab both my wrists and pin them in one of his hands above my head roughly.

“Such a bad girl,” he scorned me.

“Fuck you. Let me go!” I spat and pulled at my wrists as hard as I could, flexing my hands in an attempt to loosen his grip as I twisted. After about thirty seconds, it was becoming pointless and I was just rubbing the skin of my wrists raw until they burned from his hand.

“Are you done?” the owner asked, clearly amused by my aggravation and failed attempt to escape him.

“Never,” I countered, making sure I made my point by looking him straight in the eyes.

“I was hoping you’d say that,” he smirked.

In one single blur, he threw me over on the bed with such force that I almost tripped to the floor. Landing face-first over the edge of it, I quickly

turned and struck him square in the face with my elbow. He seemed a little surprised but immediately regained his composure, grabbing my elbow and forcing it down on the bed. He was then on top of me before I could find my bearings. Trapping my body underneath his, he grabbed my hair and yanked my head back. The switchblade quickly appeared at my exposed throat, the sharp blade threatening to slice my skin open with the slightest movement. I froze immediately, hoping to prevent it as fear bundled inside me.

“You’ve got a smart mouth, little girl. I wonder what else those pretty little lips of yours can do,” he breathed in my ear, scratching the blade against my skin.

Ignoring his threat, I tried to push the knife away with my free hand and kick my legs out. He let go of my hair and grabbed at my wrists, holding both of them straight out in front of me with one hand.

I hated being this vulnerable, being this small and this weak. It was everything I fought against and worked so hard not to be. A lot of good that fucking did me.

“You seem to forget something here. Your compliance is non-negotiable. I will have your complete obedience, or I will have your ass strung up until you bleed the last of your defiance out. You got that?”

I practically growled at him.

“Get. The fuck. Off me!” I screamed at him with all my rage.

I didn’t know why I was so courageous or why I was so trusting that he wouldn’t just slice my throat open right there. God knew I probably deserved it in his eyes, but for some reason, I had this inclination that I was worth more to him alive. Like I was somehow worth the trouble.

“Have it your way, then,” he said.

Placing the knife back in his pocket and continuing his vise grip on my wrists, he reached down to my legs and lifted them over the bed. Still flat on my stomach, he straddled my hips and dragged my body up toward the

headboard by my wrists. I fought like crazy, trying to move my body from side to side, kicking my legs back and forth and attempting to strike his back with my heels. Even though I made contact, he barely seemed to notice.

As we got closer to the headboard, he sat down practically on my neck, his knees coming down on my arms, keeping them in place as he quickly shoved aside the pillows from the bed. I could see the short chains that were connected to the headboard and linked to black leather cuffs.

*Oh, fuck. Shit, no, no, no!*

“No! Stop!” I couldn’t help but shout.

My struggle became much more apparent as I rocked even harder than before, using all of what little energy I had left to buck him off me.

He reached over to the cuff at my left and brought it over to my wrist. I curled my fist and jerked my arm as best I could, but he still easily managed to fasten the cuff around my wrist, pulling it tightly. He did the same to my other and immediately turned back around to sit on my legs and fasten those as well. He then got off me and I quickly started pulling at my restraints.

“Goddammit!” I yelled out loud, releasing more of my built-up rage.

“Keep screaming, little girl. It’s music to my ears,” he said as he started rolling up his sleeves.

My heart was pounding away in my chest, panic rising in my veins as I realized I was now completely at his mercy, something I swore I would never let happen to me. I could hear him fidgeting with his belt buckle as he pulled it through the loops of his slacks. No sound of a zipper. Yet.

“You can pull and struggle all you want, but you’re not going anywhere.”

God, his voice burned my pride to ashes as I saw the truth in his words. He was right; the chains were too strong and the cuffs were too tight for me to slip out of. At this point, I’d have to take whatever he delivered like a champ and carry on.

“While I have you here in this beautiful position, let’s educate ourselves a little bit, shall we?”

He left the room for only a second and started rummaging through the drawers of his desk out in his office. When he came back, I turned my head around to see him holding a small white card in his hand. It looked like a driver’s license.

“Let’s see here...” he said, scanning what was probably my license. “Miss Jaden Morgan Wilder, twenty-five years old, lives in Royal Oak, Michigan, hazel eyes, red hair, five-foot-three, and an organ donor,” he said the last part with a little surprise.

“Good for you; you can read,” I bit out.

“Oh, now here’s a surprise,” he said ignoring me. “You have your motorcycle endorsement. You ride?”

“Damn right, I do,” I shot back at him.

I had been riding since I was ten. My dad started me out on dirt bikes when we went up north, and after I had mastered riding that in a short couple of months, he introduced me to some real machines and the long open road. I had a 2012 Ducati 1299 Panigale Superbike back home, decked out in black with bright purple LED lights. It was one of my most prized possessions; I saved up most of my life to own that. It was my ultimate freedom.

“Well, look at that. We have something in common now,” he said smiling.

“God, can we just get this over with so I can go back to my cage? I’m really not in the mood to be finding common ground with the likes of you.”

Damn, I really did want my ass beat, didn’t I?

“Ya know, I think I’m really starting to like that smart mouth of yours. But I think I’d rather hear it scream my name more than anything else.”

“Never gonna happen,” I replied.

“Don’t be so sure of yourself, sweetheart. Just because you’re a martial artist doesn’t make you immune to what I can do to you.”

“What are you talking about?” I asked. I didn’t want him to know how skilled I was. I was quickly losing my element of surprise, but I knew that would be exposed sooner or later.

“Don’t think you can play me for a fool, little girl,” he said seriously. “I know an experienced fighter when I see one. Not to mention all the damage you did to my guards so far. It takes some serious skill to pull off what you did, especially for someone your size. It’s actually quite impressive, really.”

Well, the cat was out of the bag now.

“You should see what I can really do when I’m fully clothed and unrestrained,” I said challenging him.

“Perhaps I will...if you last through this,” he said finally swinging his belt through the air.

I turned my head back around and braced myself for the bite.

“I want you to count, out loud, so I can hear you. Understand?”

“Yes, sir,” I said, biting back my real response to tell him to get fucked. I could hear the belt swinging in the air, the sound of it increasing the adrenaline in my veins as fear spiked up my spine.

Fuck, this was going to hurt.

And then I felt it. The buckle of the belt crashed down on top of my bare back, biting and slamming into my flesh. I suppressed my scream, effectively turning it into a sharp and harsh gasp as I sucked in air, my body jerking harshly at the contact. The pain was far worse than I imagined.

“One,” I managed to say before forgetting.

The belt came down again, harder this time. The muscles in my back tensed up as they absorbed the shock of the belt; the pain of its sting lingering on my flesh as I felt the welts begin to form.

“Two!” I pulled at my restraints, trying to distract myself from the agony forming on my back as a third strike came down, even harder than

the last.

“Ah! Three!” I didn’t want to scream. I didn’t want to give him the satisfaction. But if I didn’t scream, he would whip me harder, and I needed my body to remain intact after this.

A fourth strike came down, the hardest of them all, and this time my screams left my throat of their own accord. The pain worsened with each blow and I found myself shaking in fear, waiting for the next strike as the word, “Four,” left my mouth in a shriek. He was going to tear my flesh apart.

“That’s it, baby. Scream for me. Let it all out,” he said softly.

Eleven more times the belt came down and my screams came out sharper and louder each time. My back felt like someone had started a fire on it and left it there to burn me alive. Sweat coated my hair as it drenched my face and body, and the muscles in my arms and legs ached from the strain as I pulled against my bindings. I could feel the bruises forming and the skin tearing until I honestly believed acid was pooling in the curve of my spine. He then finally dropped the belt to the floor and that’s when I heard the zipper.

Fuck, no, no, no! I had zero energy left to fight him, all of it having been drained from my beating. He walked over to the nightstand next to the bed and pulled out something small from the drawer. My heart stopped when I saw it was a condom.

I couldn’t let him do this to me. I had never been raped before, and I wasn’t about to let that happen now. With my stomach in tight little knots and nothing but fumes of energy left, I pushed my head up and tried to fight against my restraints as he climbed onto the bed, hovering over me. His large hands grasped my ass cheeks and squeezed them.

“Damn, you really have the most perfect ass, don’t you?” he said, rubbing his hands up and down the curve of my cheeks. I could only manage a quiet growl at him as he continued to assault me, my exhaustion

heavy and evident. Had I not heard the sound of the zipper, I might have allowed myself to slip away into sweet unconsciousness, but that God awful sound summoned a small spike of adrenaline I had no way of tracing.

“Still feisty, huh? Let me fix that for you,” he said as he positioned himself between the V of my spread legs. I listened as he ripped open the condom packet, and I couldn’t stop my panic.

“Wait!” I shouted, turning my head back to him, my hair falling over my face and shoulders in a crazed and tousled mess. He actually paused for a second, looking over at me, probably a little shocked at my sudden request. I was breathing so hard I could barely get the desperate words out.

“You don’t have to do this. I get it. You win. I’m done,” I pleaded and dropped my head onto the bed in defeat.

God, it was so hard for me to say that, but I had no idea what kind of diseases this piece of shit carried, and I didn’t want to find out. Condom or no condom, it wasn’t worth the risk.

I felt him move up my body, slowly, like an animal and dipped his mouth to my ear.

“Too late, kitten,” he sneered, my blood turning ice cold in my veins. “I told you I could arrange this and now I’m gonna follow through with it. You’ll come to find I’m a man of my word.”

I couldn’t hold back the tears that started to fall from my eyes as he returned to his original position between my legs. They were silent tears, but they fell nonetheless.

After he finished rolling the condom on, he crawled over my bare and beaten body and slowly eased his hand under my torso to brush a long finger over my clit. I flinched and gasped at his touch, squeezing my eyes shut, pretending this wasn’t happening. I desperately tried to move my body away from him, tried to press my thighs together, but there was nowhere to go as his hand kept me right where he wanted me. Gently moving his finger

back and forth, he leaned his mouth down to my ear. His voice was dark and smooth.

“I’m going to fuck you so hard that by the time I’m through with you, you’ll be lucky if you can walk straight.”

At that, I buried my face in the mattress, trying to hide as much of myself as I could. My strength was gone and all that was left was the realization that I had zero control in this situation. It was the worse feeling in the world to know that I had no choice anymore and there wasn’t a goddamn thing I could do about it.

Still rubbing my clit as he pulled back, I could feel my body betraying me as I realized his fingers were becoming slick with wetness. I suppose it was better than him going in dry and tearing the shit out of me.

*That’s it, Jaden. Stay positive.*

So fucking twisted.

“God, you smell amazing,” he said, inhaling deep through his nose. “And so responsive. I like that.”

I officially hated my body. And him.

He finally released my clit, satisfied with my body’s involuntary response and placed both his hands on either side of my hips, lifting them off the mattress. My fingers instantly gripped the sheets until I swore I dug holes in them.

“Ready?” he asked, drawing it out cruelly.

“Go to Hell!” I tried to shout at him, but it came out like more of a squeak.

With my final act of defiance, he plunged into me, slamming against my cervix and filling every square inch of me. I grunted aloud at his violent invasion but refused to give him anything further than that. Had he not been holding on to my hips, my head probably would have slammed into the headboard. I felt him lean down to my ear again, grasping my hair and jerking it back in a painful grip.

“Welcome to your new reality,” he snickered. The cruelty in his voice sent shivers up my spine as more silent tears rolled down my cheeks. He was enjoying this, enjoying my pain and swallowing it up like a lion eating the meat of its freshly captured prey.

My muscles strained to accommodate his size, but eventually, I was able to force them to relax. The more tense I was, the more excruciating it would be. He pulled himself back to his original position while his fingers pressed so hard into my hips that I was sure they’d leave bruises. He then retracted himself from me only slightly before slamming back in a second time. I cried out from the force of the impact as he collided with my cervix all over again. Not much longer, he began pumping himself into me, grunting with each stroke while I cringed into the now sweaty sheets beneath me. “Oh, my God, you’re so tight,” he growled in satisfaction.

Listening to the sound of my ass slapping against his hips was enough to nearly cause me to throw up in my mouth. I kept it down though, not wanting to make matters worse for myself. My body rocked back and forth, each thrust of his cock making my cervix feel like it was a tiny punching bag while my back screamed in pain from the movement. Maybe that was what he meant by his little threat back in his office.

I kept trying to regulate my oxygen flow as he continued to drill into me, pumping away until I became raw and sensitive. I attempted to pull away from his vicious onslaught, but he refused to give me even an inch. He suddenly let go of one of my hips and slapped my ass so hard I could barely suppress the scream, letting it turn into a loud gasp. As his hand returned to my hip, he pumped even faster, finally finishing with an animalistic roar that echoed in my ears. I could hear him panting a little as he released my hips and pulled himself from my body, the harsh pressure finally relenting. I tried to catch my breath as relief flooded my body knowing it was over, or at least I hoped it was. He leaned down over my

back again, pressing his hands softly into my sore and scorching skin and lowered himself to my ear.

“If I have to fuck you into submission every day to remind you of your place here, then I will gladly do so. Remember, your compliance is non-negotiable. If you act out again, your punishment will be much more severe than this. Do you understand or do you need more emphasis?”

“I understand,” I whispered.

“Good girl,” he said getting off me then. “The next time I see you, I expect a dramatic change in your behavior.”

That was the last thing I remember before plunging into the darkness that welcomed me with open arms.

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After I had dressed, I opened the door back to my office and stopped in the doorway. I looked back at Jaden, who had passed out on the bed. Her body had finally given out from the abuse it had taken from me, and I had to admit that she held out better than I thought she would. But it just made me want to give her more just to see how far I could take her. Perhaps, sometime soon, I would find out.

God, she had felt amazing under me as if her body was made for me; each stroke inside her made me want her more and more until there was nothing left. Even delivering her strikes set me ablaze, watching her body twitch and writhe in pain, fear drenching her face in the form of tears. It just made me harder; it made me want her more than I could stand. I was a sadistic fuck for sure, but I didn't care. I never hid my true desires, and I wasn't about to start now.

I stepped out, closing the door behind me and locking it as I made my way down to check on Jared's pathetic ass. He was still in the room with Sid. Lucky for him, Sid was close by to take care of his wounds. Before I turned the corner, I sent a text to one of my guards to have them put Jaden back in her cage. Even though she was still chained to the bed, I didn't want her waking up and trying anything.

When I came to the examining room, I leaned against the doorframe and watched as Sid finished stitching Jared while he groaned and complained like a whiny little bitch.

When Sid was done, he turned around to acknowledge me.

“He’ll be fine,” he said nonchalantly, setting his bloody tools in the sink. “One more centimeter though and it would have pierced his intestines. He’ll just need to take it easy for a few days to let the wound heal.”

“Thanks, Sid,” I said and moved out of the way so he could exit the room.

I looked over at Jared, who slowly sat up, grunting and wincing while he clutched the side of his gut.

“What happened?” I asked sternly, crossing my arms over my chest.

“Bitch is crazy,” he said shaking his head. “I cut her ties so Sid could examine her, and she just...attacked. It happened so fast, I barely remember.”

I took a few more steps into the room while Jared stood from the table, sidestepping me just a little bit. He knew I was pissed. “And you think that’s an acceptable excuse?” I asked. “She almost made it to the elevator. You’re lucky I was there to intervene.”

“She never would have made it past the perimeter.”

“Yes, because those guards are competent!” I seethed, taking a step toward him.

We had three guards who manned the roof, watching for any potential threats or girls trying to escape the compound. If anyone fled, they were shot on sight. No one had ever escaped the warehouse before, and Jared’s incompetence was not about to change that.

Jared stayed silent as I stared him down. “Now, where did you find this girl?”

He shrugged like the dumbshit he was. “I met her at a bar in Detroit. She seemed like an easy target.”

“And how much research did you do before taking her? How many days did you wait and watch?”

“I put the order for the team to take her the following night. Quinn watched her get in her car, we searched her license plate, found out she was

a student at Wayne State Law School, got her schedule, and picked her up after class, loaded her on the plane with the rest of the girls. I didn't want to wait and risk the chance of losing a really profitable target."

"And what a fuck-up that turned out to be," I menaced.

"What are you talking about? We have her just fine—"

"She's a goddamn mixed martial artist, you idiot," I roared, shoving him into the wall and keeping my forearm against his throat. "She's the complete opposite of the type you're supposed to be hunting. Do you have any idea how much of a pain in the ass she's going to be? No, you wouldn't know that because you didn't do the research like you're supposed to. Instead, your fuck-up of a team left behind a shot-to-shit car, bullet shells, and most likely unknown witnesses. What the fuck were you thinking?"

"I don't know, sir. She pissed me off. The little ungrateful bitch had it coming," he croaked.

"What, because she wouldn't accept the cheap ass drink you probably tried to buy her?"

"Something like that," he groaned.

I released him and took a step back.

"So, because you couldn't stand to have your ego wounded, you decided you'd fuck with my business and create a liability in the process?"

"Look, I'm sorry—"

"I don't want your goddamn apology! I want you to fucking follow orders!" My rage had exceeded its limit, and I punched the stupid son of a bitch right where Jaden had stabbed him. He screeched in pain and curled into himself, sliding down the wall until his ass hit the floor. I got real low in his face. "You ever do anything to jeopardize my business again, and I'll fucking kill you, you understand me?"

"Yes, sir," he panted, finally looking up to meet me eye to eye. Maybe there was a man in there somewhere, after all.

“Good,” I said rising back up to my full height. “Lucky for you, there may be some fun to be had with her yet. She’s probably going to be my biggest challenge ever, and God knows I love a challenge.”

I walked out of the room, leaving Jared in his curled-up mess while I headed down to see my head of security. Scott was my right-hand man; anything I needed him to do, he did without question and without any fuck-ups. He was extremely resourceful and damn good at his job. He just so happened to be a close friend, one of the very few that I trusted.

Scott used to be a Navy SEAL before he was dishonorably discharged for deliberately disobeying orders. He had tortured and then killed some unknown terrorist overseas while trying to obtain some important information. He had been successful, but the government wasn’t so keen on his methods of persuasion. I, however, was.

When I walked into his office, I found him squinting and clicking away on his computer, probably re-watching the latest feed for Jaden’s little attempt at escape. The desk he sat at was just as big as mine to accommodate the four monitors required for all the cameras we had set up in the warehouse. Nothing got past him while he was watching.

His short black hair sat spiked and gelled at the top of his head while singular strands fell against the order and hung down over his forehead. He was a tall motherfucker like me and just as built, which was probably why I had more of a mutual respect for him, since I didn’t have to look down or up to look him in the eyes. Or maybe it was the lack of remorse we both felt when it came to our way of life.

All dressed in black as per usual, he sat back and looked over at me when I stood in front of his desk and tossed him Jaden’s driver’s license.

“I want everything you can find on her,” I said.

He picked the license up with his calloused meaty hand and examined it.

“Why am I not surprised?” He chuckled, setting it down on the desk.

“Just do it,” I said and turned to leave.

“That was one hell of an escape she almost made,” he said from behind me, and I turned back around to face him.

“She never would have made it past the gate, and you know it,” I replied.

“I know because she would have been dead.”

“Exactly.”

“Still...it was an impressive attempt.”

“Yes, attempt,” I stated, reminding him that I was the reason it remained an attempt and not a success.

He stayed silent for a moment, a smirk hiding in the corner of his mouth.

“I’ll have it to you by tomorrow,” Scott said returning to his work.

“Good,” I replied and walked out. Tomorrow couldn’t come soon enough.

When I woke up, I was huddled up against small metal bars, lying flat on my stomach. I was back in my cage again as I could hear the women still crying and whimpering around me. I slowly opened my eyes, but the pain radiating down my back and between my legs made me squeeze them closed as I squirmed and groaned in agony.

I huddled into myself, feeling nothing but rage and pure hatred for the man who thought he had a right to do this to another human being. I finally opened my eyes to realize it was now dark out. The lights in the hallway were off and I assumed it was nighty-night time for the slaves.

I looked over at Kayla, who was sleeping on her side, her back facing me.

“Kayla?” I whispered. “Are you awake?” My voice strained and cracked, and I honestly didn’t even think she could hear me.

“Of course, I am,” she said turning over to me. “Like I could sleep in this hellhole.”

Turning over and lying on her other side, she looked me over.

“I’m willing to bet you look like shit right now.”

“You’d probably be right.”

“What happened?” she asked.

“I tried to run.”

“Was it worth it?”

She wasn’t even surprised, as if she already knew I was going to try at some point. Was I that obvious?

“I learned some of the layout, found their cameras, which did not have much hope for blind spots. I did get to mess up the guards. Jared should be out of commission for a few days. I’m sure he’ll come after me though if they haven’t sold me by then. And the other two, well, they’ll be lucky if they can ever reproduce. I seriously hope not, though.”

“Damn,” she laughed. “What are you, some kind of black belt?”

“Yeah, trained since I was six years old. Doesn’t help much when you’re the size of a large child and extremely outnumbered, though.”

“Well, that’s more than I could have done. I scratched the face of one of the guards one time and they hit me so hard I thought I saw stars. That was enough for me.”

“Sounds like you got off easy. I met the owner and he was the one who caught me trying to run. He ended up strapping me to a bed and beat my back with his belt buckle.”

“Ouch, that’s all he did? I hear his punishments are pretty bad from what the guards say.”

“I’d rather not talk about the rest,” I said, not wanting to relive that experience. Kayla nodded.

“You should rest,” she said. “You’re going to need it.”

“Yeah, maybe then I’ll finally wake up and this will all just be some fucked-up nightmare.”

“Let’s hope,” she said, closing her eyes.

I also closed my eyes, finally surrendering to their heavy weight and falling back into the darkness that would be my only escape from this horribly fucked-up place.

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The sound of something slamming against my cage jerked me awake; the noise pierced my ears and created an instant headache.

“Wake up, bitch!” a guard above me yelled. I cracked my eyes and staggered to get up, but my body felt like an eighteen-wheeler had hit it.

“You have five seconds to get up before I drag you out of there by your skull.”

Looking up at the guard, I realized he was the one I had hook-kicked in the eye. He had a pretty nice shiner where my heel had made contact, and I felt a twinge of pride surge through me as I focused on the black puffiness I had created. No wonder he was being such a pushy asshole.

“Good morning to you, too,” I mumbled under my breath.

“What was that?” he asked sternly, challenging me.

“Nothing, sir,” I grunted as I forced my body to crawl out of the cage.

“On your feet, slave, now,” he ordered. I placed my hands against the cage and attempted to pull myself up. I was so sore and stiff that I didn’t think I could walk another step as the deep pain aching between my legs threatened to spring tears. “Let’s go,” the guard said grabbing my arm and dragging me along his side, not even bothering to cuff me. They were either testing me or felt I would be too weak to fight after yesterday’s punishment. I was also way too fucking exhausted.

“Where are we going?” I grumbled my question.

My temporarily diminished reflexes weren’t able to stop the backhand that came across my mouth. I was so damn weak from yesterday; I actually

stumbled against the wall from the impact. The pain stung the side of my cheek as I felt it begin to heat and swell.

“I don’t recall asking you a question, slave,” he said, glaring at me. Biting back my tongue, I lowered my eyes to the floor and let him lead me back to the elevator and up to the third floor. My heart nearly skipped a beat as he pushed the button, but thankfully, we turned right instead of left. I assumed he was taking me back to the doctor’s office for the exam I decided to skip out on yesterday.

Sure enough, as the guard opened the door, there was the doctor, gloved up and ready to go. Whatever fear he had yesterday was replaced with warning when he looked me over. He had a tray of medical instruments next to him, one of them being a syringe filled with a yellow-tinged liquid.

“Hello, again,” he said cheerfully, eyeing me up and down.

I gave him a blank hard look.

“Judging by your physical state,” he said, resting his hand on the syringe, “I shouldn’t have to use this.” He looked my way, an eyebrow raised as if he was asking me a question.

I slowly shook my head. I just wanted to get this over with.

“Good. Lie on your back on the table, please, knees up, and try to relax. I’m not going to hurt you.”

I did as he asked, slowly climbing on the table as my muscles and joints ached to support my weight. Laying down, I winced as my back seared in pain when my bare skin encountered the cold padding. I raised my knees up, took a deep breath, and slowly let it out, relaxing myself as best I could.

“I’m going to begin the exam now. Spread your knees a little for me, please.” I sniffed back my protest and slowly parted my knees, giving him access to my most private area. The flesh there was tender as he completed a routine Pap smear.

“You’re a little swollen with some slight bruising, but you should be fine,” he claimed when he was finished. “Other than that, everything looks

normal.”

I nodded in acknowledgment.

“If you could sit up now, please,” he asked. I let my knees fall over the edge of the table and forced myself to sit up, agony accompanying my every move.

The guard sat in the corner, smiling at my obvious discomfort. The doctor came back over and checked my heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, and drew some blood. He then examined my chest and back. The footprint was embarrassingly obvious. Lightly pressing my skin, I tried to hold back my pathetic little whimpers, but it was tough with him touching me.

“On a scale of one to ten, how bad is the pain?”

“Probably an eight,” I replied. If the number was too low on the spectrum, I feared they might bring me back in for a second dose of pain. I was honest with my answer though, hoping it was sufficient.

“Can she have painkillers?” the doctor asked the guard.

“Fuck that. If she ain’t broken, then she don’t need ‘em,” the guard said, raising from his seat.

“Then I guess we’re done here. She’s seriously dehydrated and needs some food in her system. Other than that, she should be fine but bring her back in two days for a final check-up. I should have the test results by then.”

“Thanks, Sid,” the guard said, reaching for me and pulling me from the table.

“I believe you earned this?” Sid said, holding out the little black strapless “dress” that was supposed to be promised to me for good behavior.

“Thank you,” my voice rasped as I quickly threw the dress on, finally covering my body from exposure. Even though it was barely long enough to cover my ass, I had never been more thankful for an item of clothing all my life.

“Let’s go,” the guard said, pulling me along by the arm.

As we headed back down the hall, it occurred to me that I hadn’t eaten or drank anything for almost two days and my stomach grumbled violently at the realization. Not like my stomach would be able to handle much of it anyway, but I would do just about anything for a glass of water. However, I didn’t dare ask for one, though.

**A**s I sat at my desk, my fingers twitched with fury as I clicked on Jaden’s social media pages now that Scott had provided me with her username and password. She had hundreds of irritating photos of family, friends, and all the fan-fucking-tastic times she had with them. I saw so many photos of her and her pathetic excuse of a boyfriend that I felt like killing him just out of annoyance. There were pictures of them smiling, kissing, and even sparring together. Even her younger brothers remained constant in her life.

There were also dozens of posts from her family and friends on her page from condolences to well wishes, hoping that Jaden returned to them alive and unharmed. I laughed a little at that. It had never happened before and Jaden was not about to change it any time soon.

Judging from her pictures, she was a very active girl. There were photos of her snowboarding, jet skiing, sparring, rock climbing, drinking, snowmobiling, four wheeling, shooting, and even riding her motorcycle and dirt bike. There were even videos of her competing in world karate competitions, from forms to sparring and even weapons. She dominated with a bo staff; her technique was flawless and impressive during her performances. It was clear she was a very well trained competitor and an excellent performer. This was no girly girl I was dealing with. She liked to live life on the edge, but only just a little. Now that was my kind of girl.

It was all so precious, Jaden’s life, and I was happily dragging her away from it kicking and screaming.

It was ridiculous how much information social media gave up on a person. I now knew where Jaden worked, how long she'd been there, where she went to school, what degree she had, who her friends and family were, and even her future plans all before Scott had provided me with the rest of her information from much more credible sources.

Her email was filled with all kinds of junk from every sporting goods store imaginable, newsletters from gun manufacturers, some banking information, and to my surprise, there were actually a few from some cosmetic stores. Maybe she had a girly bone in her body after all.

Her credit was perfect aside from the mortgage, car, motorcycle, and a massive pile of student loans she had under her belt. Law school was not cheap. She worked as a paralegal at a prominent law firm in Detroit and made decent money for her age. Her grades were excellent, even during her undergraduate years, graduating magna cum laude with a Bachelor's Degree in psychology with a minor in political science from Wayne State University. Smart girl. But her medical records held the most color. She had been in and out of the emergency room for snowboarding and motorbike accidents when she was younger but seemed to calm down as she got older. She had her wisdom teeth and tonsils removed as well. Aside from that, no known allergies or current diseases. Her family did have a history of depression, which worried me for some reason.

As far as her family was concerned, her dad passed away from cancer four years ago, but her mom seemed to be in good health. Her two younger brothers were still in high school, while her mom worked as a hairdresser. Too bad that big sis would no longer be around to see them graduate next year.

Her criminal history was almost spotless. She had been charged with assault and battery two years ago from some guy in Macomb County, but the charges were dropped when she claimed self-defense. She had broken

two of his ribs as well as his nose. I suddenly felt proud of her after looking at the photos of the damage she had done.

As far as her driving record went, it was completely clean. Not even a parking ticket. She owned a 2014 black Dodge Challenger as well as a 2012 1299 Panigale Super Bike. Damn, she had good taste. The more I researched, the more I found myself becoming intrigued. Most of the women I knew could barely drive, and this one was operating all kinds of fun toys.

Jaden also had a concealed weapons permit and owned a nice little Sig P238 handgun, but apparently she wasn't that good of a shot since she didn't hit even one of my men. She should have gone with the 938. At least it shot nines.

And that was the extent of Scott's informative skills as a private investigator.

I sat back in my chair, staring at a single photo of Jaden on my screen and felt my chest tighten. She had an intoxicatingly beautiful smile and the amber color in her eyes warmed me from the inside out. I wondered how much longer it would be before she acted out again because judging from her lifestyle, it was very clear that she would. She would not give in to me so easily, and that was fine because I loved the fight in her. I would relish the challenge she presented, and when the time finally came for her to break down and surrender, it would be the most glorious day of all.

I grabbed the shit I needed for our special little accounting department to confirm the accounts for the auction that was coming up shortly and headed out of my office. Time to get shit rolling.

**A**s we exited the room, my legs felt wobbly and every step ached, but I carried on to the elevator with the guard pulling me alongside him. As soon as we got to the elevator, of course, who walks out of their office but the owner, looking devilishly handsome in a dark three-piece suit and carrying a manila folder. The second his eyes found mine, a smile

stretched across his face, and his steps thundered as he closed the distance between us.

“Well, look at you,” he said as he sauntered over to us. “Somebody must have finally behaved if they earned themselves a pretty little dress.”

I turned to him, narrowing my eyes, and smirked. “I thought your men could use a break.”

“Shut it!” the guard shouted, smacking me upside the head. I hunched, but my eyes remained on the owner.

*What the fuck are you doing? Stop taunting him, you idiot.*

The elevator dinged and the doors opened. The guard pushed me inside and he and the owner followed me in. As soon as the doors closed, the owner handed his folder to the guard and instantly pushed me into the corner by my throat, slamming my head against the elevator wall. His big body pressed into mine as he once again trapped me in place. God, I was so tired of this, feeling small and helpless. It just pissed me off to no end, and it made my body shake in instant aggravation.

Releasing my throat, both of his hands gently went for my shoulders as he felt my body tense. His musky cologne filled my nostrils as it mixed with the air I was now trying to suck down.

“You’re shaking,” the owner said smoothly. “Scared, little slave?”

Fuck, if I wasn’t about to bust his nose in this very second.

“Do not make the mistake of confusing my rage for fear,” I practically yelled. “I am not afraid, just seriously pissed off!”

Where in the fuck was all this energy coming from? Had I lost my fucking mind?

Instantly, his hand went back for my throat, clasping around it like a glove. My hand wrapped around the one clutching my throat as I attempted to dig my fingers under the meat of his thumb to pry him off me, but he was stronger than I expected. Failing miserably, I changed my strategy and went

to strike his nose with my palm, but he caught my wrist and pinned it against the elevator wall. My other arm continued to fight against him and he quickly trapped both my wrists in one hand, holding them up high above my head. I continued to strain against his hold as my oxygen supply slowly depleted, tears involuntarily pooling in the corners of my eyes. For every inch I struggled, the pain in my body worsened, finally motivating me to be still and attempt to relax.

“It must be so tough for you...” he growled into my ear. “Being reduced to nothing, feeling trapped with no way out; awaiting a future you have no control over...”

I continued to strain for air, trying to let his words fly over me as I fought for my inner warrior.

“I could crush your fragile little body in an instant,” he continued, squeezing tighter for emphasis; his words were like venom, poisoning my ears. “It would be so...easy. You need to accept that I’m the one who holds all the cards now, all of the control, and the sooner you realize this, the sooner you can become content with your life. There’s no use fighting it, slave. It’ll just bring you more pain...pain that I am more than happy to deliver.”

I knew what he was doing. He was trying to break me down by shadowing me with his physical dominance. He was trying to prove to me that I didn’t have a chance in hell in fighting him off, but what he didn’t realize is that the sooner I got my chance, the sooner he’d see he was dead fucking wrong. I would have told him so, but my mouth was busy with more important things.

Still keeping his hand firmly in place, he turned back to the guard.

“How did her exam go?” he asked. The guard shrugged as he leaned against the wall.

“She’s good to go, sir. Test results will be ready in a few days.”

“Excellent,” he said turning back to stare down at me. He had a dark look in his eyes and that turned my anger into ice-cold fear. What the fuck had I done?

“It was recommended though that she receive food and water. She hasn’t had either since she got here.”

I needed a lot more than food and water. Oxygen was pretty fucking important at the moment.

“See to it then. I wouldn’t want our little star wasting away her potential.”

“Yes, sir.”

With that, he released my throat and I dropped to the floor like a sack of potatoes. I coughed and wheezed for air as I had lost all my energy to my fight for oxygen. I was dizzy and weak and the second the elevator doors opened, the owner stepped out, leaving me on the floor like a pile of dirty laundry. I truly was nothing to him - to any of them - just another dollar sign.

I was not sure how I got back to my cage. The guard must have helped me somehow. When I got back, it was breakfast time and I laid on my stomach on the padding of my cage and watched as the guards carried trays containing bowls of food and bottles of water down the aisle. They placed a bowl and bottle in each cage and every girl scrambled to finish their food as fast as they could. When the guard finally placed the bowl and water in my cage, I waited for them to lock the door before cracking the bottle open and nearly draining the entire thing.

“Slow down!” Kayla shouted at me with a mouthful of food. She swallowed. “You only get three of those a day. Save some for later.”

I stopped at about a quarter of the way and looked down into the bowl. Instantly my stomach growled something fierce, and I suddenly remembered I was starving. Steaming away like a heavenly miracle was what looked like chicken stir-fry. The aroma of chicken, rice, and

vegetables filled my nose, and I didn't hesitate another second before shoving spoonfuls of food down my throat. It was very bland for a stir-fry, probably just a bag of frozen shit, but I didn't care. It was solid and I was starving. I finished my food in three minutes and placed the bowl at the door of my cage where the guards eventually came back to collect them.

Feeling full and drained, I laid back down on my side and closed my eyes.

“You okay?” asked Kayla.

“I'm fine,” I mumbled. “Just need to rest, I think.” And I drowned myself in a good long nap that would last nearly the rest of the day.

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I t had been two days since my last encounter with the owner, but with a little food, water, and rest, I could already feel my strength returning to me. Every now and then, I would stretch my body with what little room I had in my cage, relaxing the tension in my muscles and expanding the blood flow in them. I could see Kayla taking mental notes as she watched me.

She and I were becoming pretty close now with so much time and nothing to do. She reminded me of home and we reminisced a lot about the bipolar tendencies of Michigan weather and the fun of dodging the potholes when the snow finally melted. If we hadn't met in such a shitty situation, we might have become friends at another time.

Earlier that day, I had my follow-up with the doctor. I was healing nicely and had been deemed clear of any STDs or other illnesses I might have had. My anxiety spiked a little as I realized the precautions used on me days before were no longer necessary, especially after the doctor placed a birth control implant in my arm. I hadn't fought against it. There was no way I wanted to bring a child into the kind of world I was now living in.

About an hour after the guards escorted me back to my cage, three guards came strolling in, their boots pounding away on the floor, sending echoes through the room and giving way to the scowl that now formed on my face.

"Shower time!" the lead guard shouted. As he got closer, I realized it was Jared.

*So, the son of a bitch had lived...*

I suddenly realized how much it didn't bother me if I really had killed him. It should have, but it didn't. Probably because I thought none of these sadistic motherfuckers deserved to live. They were nothing to me. As far as I was concerned, the world was probably better off without them, and if I had the chance, I didn't have a single doubt that I would end all of their lives if I could.

As Jared limped his sorry ass to the cages, he instructed his men to let out five girls. They lined them up against the wall, and then took them out of the hallway in a perfect line; he in the lead while the other two guards flanked the line of whimpering girls.

"Where are they taking them?" I asked Kayla. She shrugged.

"There's a locker room with a bunch of showers at the end of the hallway. They give you a bar of soap and a small bottle of shampoo so you look nicer and smell better for the auction. You even get a small bottle of mouthwash."

"How considerate of them," I replied.

"Only the best for us." She smiled sarcastically.

I smiled back at her. The fact that either of us was capable of finding the smallest ounce of light in this darkness was worth more than all the treasure in the world. I was glad to have someone like her next to me. The other girl on my right never said a word, obviously too terrified to open her mouth anymore thanks to the bruises all over her body from the last time she must have spoken up.

About fifteen minutes later, the guards came back with the girls now cleaner than before with dripping wet hair. Even their dresses looked cleaner and neater. The idea of getting to shower appealed to me, but I was sure we would be under scrutinizing eyes and I had a feeling an absent pair would still be watching from afar.

Once the girls were back in their cages, they came down to the next five; Kayla and I included. The two girls before me were let out, but before my cage was unlocked, I watched as Jared made his way over to my cage and leaned over it, looking down at me with his stupid smug face.

“You gonna behave yourself?” he asked me gruffly.

*You gonna eat a dick?*

I gave him a curt little smile. “Of course, sir,” I replied sweetly. He didn’t look too convinced, which was fine by me. It gave me too much pleasure knowing the pain he was feeling in his side was all thanks to me.

Jared nodded at the guard before leaning down to unlock my cage. As I crawled out and walked to join the other girls, I couldn’t help but look down and notice how his hand blocked the wound from me, as if he needed to protect it further. I couldn’t stop the smile that crept across my face.

“Something funny, bitch!” Jared yelled, grabbing my head with his big hand and slamming it into the concrete wall. I pushed my hands up in an attempt to lessen the blow as he pressed my skull into the concrete blocks, causing the skin at my temple to split. A throbbing pain now pounded away at my head as I tried to push away from the wall. “I said...is something funny, bitch?” he snarled into my ear.

The girls around me whimpered as they tried to put as much distance between them and us as allowed, but all I could think about was throwing my elbow back into his gut and reopening the stitches I was sure were holding his wound together. But I was outnumbered as usual and I did actually want a shower.

“No, sir,” I finally winced into the wall.

“I didn’t think so,” he replied and then brought his mouth down to my ear. “I’d be extra careful if I were you. I just might be the next one to have a go at that sweet little pussy of yours.”

*Good luck with that...*

He then released my head and I practically threw myself off the wall in anger. I didn't give him the satisfaction of showing I was in pain by rubbing my temples, so I kept my arms at my sides and took deep quiet breaths to soothe my aching brain.

Kayla then joined behind me, as did the last girl and we soon found ourselves being led out of the room and down the end of the hallway. Jared opened a door to the right, which led into a locker room. We followed him further until we reached a room tiled from floor to ceiling, drains and all, with what seemed like ten shower heads.

Jared turned around and grabbed a box that was sitting on a wooden bench next to him. Holding the box and his hand out, he said "Give me your clothes. You all have five minutes, so make them count."

One by one, we all reluctantly pulled our dresses off and placed the thin material in his open hand. We took what he had to offer in the box, making our way into the shower room. I could feel Jared's glare as I reached into the box he held, taking a little bar of soap, a bottle of shampoo, and a small container of mouthwash which were all tied together with a rubber band. I glared right back at him before making my way under a showerhead with Kayla close behind me.

Pulling on the lever, cold water came shooting out, spraying down on my sore and filthy feet. I swigged back the mouthwash, swishing it in my mouth as I waited the twenty seconds it took for the water to heat up before stepping under and engulfing my body in the warmth of the spray. My skin shuddered as a wave of comfort flooded my skin, coating my muscles in a dense heat and releasing the tension that had built up inside.

I swished the mouthwash for as long as possible, wanting to remove as much bacteria from my mouth as I could before finally spitting it out down the drain. It wasn't the same as a toothbrush, but my mouth felt considerably cleaner than it had before. After about a minute, I realized I only had so much time and immediately began shampooing my hair.

Thankfully, it was barely mid-length so it wasn't that difficult to manage yet.

The shampoo wasn't anything luxurious - smelled like motel shit, to be honest, but I didn't care. I was cleaning my hair and it felt amazing to wash away all the dirt and grime that had built up over the last couple of days. I hadn't even felt the sting of the torn flesh on my temple until I saw the blood drip down onto the tile floor. The shampoo hadn't helped calm it down much either. As I rinsed my hair, I lathered up the bar of soap and scrubbed my body as best I could. Unfortunately, they couldn't wash away my new collection of bruises as I watched the soap rinse away over my skin.

"Time's up!" Jared yelled.

I slumped a little at that. Five minutes was not long enough to rinse away all the bullshit that had happened in the last few days, but I couldn't do shit about that. In a fit of slight rebellion, I gave myself five more seconds before turning the glorious hot spray off. I then rung out my soaking wet hair and joined the rest of the girls as we made our way back into line.

Before I could take my place, a backhand came swiftly through the air and crashed into the side of my face. I didn't even try to conceal the scowl that formed on my face as my cheek began to redden and swell.

"When I tell you that time's up," Jared seethed, pointing his stupid fucking finger right in my face, "that means time...is fucking...up!"

I was fuming now. Obviously, Jared was still a little pissed at me for nearly gutting him, but it was not my fault that he sucked at defending himself.

"Get your fucking hand out of my face," I practically growled at him, swatting his hand away and snarling.

All at once, everyone's eyes were on me, but mine were too busy staring down Jared's. I could feel the room stiffen, tension coating the walls as

Jared's face lit up with my insubordination. I didn't care if this warranted some kind of punishment. I wanted this fucker to see that I wasn't scared of him, or any of them, for that matter.

"You defiant little bitch," he fumed and went after me. Bad move.

I saw his hand coming for my throat a mile away, and I instinctively blocked it, grabbing and twisting his wrist in the most painful way. Keeping his arm straight and locking his elbow in place, I quickly pulled him forward and pressed my other hand down on his shoulder to force his body lower to allow my knee to slam into his face three times before I finally let him fall back, clutching his now bloody and broken nose.

I felt rejuvenated as my body was once again able to perform close to my normal abilities. My back was still sore and stiff, but I could push through it thanks to that second of a shower.

The girls around me flocked away as the two guards came after me, but I was already ready for them. My skin was still slick with moisture as I slid out of their grip as they tried to restrain me so Jared could finish the job. Elbows and fists flew out, connecting with faces and guts as I fought with everything I had.

Once I was sure I had the attention of all three guards, I gave wings to the escape of the other girls. "Run! Get out! Go! Now!" I shouted at them, hoping at least one of them could make their way out of here. But only two of them took off, the quiet girl next to me and Kayla, while the other two stood there frozen with fear, too afraid to move. Kayla had given me one last look before she ran out the door. Hopefully, she'd make it out and send for help.

"Shit! Go after them!" Jared yelled at the guards. The two of them then took off after Kayla and the other girl while I continued distracting Jared.

"You fucking bitch. Now, you're dead," he seethed, blood splattered all over his face from his nose, but I only smiled and held out my arms.

"Come at me, bro."

Before he got another shot, he attempted another fist toward my face, but just as his arm extended, I had already kicked him in his wound, following through with a kick to the head. Jared grunted loudly and doubled over while I ducked low to the ground fast, grabbing the back of both of his ankles and yanked them forward as hard as I could. Jared's feet flew up in the air as he landed hard on his back, effectively knocking the wind from his chest.

“Fuck! You stupid little whore!” he bellowed with pain as he curled into himself.

I just laughed as I slowly made my way over to him. I wanted to savor this while I still had the chance.

“How’s that pussy taste now, bitch?” I asked bitterly. He just groaned an agitated growl in response.

I took a split second to grab one of the clean dresses from the pile that was sitting on one of the benches and quickly threw it on. I was still soaking wet, but I didn’t care. I was sure a battle was about to ensue somewhere and I didn’t want to be naked for it. I only spared five seconds and as soon as I was covered, I raged my ass over to Jared, ready to light him up as he continued to moan like a bitch on the floor.

Adrenaline rushed through my veins as I stood over him, not hesitating for another second as I began slamming axe kicks down onto his ribs as hard as I could before I finally climbed on top of him. Totally lost in my element, I rained down punches and hammer fists to his face, groin, stomach, and now his open bleeding wound with everything I had, his body flinching and flailing with each blow.

“Fuck! You! You stupid! Son of a! Bitch!” I screamed at him after every blow; he barely put his hands up to defend himself.

All my frustration - all my anger and rage - was taken out on him. He was the reason I was there, he was the reason my life was being taken away from me, and he was the reason for so many others. I wanted him dead, I

wanted all of them dead, and as I continued to bust my now bruised and bloodied knuckles into him, I didn't care if I beat him to death.

Everything seemed to last for hours, but my entire altercation probably lasted only a few seconds, maybe even mere minutes because before I knew what was happening, I felt a long thick arm slink around my waist, pulling me roughly from Jared's limp body, forcing me into a wide hard chest. I fought like a crazed animal, kicking my legs back, and throwing an elbow at whoever's face I could find until I was turned around and slammed into a wall.

I continued my fight until I finally looked up to find dangerous dark blue eyes staring back at me with a ferocity that momentarily froze my fight response. My stomach clenched and spiraled as I realized it was the last person I wanted to see right now. The owner.

I stared back at him with the same intensity as the initial shock of his presence wore off, and I quickly found my voice as anger surged through my body once again.

"Get the fuck off me!" I shouted, refusing to look at the man who acted like a second wall as I fought and clawed at anything I could touch. "This is such bullshit! Let me go!"

Before I could manage another word, his giant hand shot out to grip my throat, essentially silencing me as I choked on my own words. "You're not going anywhere, little girl. Not after this," he drawled into my ear.

At this point, I'd had enough with his hand constantly at my throat. I wrapped my right hand on the underside of his wrist while my left shot out against his elbow. He bent it just in time, essentially only causing his arm to move slightly as he absorbed my attack. Had he kept his arm straight, I could have broken his elbow. It didn't deter me though, as I continued to strike the same spot several more times before he released my throat and captured both my hands in his, pinning them above my head.

I continued my fight, attempting more use of my knees, but the owner just roughly pressed himself into me, crushing me against the wall. Tears welled in the corners of my eyes as all my frustration came out and I screamed and cursed out loud until I finally gave up my struggle and just waited for death to come. I hadn't thought about dying for my actions, but thinking about it now, I was sure I deserved it all over again.

Just then, the two guards came back with Kayla and the other girl squirming and screaming in their arms. I felt my insides shrink as I looked back at Kayla, confirming her failed attempt at escape. She now looked scared for me. I was sure she probably should be.

"Get them back in their cages. Punish the two who ran," the owner barked, still keeping a tight grip on my throat.

*Oh, God, Kayla, I'm sorry.*

"And get someone to clean this piece of shit off the floor." He nodded over to Jared.

"Yes, sir," they said in unison and got the other girls back in line and out the door, leaving me with the owner and a fucked-up Jared on the floor.

"You never cease to amaze me," the owner spoke down to me harshly. I was not expecting those words from him after what I had just done. I gave him a puzzled look as I continued to fight for air. You'd think my body would be used to this by now. "That was another valiant attempt, sacrificing yourself like that...but still pretty fucking stupid." His eyes were dark, sinking me further into the ocean of his fury and penetrating my soul, revealing to me how easily he could take it if he wanted to.

"When are you going to learn," I started to choke out. "That taking me...was pretty fucking stupid."

A cruel smile crept across his lips as a low chuckle vibrated up his throat.

"It looks like I'm going to have to make good on my promise, aren't I?"

I raised an eyebrow in confusion. What the fuck promise was he referring to?

Pulling me from the wall, he grabbed a chunk of my wet hair from the back of my head and dragged my thrashing defiant ass out of the locker room. His grip on my hair was so tight that it blinded me with pain as he tugged me along down the hall. Keeping his arm down at his side so I had to crouch and walk at the same time, he dragged me along, up the stairs, and toward the elevator. When the doors opened, he threw me inside and I crashed against the steel walls hard. Following me in, he pressed the button for the third floor and pushed his hard body against mine, backing me into the corner of the elevator and trapping me there.

“I’m impressed by your determination and ferocity, Miss Wilder,” he said, sneering down to me. “Most slaves break pretty easily after one session with me. But not you, no. Apparently, you want some more.”

Fuck, fuck, fuck. He must be right because I couldn’t follow the rules around here to save my life. Literally. But I was so pissed and I didn’t care what happened next. The dam to my adrenaline broke loose and I felt a surge of fury roll out of me like a lightning storm.

“Okay, look,” I said staring up at him as my heart practically leaped out of my chest. “You’re obviously a businessman so I’m sure we can come to some kind of understanding here.”

He cocked an eyebrow at me, obviously entertained by my sudden change of attitude.

“Are you seriously trying to negotiate with me, right now?” he asked, completely surprised.

“Yes, in fact, I think another session with you would be a serious waste of both of our time.”

“And why would you say that?”

“Because it won’t do anything. You can hurt me all you want, but I meant what I said before. I will never be done. I will never stop fighting.

And the sooner you realize that, the sooner we can both stop wasting our time.”

*Commence gunshot to head.*

“Is that a challenge, Miss Wilder?” he said, narrowing his eyes.

“No, it’s a cold, hard fucking fact,” I seethed.

It was probably a bad idea to poke the bear, but even the largest of bears could be killed, and I was going to be the one to pull the fucking trigger.

“This is going to be so much fun.” He smiled, stepping away from me and watching the lights at the top of the door change to the fifth floor.

My adrenaline spiked again and I suddenly forgot about the pain in my temple. Determination and pure rage took complete control of me and I finally released everything that had been building up inside since the day they first brought me here.

I didn’t even wait for the doors to open as I went straight for a sidekick, striking him right in the ribs. I could see a small wince as he grabbed my leg and tossed me out of the elevator. As he exited, I spun around quickly, jumped off the nearby wall with my foot and landed a Superman punch right against his left eye.

He grunted at the impact, just as surprised at my sudden burst of energy as I was. Though my fist made contact, he ignored it, grabbing my body and throwing me to the ground hard. I broke my fall, rolling and slamming my arm down to stop my momentum, ultimately landing on my back, and allowing the ache in my muscles to steadily return. He then swung his leg up, coming down for an axe kick, but I rolled out of the way as his foot came crashing down on the carpet.

Back on my feet, I waited for his next move. He threw a fast right hook, but I just barely dodged it, grabbing his arm and using his momentum to trap it and attempt to force my knee into his gut and groin. But it was as if he could read my mind because, before I could even lift my knee, his arm twisted out of my grasp, turned me around, and wrapped his arm around my

neck, putting me in a rear naked choke. I struggled against him, attempting to pull his arm away from my throat as I fought for air.

“Surely, this isn’t the best you can do,” he mocked in my ear as he held me tight.

*Oh, game on, asshole...*

Keeping calm, I let go of his elbow, reached down, and pinched the inside of his inner thigh as hard as I could all the while driving my heel up and into his groin. He flinched just enough for me to loosen out of his grip and elbow him in the ribs before I leaped away from him and turned around.

I fought to regain my composure and catch my breath as he had already regained his. He smiled at me then, stirring my stomach up and sending little chills up my spine. Fuck, he was enjoying this.

“Now, that’s better,” he smirked.

“Come on.” I welcomed him and readied my stance. The smile he had on was even bigger than before. I merely glared in response.

In two long strides, he came at me, charging in with a sidekick. I shuffled to the side, barely making it out of the way in time before twisting my body and turning into a reverse hook kick. He dodged it, leaning to the side before sweeping my standing leg out from under me as I completed my kick. I fell to the ground on my back hard, and I grunted in response, pain flaring up and causing me to wince.

When I looked up, the owner was leaning over me with his hands on his knees.

“Don’t tell me you’re done already,” he mocked again.

*Motherfucker...*

Faster than lightning, I kicked at his face, but he veered away before I kipped up and landed on my two feet, hands at the ready. I then went after him. Amusement covered his face as I went for a roundhouse kick to his head, which he blocked, returning the favor with a quick elbow to the side

of my head. I blocked that, which took every ounce of force I had as I then countered with a reverse punch to his gut, but missed completely.

Blocks and counterattacks were exchanged over and over again, and I had to give it to him, he was fast. But something was off about his fight. Somehow, it felt like he was holding back, and this pissed me off like crazy. I was giving everything I had, and getting nowhere, while he wasn't even winded. Fuck.

We paused, my breathing coming in and out in heavy gusts, him watching me like a lion ready for the kill. He kept himself moving, slowing beginning to circle me, but my hands and eyes followed him the entire time. I would never turn my back to him.

I glared at him as he continued to circle me, his eyes never leaving mine as my body turned with his. It was then though that I realized what I feared most. He was just toying with me. He could have ended me at any moment. The more we fought, the more I could feel him holding back, taking hits when he didn't have to. Why he was taking them, I hadn't a clue. Maybe he wanted to see how hard I could hit - see if I was even worth the fight?

"You're holding back." I pointed at him as I tried to calm my breathing.  
"Why?"

He looked at me with a smirk and shrugged. "We both know I could have ended this five minutes ago."

"That's debatable," I replied.

"Is it?" He laughed. "Which one of us is winded again? I'm not sure I can tell."

"I am fighting at half capacity here."

"And now you're making excuses for yourself."

"I think that given the circumstances, I'm entitled to them!" I shouted at him.

"Maybe, but excuses won't win you a fight against me," he tsked.  
"Actually, nothing will, but it's cute that you're trying."

I furrowed my brows. Cute?

“Again. Debatable,” I sneered.

He shrugged again. “Maybe I’m just enjoying this too much to end it too soon.”

“Well, I’m done playing games.”

“Now, that’s debatable,” he pointed out with a smirk.

My face twisted into a scowl as I glared into his pretty face - the pretty face I wanted to bash in until it was bloody and broken.

Okay, break time was over. Time to seriously step it up a notch.

“Let’s go,” I challenged.

He didn’t hesitate for a second.

He came at me this time, coming in with a jab straight for my face, but I dodged it, bent low and fast, and brought my back leg up into a high scorpion kick, landing my heel right into his chin before righting myself and punching him in the groin.

He took a step back and rubbed his chin before giving me a chuckle and a smile. “Now, that was impressive.” He chuckled.

“I’m just getting started,” I seethed. He stared at me for another few seconds before giving me another smirk.

“God, I hope so,” he beamed. And then he charged at me again.

I moved, running and jumping off the wall and going for another hit straight to his face. But he saw it coming and caught my body before slamming me straight into the wall, the pain I had forgotten in my back igniting tenfold.

I cried out as he forced himself between my legs and I wrapped them tightly around his waist, attempting to keep him at a distance. My fist then instantly went for his jaw as he kept me pinned against the wall, but he just gripped my wrists and held them tightly on either side of my head. I struggled against him, pulling from his grip, but I was just tiring myself out.

“Is that all?” He chuckled above me.

I stared up at him, glaring and baring my teeth with all the rage in the world before I finally head-butted his nose, causing his blood to explode all over me. The look on his face was priceless, but short lived as he then grabbed my ribs and tossed me across the hallway. I landed on my shoulder and rolled across the carpet onto my hands and knees, but the impact was not soft. Pushing through my roll, I let my momentum carry me back up to my feet and turned to face him. The pain in my back was now becoming unbearable, and I wasn't sure how much longer I could go.

I knew I was better than this. I knew my conditioning to handle a long fight was excellent, but this guy didn't let up. Not to mention, he hadn't gone through a belt buckle whipping a few days ago. My circumstances were so shitty, it made winning impossible, but I couldn't make excuses for myself. I had to keep going. I had to at least show him that I wasn't going to give up at the first sight of a leak in my boat.

He charged at me this time, ferocity clouding his face and making me want to cower away, but I forced myself to remain steady. I kicked my leg out into a front kick, but it didn't do much as he took the brunt of my kick before slamming his elbow into the side of my head. I jerked to the side, wincing and groaning in response to the ache now pulsing at my temple, but I shook my head and brushed it off. Blood was now seeping out of his nose as he came after me again, his arm reaching out for my throat. I grabbed it this time, turning my body and bringing my leg up for another kick to his face, just barely grazing the underside of his chin before he blocked it down and then backhanded me across the face. It sent me crashing to the floor, the initial shock flooding my body as pain exploded in the side of my face. I could taste blood in my mouth.

"Well, someone's angry," I said, gasping for air as I wiped the blood from my lips.

I kept my eyes on the owner, staring him down before spitting blood on his carpeted floor and standing to my full height. He glared at me

something fierce that gave fear a new meaning, but I couldn't back down. Not now. Not while there was still fight left in me.

And again we danced, but the amount of energy it took to block the strength in his attacks took too much out of me. He was dragging our fight out on purpose, draining my energy until I struggled to even dodge him. He managed to trip me a third time, and as I landed on my back, the strength to roll over was nearly gone. I felt his presence growing nearer and before I realized what was happening, he was straddling me. I looked up to find his smug face covered in sweet satisfaction as he stared down at me, clearly claiming himself the victor,. But I had one more ace up my sleeve.

“Time to surrender, little slave,” he sneered.

I shook my head at him, purposely whispering unintelligible words. Surrender was not on the table yet. In an attempt to hear me, he brought his face down to my ear just as I wanted him to.

“I don’t think I quite heard that,” he whispered in my ear and then I made my final move. I turned my head to the side and bit him right in the throat. I clamped my teeth down hard on flesh and tore what I could. Unfortunately, the collar on his shirt prevented me from making a lethal bite, but I took what I could get. I heard him groan as he gripped my hair so tight that I thought the strands would rip from my head. I immediately let go, small amounts of blood coating my mouth as I screeched from the pain he was now causing in the back of my head.

I tried to claw at his face, but before I could make my hands even move, he slammed my head into the floor by my hair. I groaned as stars appeared in my vision as I tried to reclaim my vertigo, but the pounding ache in the back of my head was a little distracting. And then I felt myself suddenly airborne. My body crashed against the side of the wall, the ache in my head now spreading into my ribs and back as I doubled over onto the floor.

My energy nearly gone, I attempted to pick myself off the ground, but as I did, I felt the owner grab me again and toss me further down the hall. I

landed hard on the floor, rolling on my side until I came up against the wall. I was exhausted now, having nothing left to go on but sheer willpower. It wasn't enough though, and I knew I was going to lose the fight.

I could hear the footsteps of the owner thundering away on the carpet as he came for me, causing the fear to begin to boil up inside. I couldn't help but cringe a little as I turned my head, tucking it away under my arm in a feeble attempt to protect myself from him. He reached down for my throat, but I swatted his arm away, deflecting with an attempted punch to his gut. He caught my wrist mid-strike and held it tight, squeezing until I thought it would break. I cried out at the pain as his other hand came down again and picked me up by my throat, my feet actually dangling above the floor. Fuck, how strong was this guy?

I lifted my leg to kick at him, but he anticipated that and just slammed me against the wall again, holding me there by my neck. I felt the blood pressure in my head increase while my eyes felt like they were about to pop out of my head as tears welled in the corners. I struggled against him, but he just reinforced his grip, forcing my head up to look at him. His eyes were dark and dangerous as blood coated his nostrils.

“The things I am going to do to you,” he snarled, leaning down into my ear.

I was so fucked.

The owner dragged me further down the hall, still grasping my throat as I continued to struggle against him. I had no energy left, and he knew it. Opening a door to his left, he walked through and tossed me in. I stumbled forward, staggering to my knees as I fought to catch my breath and calm my pounding heart, but I knew there would be no such luck. Maybe he would just kill me and I could finally be done with this place.

Looking around, I realized I was in some sort of torture room. Fear spiked in my entire body as I took in my surroundings. There was another large four-poster bed against the wall to my left and, this time, I could visibly see the restraints hanging from each post. To my right, in the corner, was a Saint Andrew's Cross, and hanging next to it on the wall was a series of whips, crops, chains, and canes. A dresser with a mirror stood adjacent to the wall of the whips, while another door nearby was slightly ajar, leading into what looked like a bathroom. A bar, similar to the one in his office, stood against the wall to my left and a mini fridge sat on the floor next to it. There was also a pair of chains hanging from the center of the ceiling with metal cuffs attached at the ends, while another set of cuffs rested on the floor beneath the hanging set, and multiple different pieces of furniture were scattered about the room. What the fuck had I gotten myself into?

After quickly closing the door and locking it with the keys in his pocket, the owner turned and came at me, his large hand digging into my stringy damp hair and pulling me forward. I kicked his ribs with my foot, but he

jerked my head to the side, creating a sharp pain in my neck and tightening his grip on my scalp.

He dragged me over to the dresser and pushed me to the floor, planting his foot between my shoulder blades and keeping me in place. I struggled beneath him, but realized the more that I struggled, the stronger the pain flourished in my already badly damaged back.

My heart raced as I heard him reach for the drawers above me, pulling out what looked like a black metal box, and placed it on the dresser. Unlocking it with the keys he kept in his pocket, he took out another capped syringe with a clear liquid in it and brought it down to my face.

“Do you know what this is?” he asked, his eyes boring into mine.

“How the fuck should I know?” I spat.

“It’s a special drug that when injected, prevents a person from blacking out. But my favorite part about this little guy is its ability to over sensitize the nerve endings, magnifying touch by ten times. So, in short,” he said, his voice coming low and spilling into my ear, “you’re gonna feel everything and then some, and there will be no darkness for you to escape to.”

*Fuck.*

I fought hard against him again, but he pressed his entire body into me and forced the needle into my skin.

“No!” I screeched.

I could feel the liquid going into my arm as it traveled into my bloodstream. Within seconds, the pain in my back intensified and I tried to stifle my cries, but they came out as heavy loud gasps. He then gripped my hair again and pulled me to my feet, sending sharp electric pains through my scalp and down my neck. Fighting him only made the pain worse.

Heaving me over to the hanging chains, he leaned my body against his and yanked my hands above my head, clasping them into the metal cuffs. I fought harder and harder, but his strength had overpowered mine like a cruel joke. As he bent down to clasp my ankles, I almost managed to knee

him in the face, but he quickly shoved my leg back down and slapped me against my thigh. I yelped at his touch, realizing that even though he looked like he barely used any force, it felt like my skin would split open.

After clasping my ankles in the cuffs, he stood back and admired his work. His eyes trailed up and down my body, taking me in and curling his lips into a cruel smile. I hated him so much then. I wanted to claw the blue from his eyes until my fingernails bled with vengeance.

He then left me to head into the bathroom, most likely to wash off the blood from his nose and neck. When he returned a few short moments later, his face was all clean and pretty. He smiled down at me and closed in until his chest nearly touched my nose. My breathing rate increased as his hand slowly reached out for my face and tucked my damp loose strands behind my ear. He then tipped my chin up with his forefinger to meet his gaze, but I averted my eyes. I couldn't bear the sight of him.

"Look at me," he commanded.

I exhaled and slowly brought my eyes to his, terrified of what I might find. And then I felt it. Underlying his boiling rage was the electricity that flowed between us. It made me dizzy, yet sensitized my skin to the point where I could feel even the slightest shift in the air. The burning chill in his eyes slowly iced my blood to sleet and I suddenly shivered from an extreme cold that enveloped my entire body.

"I wasn't kidding when I said I was impressed by your strength, and considering you're the first slave who has ever drawn blood from me, I suppose I should regard you with a certain level of respect for your efforts...but that's not going to happen," he said, his hand now stretching across my jaw.

"Do you remember what I told you after I fucked that tight little pussy of yours?"

I held my breath. I remembered exactly what he said.

"I asked you a question," he growled, tightening his grip on my jaw.

“You said...if you had to...you would fuck me into submission.”

“And how often did I say I would do that?” he continued.

“Every day,” I gulped.

“Would you like me to fuck you every day?”

“No,” I whispered.

“Then what do you need to do to avoid that?” he asked, intently. I closed my eyes. I was not ready to admit defeat. “Answer me, slave,” he jerked me. “What do you need to do?”

“...submit...” I finally said.

“Good girl,” he replied, finally releasing my face and walking away from me.

He went over to the wall behind me and took something from the mini fridge next to the bar. He strolled back over to me holding a bottle of water. Suddenly, I was very aware of how dry my mouth had become. It was amazing what adrenaline could make you forget.

He twisted the cap and took a sip. “Thirsty?” he asked, tilting the bottle toward me. I shook my head. I refused to accept anything from this man no matter how much I wanted or needed it. He then took the bottle and tipped it over my head, ice-cold water spilling over my hair and dripping down in heavy freezing rivers. He walked around me, emptying the bottle over my back and, finally, my breasts and legs.

I bawled as my body trembled and shivered as the water traveled down my skin, chilling every square inch it touched until it felt like razors dragging over my body. My now soaking wet dress clinging to my body as it absorbed all the water. Tossing the empty bottle over his shoulder, he headed back to the dresser and pulled out a silky black blindfold. Sauntering back over to me, he tied it firmly over my eyes, effectively blinding me. My fear instantly spiked as I listened to him circle around me, his footsteps causing my heart to thump louder with each deliberate step.

I could feel his fingers slowly tracing down my cheek as he moved to stand in front of me. Darkness consumed me while panic followed not far behind, but I tried to calm myself, relying on my other senses to place the owner.

“Do you know what you are?” he asked me suddenly.

“No...?”

“No, what?” he snarled.

“No, sir,” I stated.

“You know exactly what you are, and it’s time for you to admit it to yourself.”

I shook my head.

“Don’t you dare deny it,” he rumbled, grabbing at my sore and now bruised throat again. “What are you?” His hand tightened and a dull ache throbbed in my neck from his unwavering grip.

I shook my head again, my breathing labored and harsh. His palm crashed against my face and I screamed at the impact, feeling like a sheet of broken glass had slapped me. Fuck, this drug was effective.

“I don’t like to repeat myself. I will ask you one more time, what are you?”

My pride was going to get me killed, but I refused to break. My heart was pounding out of my chest from the pain that was now throbbing in my face as I sucked in oxygen. Continuing to shake my head, I almost started to cry. My body began to tremble from what I knew was sure to come.

“Very well,” he said, and grabbed the top of my dress with both hands.

He slowly ripped the material in half like it was paper, exposing my body to him completely. I endeavored to cross my legs and turn myself away from him, but it was a joke. I could practically hear him smiling as he took in the sight before him. Me, naked, chained, blindfolded, soaking wet, and trembling in fear as I waited for him to deliver on something that was

probably meant to break me for good. I couldn't let him, though. I couldn't give in, no matter what he did. I would survive this. I would survive him.

"Such a beautiful sight," he leaned forward to whisper in my ear. I recoiled away.

"Fuck you," I whispered back defiantly.

I heard him chuckle as he walked away and tossed his jacket on one of the pieces of furniture before lifting something from the wall that contained the whips and chains. My body shook even harder. With my eyesight taken from me, I would have no idea what he was about to do. The fear of the unknown instantly intensified, and somehow, I knew he was counting on that.

I listened intently as his footsteps brought him closer to my still freezing cold, soaking wet body. His presence alone was excruciating enough, his energy palpable and intense with every step he took and it made me cringe in response. Whatever he had pulled from the wall, he traced it over my skin, electrifying my newly sensitized nerves. It felt like a cane. Fuck. I had heard about those causing a lot of damage if not controlled properly. Somehow, I had a feeling this asshole knew exactly what he was doing.

"I'm going to give you one last chance," he said, rolling up his sleeves.

I whimpered slightly, unable to contain my fear, but I couldn't give in, no matter how much I wanted to.

"Go to hell," I finally bit out.

Listening to the cane slash through the air, it landed swiftly against my bare wet ass with a fury that lit my skin on fire. I screamed against the impact, the pain traveling through my flesh and devastating my nerve endings.

"Perhaps I'll take you with me, then!" he roared, slapping the cane against my other cheek.

I cried out again as the bite of the cane seared into my flesh. I took fast and hard breaths, in and out, trying to breathe through the pain. Another

smack landed against the back of my wet thighs, and I screamed again, feeling the welts form from the impact. Strike after strike came down on the back of my drenched legs and ass, and I could no longer fight back the tears as they spilled down my face. I quietly whimpered to myself, releasing some of the anguish hidden behind my resolve.

He strolled around me now, smacking the inside of my thighs, leaving behind more welts and bruises as he did. I leaned my head back and pulled against my restraints, but the metal of the cuffs just bit into my wrists and made the pain even worse. Another strike came at my abdomen, sharp throbbing heat spreading over my skin, and I thought I would vomit, but luckily, there was nothing in my stomach to release. I could hear the sound of the strikes echo in the room closely followed by my screams. My body was on fire and there wasn't shit I could do about it.

"You can end this, you know," he said, circling me. "You can stop this from continuing at any time. The sooner you accept your place, the sooner we can get you sold and on your way."

*Because that sounded so much better.*

"Is this really how you want things to end? You want to die here? Like this? Because that's exactly where you're headed if you don't submit," he snarled, slamming the cane against my shoulder. I screamed again, rocking back and forth in my chains from the blow. The blindfold was soaked, my sweat and tears mixing into the fabric and stinging my eyes.

As he continued to beat me, I realized I hadn't even begged him to stop. Hadn't screamed to be let go; I had barely even said a word. I knew deep down that begging was pointless and he would probably just enjoy my groveling anyway. I didn't want to give this man a single ounce of satisfaction. Instead, I just took his fury, realizing I had no other choice in the matter.

"Your freedom is gone. There is nothing left but to submit to your new role. No matter how strong you think your resolve is, I will break it down.

You think you're the first slave to rebel? You're not and you certainly won't be the last. Just know this..." he came real close to my ear, "...one way or another, every slave always breaks."

*Fuck him.*

He rose again, circling me like the predator he was, twirling the cane between his fingers before slamming it against my ribs, and forcing another scream from my scorched throat. I could feel my skin breaking under the force of the cane, blood spreading from my wounds as it coated my flesh.

*Go to your happy place... Go to your happy place...*

I closed my eyes and tried to imagine Jason. I tried to imagine his soft green eyes staring at me through chocolate brown hair that hung down past his eyebrows. I tried to imagine his beautiful smile, the smile that always stretched a little wider when he told me he loved me. I tried to remember how warm he felt, how happy he made me, but the storm of reality thundered above me as the bite of that fucking cane slammed into my upper abdomen, dragging me back into the Hell I fought to escape from.

I immediately slouched forward, sucking my abs in and forgetting how to breathe as more pain radiated throughout my midsection.

As much as I tried to fight it, my plan of distraction never lasted long. The drug saw to that. I was stuck in this torment until the owner was finished with me.

I didn't want to break; I wasn't sure if I even could. Did I want to die like this? Was it better than the alternative? If I did choose to die, I would have no chance of ever seeing my family again, and I would never be able to exact my vengeance on the people who did this to me. But giving in to them made me feel weak and my pride had a huge problem with that. I was supposed to be the tough chick, the one that no one dared to mess with, and now here I was, chained up, beaten, and crying like a little bitch.

The cane came down again, striking hard into the side of my thigh, my voice no longer audible. My throat felt ripped to shreds as my screams tore

from my body in bulk.

“Yes...scream for me, little girl,” he growled. “It’s making me hard.”

“You disgust me,” I snarled, my voice croaking with each word.

His response was that of a low chuckle that twisted warm knots in my belly.

Three more strikes came down against my back with only wretched silence spearing from my throat. I hunched into myself, straining against the cuffs on my wrists, attempting to break free from them to no avail. Hopeless exhaustion flooded me like a tsunami as I came to acknowledge the reality of my current state of existence. I was in so much pain, both physically and mentally, and I found myself wanting to give in simply because it seemed so liberating now. This relentless torture would not cease until I gave this man what he wanted, but what would happen if I did? Would he even stop or would he continue to hurt me until my new “status” was so far etched into my brain that I wouldn’t even remember my own name? Was that what they wanted? Mindless sex robots incapable of thinking or doing anything unless instructed? After everything I had been through, after everything I had suffered, that was the one fear that terrified me far more than any other threat they could present me with. I refused to lose myself in this world they wanted me to succumb to. I could not forget who I was or where I came from - where there were still people who loved and cared for me. I would not forget them.

But still...I might have to bend to avoid breaking...

Finally, the owner put the cane down on the bed and walked somewhere in the room behind me. I could hear him rolling something over and stopped it right in front of me. He then stood behind me and ripped the blindfold from my face. It took my eyes a second to adjust to the light, and when they did, they settled on the reflection of a person before me who I didn’t recognize.

Her tear-stained face was vacant and hollow and she was battered and bruised all over; her arms hung above her head in chains, and her red hair was wet and disheveled as it fell around her shoulders. Sweat and dirt covered her naked body with traces of blood accompanying it, and a large bruise in the shape of a shoepoint dominated her chest, commanding all of the attention.

Fuck, this girl was me. And behind her stood the monster responsible for her horrifying appearance.

Looking at myself this way made the pain so much worse. I hadn't seen my reflection in days, but I didn't expect it to be this bad. More tears trickled down my cheeks as I came to the realization that I just could not win this game. Not like this with my pride as my king. I would have to surrender that if I wanted to survive this - if I wanted to survive *him*.

"Look at what you've done to yourself," he said, standing behind me, shaking his head.

"You did this," I whispered back defiantly.

"No," he sneered, "you did this with your inability to let go of what is no longer yours. You have no control anymore. You'll do as you're told or you'll die like all the others. It's as simple as that," he concluded.

I looked away from the mirror, attempting to ignore his statement as he'd now laid out death on the table as a viable option. I wasn't ready to die, but I when the time came to finally surrender, I couldn't draw the flag because I couldn't find it. What the fuck was it going to take for me to just give in? I knew I was just prolonging the inevitable. I could feel my body wanting to surrender, but my mouth just couldn't say the words - my brain refused to allow it. God, I was so fucking stubborn.

Dissatisfied with my lack of response, his hand reached around to my jaw and squeezed.

"Look at me, slave," he snarled. I unwillingly obeyed and forced my eyes to meet his in the reflection. "There is no escaping this, and there is no

escaping me. I am four times your size and over twice your weight. My strength and speed will always exceed yours. Always. Whatever hope you have left of beating me in this little game is false as well as foolish. In what world do you ever imagine escaping me and your future?"

"One where I'm fully clothed," I somehow managed to say against his grip.

Having clothes and shoes really did make a difference when it came to defending yourself. Somehow, I had a feeling I would have to learn to do so without them. He smirked at my answer. Hopefully, he appreciated my honesty.

"God, I love your spirit," he said, pressing his mouth against my temple. "It's really too bad I have to break it."

That was when he headed back toward the dresser and grabbed a small stool from the corner. Placing it at my feet, he instructed me to stand on it. I looked at him confused and exhausted as there was no way I could even lift my legs at this point. There was enough slack in the chains as I tried to obey, but I had no strength left to raise them. He noticed my struggle and didn't bother to wait any longer as he rolled his eyes and lifted my hips with ease and placed me on top of the stool. It gave me an extra six inches, but the fucker could still see clearly over my head.

It was then that I noticed the huge bulge in his pants as he returned to his position behind me and unzipped his fly.

"Just making good on my promise." He smiled. "And I have to say, I am very pleased to hear you've been approved for action."

The sudden understanding of what was about to happen caused me to surge in my restraints as I struggled and pulled against the chains, but they kept me firmly in place. Why I was suddenly surprised he would fuck me again, I hadn't a clue. I should have seen that coming, should have known there was a chance all along, but I thought since it hadn't worked last time,

he'd have to up his game. And he did, but now I didn't want to play anymore. The game of "Pride" was over.

"No! Don't!" I shouted, but it was barely audible.

"The more you struggle, the harder it makes me," he warned.

Twisted fuck. It now became clear to me that he enjoyed the power play that was occurring between the two of us. He probably got off on the fact that I was desperately at his mercy, that he was able to do whatever the fuck he wanted to me. He was clearly the type of man who demanded full submission and obedience wherever he was, and there wasn't shit I could do but endure and obey.

He then positioned himself behind me, his fingers tracing a line of zigzags down my back and sending fierce little aches through my skin. I couldn't contain my fear as it consumed my entire body, and I whimpered silently as another rainfall of tears came spilling down my face.

"Please, don't," I found myself begging for the first time, shaking with fear and regret. "I'll give you what you want."

It was stupid, but I couldn't withstand even the thought of him being inside me again. If submitting was what it took to prevent it, then fine. I knew I was going to cave at some point, anyway. I didn't want to die. I just wanted him to know it wouldn't be easy for him and that I could handle it. They were just words he wanted me to say anyway.

"Oh, I know you will," he sneered into my ear, running a fingertip down my cheek, "right after I'm done taking it from you."

I thought I felt my heart stop.

"No! Don't! You don't-"

"Eyes on the mirror, sweetheart," he said, cutting me off. "If, for any reason, I see your eyes leave mine, then I'll take that cane and fuck your ass with it until your blood covers my hands. Understand?"

I was silent then, unable to form words as more tears fell down my face. This was my fault. This was what I got for prolonging the inevitable. I just

made it worse for myself. He was right. I was such a foolish little girl.

“Please...”I whispered, begging one last time.

He slapped my ass so hard that I screamed.

“Do you understand?!” he shouted at me, causing me to flinch and nearly cower.

“Yes, sir,” I barely whispered to the reflection, more tears sliding down my cheeks.

He was going to make me watch him fuck me. Even though I said I would give him my stupid admission, it didn’t matter. He was going to take and take until there was nothing left to give - until I was nothing left but a shell of a woman whose only purpose was to fuck and be fucked. Well, he wasn’t the only one who could take. He could take away my freedom and my life, but I could take something away from him as well. I could take away his ability to affect me. I could take away his ability to get to me. I could take away all his power if I showed him that no matter what he did, whether it was days later or years later, I would eventually get back up and stand. It wasn’t just physical domination with him; it was mental. He didn’t just want my body to break; he wanted my mind as well. My body he might win, but my mind would remain stronger than ever. He would never win that war. Never.

And with that, he hands gripped my hips and he slammed into me, not bothering to prepare my body this time as it shattered from his invasion. He grunted in total satisfaction as he held himself still for a few seconds before pumping himself into me hard and fast, not giving me any time to adjust as I wept in agony. My core fought against him, attempting to force him out, but he just bulldozed through, taking everything I was unwilling to give.

“God, this pussy of yours,” he said against my ear. “It’s like a drug to me.”

*Go ahead and overdose then, you motherfucker.*

He continued drilling away, and it took everything I had not to look away from the onslaught of his body on mine. I rocked back and forth, groaning in pain as my breasts bounced up and down, and I could tell he was enjoying the view; his smile was impossible to miss.

“Scream for me, baby,” he whispered as his hands trailed up my skin and took my nipples in his fingers, twisting them roughly. I cried out as an electric current of pain twisted away as he tweaked and pulled. “That’s my girl,” he crooned.

Releasing my now tender nipples, his large hands cupped my breasts, the swells filling his palms completely. A low feral growl escaped his lips as he held them, squeezing and massaging them with rough, calloused hands. I tried to provoke the darkness to come and claim me again, but it would not come; a beautiful, twisted monster stole its invitation.

I allowed my tears to blur my vision just enough so that all that was visible was a watery reflection of two people I couldn’t comprehend. I could feel him getting ready to finish as his body tensed up and finally shot his load, yet he did not remove himself from my body. I could feel him still hard inside me and I wanted desperately to pull away, but my chains wouldn’t let me.

His hands still held my tender breasts captive as he continued to play with them; his fingers on my skin made me want to vomit all over again. When he did finally pull out, my pussy could not even enjoy the release as it pulsed with a pain that was equivalent to being fist fucked with an iron glove. Not like I actually knew what that felt like, but I had to imagine it was probably pretty close. Every single nerve ending in my body was on fire, and all I could do was pant and cry until it was over.

He then left me there to stare at my hideous reflection as he headed into the bathroom to wash himself up. I could feel the slow trickle of his cum begin to ooze out of me and slide down the inside of my leg. I felt disgusted

and vile as I tried to expel every last drop of him from me, but the torment of it never wavered in its slow agonizing seepage.

When the owner returned, he withdrew a rather large knife from his pocket and held it out in his hand for me to see. My body was so sore and wrecked I could barely move to react. A sharp inhale as I held my breath was all I could muster as my eyes took in the sheer sharpness of the blade.

Standing behind me again, he kicked the stool out from under my feet, and I stumbled down, the chains restricting my arms the only thing keeping me from crashing to the floor. A loud gasp escaped me as my weight increased the pressure of the cuffs on my wrists. I really thought the cuffs were about to slice right through my wrists.

“This is your last chance,” he rumbled, placing the knife at my throat. “You can surrender to me now, or you can watch yourself die, right here, right now. It’ll be the last choice you ever make,” he said, pressing the knife hard against my throat. “This is the last time I will ask you this question... what are you?”

I knew it was going to come down to this; the moment where I decided if I wanted to live through this hell or die and avoid it completely. I thought that maybe if I could last long enough, hold out as long as I could, he would know I wasn’t weak - that I could take it. But with the promise of imminent death scratching at my throat, my time for deliberation was over. I didn’t want to die; I wanted my revenge. And whoever the stupid fucker was who bought me would suffer my wrath and then I would take this whole goddamned place down. It wasn’t about what the better alternative was anymore. At this point, it was purely all about survival.

“A slave...” I finally whispered.

The look on his face as I uttered the words he had desperately wanted me to say left a permanent mark in my brain. He had won, and he knew it, yet my admission still surprised him.

“What did you say?” he asked, almost shocked I had said it at all.

“I’m a slave,” I croaked again, attempting to add more volume to my broken voice.

He placed the knife back in his pocket and walked around to face me.

“Say it again,” he commanded, looking down at me, but my eyes fell to the floor, unable to hold my head up any longer.

“I’m a slave,” I repeated with more conviction to satisfy him.

“Look in my eyes and tell me. Show me that you mean it and truly accept it.”

It took every ounce of strength I had to raise my heavy head and look into his eyes. Keeping them locked on his, I gave him exactly what he wanted.

“I’m a slave,” I said, hoping it would be the last time I would have to repeat it.

The corner of his mouth finally curved up into a smile and he brought both his hands to my face, cupping my cheeks and rubbing his thumbs against my skin.

“That’s my girl.” He smiled, and then forced his lips on mine.

He kissed me with a passion that bordered violence, and my body melted under his dominance. Forcing my mouth open with his lips, his tongue possessed my mouth, exploring and conquering as it went. I whimpered at his assault but tried not to fight it. I had admitted to him what he thought I was and now I had to show him that I meant it.

He finally released my mouth and bent down to unlatch the cuffs on my ankles. Rising back up, he reached for the cuffs that held my wrists and released them. My body plummeted for the ground as I had no strength left to catch myself, but his arms caught me and lifted me to his chest with ease. He carried me over to the bed and gently laid me against the soft pillows.

“Don’t move,” he ordered.

As if I had any energy left to move.

My eyelids fluttered to stay open, but my body still refused to succumb to any form of sleep. I listened as he strolled over to the mini fridge and came back to me and sat down on the bed beside me. “Open your mouth,” he instructed.

I hesitated at first, but then obeyed and parted my lips, hoping his dick wasn’t the expected recipient of my compliance. What came, instead, was a cool merciful splash of water as it slowly filled the desert that was my mouth. I couldn’t suppress the moan that escaped my lips as the water cooled and eased my scorching throat. I kept my mouth open, greedy for more as he waited for me to finish swallowing. Obliging my obvious need, he tilted the bottle again and more water filled my mouth.

“Please,” I begged as he pulled back, needing and wanting more.

“You’ll take what I give you and be grateful for it,” he answered. I groaned at his response.

“If I give you too much too soon, you’ll choke, and I’m not about to have that. Not after all the progress we just made.”

I nodded and rested my head against the pillow, hoping he would continue his so-called generosity. He eventually tilted the bottle again and let me finish it. I had never been so grateful for something as simple as water, but I was. It wasn’t a healing remedy, but my body felt slightly better after his exhausting punishment.

When the bottle was empty, he got off the bed and headed for the bathroom. I thought I heard the faucet for the bathtub running as he reemerged from behind the door. Lifting me in his arms again, terror flowed into my veins as I fought pitifully against him.

“No,” I whimpered, trying to push away from him.

I didn’t trust his touch, even if he had just mercifully granted me water.

“What did you just say?” He glared down at me, a warning clear across his face.

My heart shriveled into my stomach, as I feared I might have just given myself away. I quickly tried to save myself, exposing all the fear I had bottled up. I allowed him to see all of it, proving to him that I wouldn't fight him anymore. "I'm sorry," I whispered in absolute pure terror, my palms coming up in surrender.

"That's what I thought. We need to get you cleaned up," he said looking down at me. "You're filthy again, and we don't want to risk an infection."

The bath was for me? He was going to clean me up? I wasn't sure that I believed him. Maybe I hadn't heard him correctly.

As soon as he carried me past the door, sure enough, he gently eased my body into the perfectly warmed water. A slight gasp escaped me as my skin made contact and adjusted to the temperature, but once I was fully submerged, it was pure ecstasy. He sat back on the edge of the tub and let me soak for a while, watching me curiously. After a few awkward moments, I finally turned my head to him and stared him down. What in the hell was he staring at?

"That was quite the fight you put up out there," he said with a blank stare. "You know you're the first slave who's ever stood up to me like that."

I nodded once only to acknowledge his words, but then remembered his expectation for verbal answers. "Stupid, I know."

*Go ahead, rub it in my face, asshole.*

"Admirable." I looked back at him confused. "You have a fire in you that supersedes my expectations. In all my years in this industry, no one has ever fought as you have. You truly are one of a kind. However, in spite of all that..." he almost sounded sad, "those past characteristics no longer apply to you," he finished darkly, and I felt myself quiver inside. "From now on, I expect full submission and complete cooperation in all things. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," I croaked, my voice still completely shot from screaming.

“Good,” he said, taking a hard look at me. “I am very pleased that you finally came to realize your place.”

I just stared back at him then, not knowing what to say. I suppose I should be elated that he was pleased with me since that meant I would no longer have to suffer him, but it just made me feel like shit - as if I had betrayed myself. But I reasoned internally that I hadn’t. My mouth had said what was necessary for survival, but my heart had never agreed to the terms of surrender. I just considered my submission as a temporary peace treaty. I would follow their rules and play nice, but where my body might have been broken to their will, my heart and soul would only bend.

I finally just nodded and turned my eyes back to the water.

“Now hold still while I wash you.”

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The bath was actually enjoyable, even when his large strong hands gently washed my body with a soft sponge and cleaned away all the new dirt, sweat, and blood that coated my skin. He was so careful in his movements, treating me almost as if I were a fragile piece of glass on the verge of shattering, which was probably true. I didn't have to do anything but lay there and let him. He even washed my hair and gently massaged my scalp while the suds scrubbed away the filth in my mane. I couldn't deny the comfort as my body began to relax for the first time under his surprisingly gentle touch.

I had so much I wanted to say to him. So much I wanted to ask. Where was this tenderness coming from? How was he even capable of it? What had happened in his life to cause him to run this kind of profitable hell? I kept my eyes averted from his, not wanting to provoke even a single word from him while the obvious beast inside of him slept.

When he was satisfied with his work, he drained the water and rinsed me off one last time with the retractable showerhead. He then lifted me from the tub and set me on the counter. I leaned my weight against the mirror as he brought a fluffy white towel to my body and began drying me off. "Lean your hair forward," he directed. I leaned forward as best I could as he started to dry my soaking wet mop. What the fuck was this guy doing? First, he punished me with more menace than I thought possible, and now, he cares for me in the aftermath. It was beyond confusing, but I kept my unsolved puzzle pieces to myself.

Once my body was fully dry and my hair just damp enough, he tossed the towel to the floor and carried me back to the bed. He propped me up to sit on the edge this time. I was so tempted to fall back and sleep, but I didn't dare. I could feel whatever drug he had given me wearing off as the pain had lessened and the darkness threatened to come back.

He then walked back towards the dresser and pulled out what appeared to be one of the barely there dresses that I had worn earlier. He brought it over to me and knelt down, slipping my feet through the opening of the dress and pulling it to my knees.

"Stand up," he said as he rose, but he didn't give me much time to comply as he took my wrists and pulled me up into a standing position. I weakly leaned against his shoulder as he pulled the dress up the rest of my body and covered me.

Just when I was about to give in to my exhaustion, the owner took my face in his hands. Forcing my head up to meet his gaze, he looked down at me with a burning desire in his eyes, his lips twisting into an evil grin. I squinted my eyes and studied his face, but I couldn't tell what he was thinking. It couldn't have been good.

"Remind me again," he said, sneering down at me.

God, I fucking hated him. As if there wasn't enough salt in my wounds already.

"I'm...a slave..." I said, hating myself for admitting it.

"That's right, and what are we going to do from now on?"

"Submit."

"Right again. Although, I really did enjoy today's session. Should you choose to misbehave again, it would only bring me great pleasure to punish you all over again."

And that was when I had him figured out. He was the type of alpha male who liked to be challenged just so he could feel the joy of putting people in their place. It was the ultimate high to know that you were in

power and made sure everyone else knew it. I was sure since I was the only slave who had really challenged him that he would eventually try to seek that out in me again. And when that eventually happened, I would deny him the rush of domination and simply conform like I was supposed to. If there was one thing I could get away with, it was disobeying his primal and possibly unconscious needs.

Rubbing his thumb over my lip, he pulled it down and parted his own lips. He let his breath flow in and out before dipping down and taking my mouth for a second time. This kiss was different, though. It was gentle, smooth, and full of a passion that I didn't know was in him. It further fueled my confusion. Why was he reacting like this? Or was this normal when he was punishing the slaves? Confuse them with love and passion so he could tear the rug out from under their feet later when he sold them.

He finally released me when a knock at the door came. "Time to go," he said to me, taking my arm in his hand and dragging me toward the door. I could still barely walk from what he did to me. Opening the door, he tossed me at the guard who stood outside, handing me off to him.

"Take her back," he told the guard.

"Yes, sir." The guard gripped my arm and began pulling me down the hall to the elevator.

"And slave," the owner sneered down at me before we got too far. "Behave yourself, or your next visit with me will be even worse than the last," he warned as he leaned out of the doorframe. He still couldn't hide the small hint of a smile in the corner of his mouth. He hoped I would misbehave, but now that I knew how to deny him, I would gladly oblige that.

"Yes, sir," I said, and he shut the door as I was turned around and brought back to the elevator.

I closed the door and strolled back to the bed, collapsing with a strained exhaustion as the adrenaline finally slowed in my veins.

Looking up at the ceiling, I recounted the events of the last hour. I had kissed her. Twice. I let my emotions get the best of me and took exactly what I wanted, right when I wanted it. I had been dying to know what those lips tasted like for too long.

They were soft and perfect; her mouth sweet like honey as I delved into the pot, taking what I had rightfully earned. Her skin had been so smooth and firm as I scrubbed her clean, indulging in everything her body had to offer. I didn't normally bathe the slaves after I wrecked them, but I wanted to explore more of the temple of Jaden Wilder.

Her eyes had remained closed, but I knew she was enjoying what I was doing to her. It was far better than the pain I had just delivered not so long ago.

I knew she would break eventually. They always did. But when she finally succumbed, my dead heart elevated to the fucking sky. It was the sweetest taste of victory I had ever savored - a rush so strong it almost brought me to my knees when I heard her finally say the words.

Breaking the weak ones was like breaking a twig, too easy and unfulfilling. Jaden, on the other hand, was like a steel skyscraper...and I was the wrecking ball that couldn't wait to tear her down. She was the challenge I now found myself craving. I honestly hoped she acted up again just so I had a reason to show her just how little control she now had over her life. Nothing said pain like a good reality check, and I was going to be the one to give it to her.

I could feel my right eye swelling from where I let Jaden's tiny angry fist come into contact with my skin. I had held back so hard in that fight, not wanting it to end, but not wanting to kill her, and she knew it. She hated it - knowing she was giving it her all while I had barely tapped into my reservoir. Every hit I took, except for that surprise scorpion kick, head-but, and random zombie attack, I took on purpose. I still couldn't believe she

fucking bit me, but I guess desperation will make a person do crazy things. Good thing my collar was in the way. Still stung like a bitch though.

Taking on Jaden's damage gave me a better idea of what kind of fighter she was. I wanted to know how hard she could hit, how well she could counter-attack, and I wanted to analyze her fighting strategy. She was a very capable and intelligent fighter...but I was better. To be fair, though, I was always better. I had never lost in combat before; I trained too fucking long and hard for that and Jaden wasn't about to change anything. It really wasn't just because I was simply bigger and stronger than her, though. If she had gotten on any other man's back with a choke like that, then she'd easily take them down, regardless of how small she was. But I wasn't any other man. Not even close.

Yeah, I'd have a nice little shiner come morning, but it was worth it to know she could actually punch correctly and leave behind some damage. She'd certainly proved that with Jared. Scott had informed me of the situation as he headed down to take care of things, but I told him I would handle it personally...and with all the pleasure in the world. Jaden's aggression and rage had completely consumed her by the time I showed up, and if I hadn't, she might have actually killed Jared and then it would have been all over for her. It already was, but those measures would have been a little bit more permanent than the ones I had already delivered on.

I knew Jaden wasn't completely gone, though; it would take more than just a single session for one as strong as her. I had just knocked her down a few levels. But that was okay. It was a step in the right direction, at least. I looked forward to the next time she needed reminding of what she was. Repetition and routine were the key with every slave and the thought of creating a routine for Jaden brought a smile to my face.

As I laid my head on the pillow Jaden had rested her wet hair against, her clean scent filled my nose. Light and soft, like roses minus the thorns. My heart was still pounding away in my chest as I thought about how close

I came to killing her. She pushed me right to the edge, and I was nearly about to deliver. It was hard to hide the overwhelming relief I felt when she finally uttered the words I had been drilling in her head for the last hour. I honestly thought she wouldn't succumb, but in the end, it was always about survival.

I knew I hadn't extinguished the fire in her eyes yet, but I had certainly reduced them to embers...for now. In time, she would build her flames back up again, and they would roar with a red-hot vengeance. I just had to give her a little push in that direction. I cracked a devilish grin across my face as the evil wheels in my head started turning.

Safely back in my cage, I rested my sore and broken body against the small padding I had for cushion and laid my head in my arms. I could hear Kayla gasp as she turned over to look at me.

"Oh, my God, are you okay? What did that son of a bitch do to you?"

"I'll be okay," I grunted as I attempted to find a comfortable position. There was no such luck.

"I'm so sorry," Kayla whispered, as if the volume of her voice could increase the pain that throbbed through my body.

I turned over to look at her. She had more bruises on her arm, a split lip, and I could see red marks curling up the side of her rib cage from her back.

"No, I'm sorry, Kayla. I tried to help you escape, and instead, I just earned you more pain. It was stupid and you definitely shouldn't be apologizing to me."

"I made the choice to run, remember? I could have stayed like those other girls, but I didn't. I knew you wouldn't want your distraction to be in vain. I thought maybe if I could escape, I could find help...but I guess I'm not as fast a runner as I thought."

"Don't do that. Don't blame yourself. At least you tried."

"What happened after we were taken away?" she finally asked after a few moments of silence.

“I fought the owner.”

“You did what?!” she almost shouted. I chuckled a little at her response and instantly winced in regret.

“Don’t worry,” I replied. “He’ll have a nice little shiner when he wakes up tomorrow morning, I’m sure.”

“Holy shit, girl. You got a death wish or something?”

“Probably, but not anymore,” I replied quietly.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“It means I’ve benched myself for a little while. In case you haven’t noticed, my body isn’t exactly in prime condition to be pissing anyone off anytime soon.”

“What did he do to you?” she asked me quietly. I let out a long slow breath, releasing the tension in my lungs.

“Just fucked with my head, is all,” I replied blankly.

“That all? Because you look pretty fucking wrecked.”

“Don’t worry about it, Kayla. I’ll be fine.”

After a few silent moments, I asked the question that had been playing in the back of my mind since it happened.

“You’ve never been punished by the owner before...have you?”

“No.” Kayla shook her head. “Never had to. I only met him during my orientation. Why do you ask?”

“He...he kissed me afterward, and he gave me a bath. Is that normal around here?”

Kayla’s eyes widened in surprise.

“I don’t know. I wouldn’t think so, but he’s the owner. He can do whatever he wants.”

“That’s true,” I said.

“Why? Did something else happen?”

“I don’t know. I just have a bad feeling is all.”

“This place is surrounded with bad feelings.”

“Yeah, my only hope now is to be sold to some old fuck I can kill easily and roll the fuck out of there.”

“That would be ideal,” she said. “But who knows what kind of monsters we’ll be sold to. I just hope we make it out of here alive.”

“We will.” I grunted and rolled over, ready to succumb to the sleep that was about to finally claim me before I came face to face with five long bright red lines running down the back of the girl sleeping next to me. I suddenly felt sick all over knowing I was the reason for those hard red lines. I closed my eyes and tried to forget. I tried to forget literally fucking everything.

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When I finally woke up again, the sunlight was low but bright. It must have been early morning. Had I really slept that long? I missed another meal, which wasn't good if I wanted to keep my strength up.

My body was still throbbing in pain and exhausted from yesterday's beat down, but I did my best to ignore it. Today and for the rest of the week, if I even had that long, I would avoid conflict. I needed more time to heal my body if I wanted another shot at escaping when the opportunity arose. I turned my head toward Kayla who was laying on her side, facing me, fast asleep. I chose not to wake her since sleep was so hard to come by in here.

Laying on my back with my knees curled in, I contemplated my situation. Here I was, looking up through the bars of a large dog cage, waiting to be sold to the highest bidder. How the fuck had I let this happen? I was supposed to be the smart girl, the one who calculated all possible outcomes, who never let her guard down, and who kicked the shit out of anyone who messed with her.

All my life I had always known exactly what I wanted and had the passion and drive to go after it. Law school had been my dream, and I had made it come true when I finally applied to Wayne State University. I had been in my second year of study and the law firm I had been working at for years promised to hire me as an attorney once I passed the bar. Everything had been falling perfectly into place for me. I had a loving family, a doting boyfriend who loved me for all that I was, friends who cared and supported

me, and a home I could honestly call my own. And now, it had all been ripped out from under me, leaving me naked and alone in the worst hell imaginable all because some asshole couldn't stand a little rejection.

Who the fuck was honestly that selfish? To just ruin and steal away someone's entire life like this for the most ridiculous reason in the world. I wondered what would have happened had I flirted with Jared a little longer, maybe even asked for his number and never called him, just to appease him. Would I still be at home with Jason? Or would Jared have stalked me further? I hated that I was here at the expense of the stupid fragility of the male ego.

Staring through the bars to the ceiling, I tried to remember how it happened. How had I become so careless that I allowed myself to be taken? I thought back to that day and tried to push through the fuzziness of it.

I remembered I had left school after a long study session around ten p.m. and it was dark in downtown Detroit, with only every other streetlight lit. Most of us girls walked in groups to our cars, but the lower level of the parking garage I usually parked in across from the campus was full. I remembered I had been running behind earlier that day due to the traffic from the Tiger's game, so I had to go two extra levels up.

As I came to the top of the stairs, I remember scanning the entire parking garage, noticing a few random cars parked here and there, but what was most noticeable was the black van idling at the end of the garage, just a few spaces away from the driver's side to my black Dodge Challenger. Fuck.

And that day had to be the one day I left my phone at home.

*Goddammit.*

I made a beeline to my car, the pace of my Converse barely making a sound as my heart rate picked up. My eyes continued to scan the parking lot, hoping someone might be around in the event something happened, or maybe someone was waiting behind a car or a pillar to jump out at me. I

knew I was just being paranoid, but I couldn't shake the dark feeling that was coming over me. Something felt very wrong, but I couldn't place it.

My steps were fierce as I thought about the gun just inside my glove compartment. I had my C.P.L., but the campus didn't allow guns on the property, so that forced me to leave it in my car. My beautiful black chrome Sig Sauer P238 was the perfect companion for me, and I was very confident in its accuracy. I kept up my pace, never dropping my gaze for a second, and mentally prepared myself for anything.

As soon as I was within reach of my car, I unlocked it, keeping my car key in my hand just in case I didn't make it to my gun on time and needed to permanently blind someone. I reached for the passenger side door first, but before I even opened it, I heard the doors of the van slide open. Four men jumped out, all wearing black ski masks, dark clothing, and armed with assault rifles.

I instantly grabbed my gun from the glove compartment and fired two shots in their direction before jumping in and starting my car from the passenger seat. Fuck, five rounds left.

I suddenly heard the muffled gunshots of their tactical rifles equipped with silencers as they shot out my tires before my engine took the next heat of fire, the sounds easily mistaken for fireworks with the 4<sup>th</sup> of July having just passed. Jumping in the driver's seat, I fired up the ignition and gunned it in reverse, but the transmission was already malfunctioning. My car only went a few feet as my tires squealed against the pavement before it went dead. That was when I started open firing.

I emptied the clip through the driver's side window of my car, but after those final five shots, it was empty and the men were too scattered for me to hit them in my rush to flee. I hurried for the second magazine I had hidden under my seat, but then remembered I had forgotten to restock after I went shooting last week. Shit!

I could hear my driver's side door being ripped open and, I instantly kicked at it and sent the fucker airborne and onto his ass. Rifles hanging from their backs, the men came at me. As one of them reached in, I kicked his ribs as hard as I could, sending him backward and wincing in pain. I then grabbed my car keys from the ignition and took off, running in the direction of the stairs. When it came to flight or fight, I was normally a fight kind of person, but I was outgunned, outnumbered, and I needed to get the hell out of there.

"Help!" I screamed, hoping someone would hear and call the police.  
"Someone help me!"

And then I felt a little prick sting into my shoulder. As I ran, I reached back and pulled out what looked like a small tranquilizer dart with half of whatever drug they used still inside. And for the first time, real fear spiked up my spine. Even though only half had gotten into my bloodstream, they most likely had more, which meant they were now more than likely going to succeed in taking me.

The men quickly caught up to me sooner than I liked, and as soon as I felt the presence of a body close to mine, I jumped forward and kicked my back leg out, landing right between his legs. He went down quickly, clutching his groin and muttering all kinds of threats at me as I continued to run. But then the rest caught up and surrounded me like a bunch of hyenas ready to attack. My breath was coming in and out fast, and the adrenaline flowing through my veins was making me light headed, or was it the drugs? My heart was pumping so hard that I thought it would explode. Then one at a time, they all started laughing.

"End of the line, sweetheart," one of them said.

"I don't fucking think so," I retorted defiantly, clutching my car key like a knife.

A few at a time, the remaining three engaged me. One of them grabbed me from behind at my waist; I clutched his wrist and elbowed him right in

the nose, busting it and spraying blood all over my skin, while simultaneously stabbing him in the thigh with my car key. Another one came at my side and I threw the hardest sidekick to his ribs that I could muster, sending him crashing against one of the cement pillars. I then threw a final jab-cross combination at the last guy just as my previous kick landed. That was about all I got in before the drug finally kicked in. I felt a wave of dizziness consume me, knocking me off balance before a fist busted into my face. The ground beneath me shifted, my legs finally giving out, as pain blossomed in the side of my face and I crashed to the ground. Extreme dizziness followed while a shortness of breath accompanied not far behind.

I landed on the pavement on my hands and knees and felt one of the men kick my ribs, sending me on to my back. Pain exploded in my side as I grunted and curled into myself.

“Told you it was the end of the line, bitch,” he sneered.

I tried to regulate my breathing as his words seeped into my brain. I was done, and they were going to take me to God knows where.

Without wasting another moment, they cuffed my hands behind my back with zip ties and hauled me to my feet. I couldn’t believe this was happening. I dragged my feet and tried to wrench myself free, fighting against the drug and ready to scream bloody murder, but then felt something sharp stab into my arm. They were drugging me again. Panic rushed through my system as I gradually felt my limbs start to get even heavier, and I struggled just to stay up. My head spun out of control and my vision became cloudy and dark.

“No,” I groaned trying to wriggle myself free, but my limbs were so uncoordinated I could barely get them to work.

As I got closer to the van, my body spiked with even more panic, but there was nothing I could do as I felt myself quickly being hauled over

someone's shoulder and into blackness. That was the last thing I remembered. I woke up here in this hell.

Tears started flowing from my eyes as I thought about Jason. God, what he must be thinking right now. Seeing my car all shot to shit, clip empty in my gun, and me nowhere to be found. My mother would be a complete wreck, and I could see my two younger brothers sitting around her, comforting her the best they could, all the while holding back silent tears. The rest of my aunts, uncles, and cousins praying for my safe return while my best friend, Jordan, plotted for my revenge. Those people were everything to me and I knew I had to get back to them. One way or another, I swore I would.

A few minutes later, I heard Kayla stir next to me. She opened her eyes and rubbed her face. "Morning," she mumbled.

"Morning," I groaned, rolling on my side, hiding the wince as I turned to her. "How did you sleep?" God, my voice sounded like shit as it cracked through the air.

"Like shit. You?"

"I think that was the longest sleep of my life, but it could have been better."

"No kidding; you were out like a light."

"Probably for the best. Sleep keeps me out of trouble." I winked. She scoffed at me.

"For someone who looks like they were hit by a truck, you sure are high in spirits today."

"Someone needs to stay positive around here; otherwise, I'll just go insane, and I need to have some hope to cling to."

"What hope is this?" She poked at me. "Where can I get some of that?"

"I think I've got a little to spare." I smiled.

Kayla smiled at me then.

A few minutes later, three guards came in, none of them recognizable to me. They each carried a tray with bowls of food and had a large bag slung over their arms. One by one, they opened each cage, dropped the bowls and bottles of water at the foot of the cages, and relocked the doors back in place.

I stayed firmly on my padding as they opened my cage and placed the food and water on the floor and locked it back up, repeating the same steps with the rest of the cages beside me.

Slowly pushing myself up and attempting to ease my sore body, I took my rations and sat against the wall of the cage. I nearly cried myself back to laying down from the agony of yesterday, but I needed to eat if I wanted to heal. I downed half the bottle of water and decided to save the rest for later. The contents of the bowl were the same as usual: chicken stir-fry. Did they not know how to make anything else?

I looked over at Kayla who was still trying to finish hers, but by the time the guards came back around to collect the bowls, she still had several bites left.

“Time’s up, bitch,” said the guard, unlocking her cage and reaching in. “Hand it over.”

“I’m almost done,” she said, desperately trying to spoon the rest of the rice in her mouth.

“I said now!” he shouted, grabbing her ankle and yanking her toward him. My body jerked in Kayla’s defense, but the sudden movement sent sharp pains all over. Kayla shrieked as she was tugged from the cage. The guard pinned her to the floor, mere inches from her face as he covered her body with his. “I gave you an order, slave! You don’t get to defy me!” he shouted at her.

All the other slaves around us whimpered in their cages or screamed in fear as their eyes took in the scene before them.

“I’m sorry!” she pleaded. “Please! I won’t do it again!”

“You’re damn right,” he said, and he slapped her hard across the face.

God, I wanted to help her, but I knew if I said anything, it would only make matters worse. I gently placed my empty bowl at the door of my cage and tried to keep myself from causing any further trouble.

“Got a fighter?” said the other guard, walking up to the scene.

“Yeah, a disrespectful little bitch who thinks she has the right to make me wait for her to finish stuffing her face.”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” Kayla kept whispering.

“Not yet, bitch, but you’re gonna be,” said the guard holding her down.

He then flipped her on to her back and spread her legs with his knees. She screamed and pleaded underneath him as he went for his zipper and I felt my stomach shrink into knots. Closing my eyes, I visually tried to walk away. I tried to tell myself to let it go, but I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t just sit there and watch them rape her.

“Hey!” I yelled at them. “Leave her alone. She said she was sorry! She won’t do it again!”

The guard on top of her looked at me as if I had lost my fucking mind. I most likely had.

“What the fuck did you just say?” said the guard who was standing up.

“Please...just let her go,” I pleaded, looking at Kayla as she whimpered on the floor. The terror in her eyes was so apparent it could be seen a mile away.

“I think she wants some, too,” said the standing guard as he walked over to my cage.

Fuck, and here I thought I was going to avoid conflict again. As he reached down to unlock my cage, I backed myself up as far as I could go, but his arm was too long as he grasped my ankle.

“Stop!” shouted a deep commanding voice from down the hall. “What’s going on here?”

I knew that voice, knew it far too well as shivers ran down my spine and my heart dropped into my stomach. It was him. Fuck, I was hoping I wouldn't have to deal with him today. Why the fuck did I have to open my mouth?

The owner made his way down to us, his heavy footsteps creating echoes in their wake, and forcing tighter knots in my belly. He stopped just in front of my cage.

"Just a couple of defiant slaves, sir," said the guard as he released my leg from his grip and stood.

"Is that so," the owner said, turning his head and staring down at my cage, the anger in his face fueling the rising fear in my body.

I shook my head pleadingly, trying to make him realize the misunderstanding. I looked over at Kayla who was still pinned and spread eagle on the floor under the guard.

"Please," I said, looking back at him, hoping to reason with him as he turned toward Kayla.

"I don't believe I've said one fucking word to you," he roared down at me.

I flinched in my cage and forced my eyes to the floor. I was pretty sure I just gave him the reason he was looking for to punish me again. My body trembled with fear as I realized that. But then I noticed something - something that nearly made me smile like the goddamn Grinch. The slight purple and green bruising around his left eye brought a surge of pride and satisfaction to my entire body, my own little ray of sunshine.

*Ha, ha-ha, ha, motherfucker.*

"Get her back in her cage," he ordered, pointing at Kayla. "And you," he said boring down at me. "I thought we had extinguished the last of your defiance."

"That's correct, sir," I said, turning my eyes on the floor.

"Funny because that's not what I'm seeing."

“I don’t want any more trouble,” I answered, looking over at Kayla who was thrown back into her cage.

“Yet you chose to open your fucking mouth again, didn’t you?”

“I...”

“Don’t you dare lie to me, little girl. You will surely regret it,” he warned.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered, surrendering my fight.

My body was so wrecked; I didn’t think I could withstand another beating of any kind, especially if it was worse than the last.

“Well, isn’t that fucking precious,” he snorted. “Lucky for you, I’ve got too much shit to do today, but I meant what I said yesterday. Give me one reason and I’ll easily find the time to beat that perfect ass of yours all over again,” he said leaning close to my cage.

I ignored his threat and returned my eyes to the floor. I didn’t want to give him another reason. Not yet, at least.

With that lasting threat that chilled my bones, he turned and stalked down the hallway and out the door without a second glance, the guards close on his heels.

“You shouldn’t have done that,” Kayla said as the doors closed. I turned back to look at her.

“I couldn’t just sit there and do nothing. It’s not really in my nature.”

“Your nature is going to get yourself killed.”

“It was worth it if it stopped them from hurting you,” I retorted.

“You’re not what stopped them; he was,” she said, nodding in the direction of the doors.

“I suppose you’re right,” I acknowledged, slumping my shoulders in defeat.

“Just keep quiet next time. I don’t want to be responsible for you getting hurt because you tried to come to my rescue. You look like shit as it is. I’m a big girl, Jaden. I can handle them.”

I smiled at her then, almost proud.

"Ya know, if I didn't know any better, I'd say you and I were cut from the same cloth," I said. She snorted at that.

"Maybe. But I think they forgot to measure out the same amount of badassness that you have that I clearly lack. Did you see the black eye you gave him? I only got a glimpse, but it looked pretty fucking awesome." She smiled.

"Yeah, I saw it," I replied. "I wish I could have seen his face when he woke up this morning." The thought of that made me chuckle a little inside.

"Me, too," Kayla replied as she laid down on the padding of her cage and turned over to face me. I did the same and studied her features, noticing how young she really looked.

"How old are you, Kayla?" I asked.

"Twenty-two." She sighed. "You?"

"Twenty-five."

She nodded in acknowledgment.

For a while, we just laid there and talked about our lives, ignoring the nightmare that surrounded us. Kayla was from Grand Rapids, but she was studying psychology at Michigan State and had one day planned to counsel children. She had a passion for helping kids and that was admirable. She had been on summer break when they took her.

I told her about my goals and dreams of being a big shot attorney after law school, but at this point, they were looking a little gloomy.

We spent the rest of the day resting and reminiscing about better days, and I somehow found it a little easier to fall asleep that night. But it wasn't meant to be.

I felt the warmth on my face, and it made me smile as I opened my eyes to the sunshine that peered down from behind the clouds. I was lying in a field of bright green grass on a soft blanket in the middle of nowhere. A soft breeze tickled my skin and the trees surrounding me bristled in the wind. I turned over and found Jason lying next to me; he'd folded his hands behind his head as he stared up at the sky. I smiled, reaching out for him, my hand grazing the short, brown beard he had grown on his face. He turned to me and grinned, his beautiful white smile warming me from the inside out as he pulled me to him. His short straight brown hair fell over his forehead, tickling my nose as I kissed his face all over. I felt complete bliss as he clutched me to him, kissing my neck and shoulder, and sending waves of heat throughout my body.

"I love you," I said.

"I love you, too," he replied happily.

But then the sunshine disappeared behind a dark cloud that threatened to cover the entire sky. I felt the wind pick up and whip my hair around my face. Something felt wrong, very wrong, but I didn't know what it was.

I raised my head up and scanned the field, but there was no one around. I felt my body begin to shake from fear as I frantically searched for the threat that I knew surrounded us. Then, like a cold draft, I felt a shadow hover over me, and my heart stopped dead. I looked up from Jason's embrace to find the owner standing over us, his hands in his pockets, and an intense, angry look upon his face as he stared down at me.

Fear constricted my movements as I suddenly became a deer in headlights. What was he doing here? How did he find us? My questions had no merit as he instantly reached down and grabbed me by my hair, hauling me to my feet and bringing me to his side.

Jason reacted, but before he even got a chance to roll over, the owner pulled out a gun and shot him in the forehead without a moment's hesitation.

"No!" I screamed; I lunged forward, but the grip the owner had on my hair prevented any such movement.

He then slung an arm around my waist and hauled me to his chest, carrying me away from Jason's now lifeless body, his blood soaking the blanket in a dark crimson red. I fought against him, but the pain in my heart was too great a distraction to fight him fully.

"Let's go, little girl. You're all mine now," he sneered in my ear, dragging me away into the darkness with him.

I shot up from my padding, gasping for air as a cold sweat coated my entire body. I put my hands on my head as I sucked in heaping gulps of air as I tried to get my aching body to calm down. Fucking nightmares.

It was dark in the hall - all of the girls around me thankfully sleeping, but I quickly realized a presence that did not match. I looked up from my knees, and my stomach twisted in my gut as I came face to face with the owner leaning against the wall. His hands were in his pockets with one foot pressed up against the wall to support his leg. He had a curious yet serious look on his face as he stared me down. I felt myself shrink inside. What the fuck was he doing here?

I nonchalantly leaned up against the wall, my hands casually in my pockets as I watched Jaden writhe and panic in her sleep. It was after midnight and the moonlight was shining through the glass block window, casting an eerie glow on Jaden's lightly colored skin. She looked almost ghost-like as she groaned and whimpered in the throes of some kind of

obvious nightmare. She was quiet at first, her breathing slow and even, until her body must have felt my presence. It wasn't thirty seconds after I appeared that her breathing pattern changed. Not much later did she burst awake from her nightmare, a scream hot on her lips, but she suppressed it to a loud gasp, making my cock twitch in response. She had the sexiest little cries.

Her chest heaved up and down in full panic mode as she looked around herself at all of the other sleeping slaves around us, but then she stiffened when she realized she wasn't the only one awake.

Her eyes found mine instantly; fear, shock, and confusion were clear on her flushed face.

"Dreaming about me?" I asked her with a smirk.

"Dreaming about killing you," she replied under her breath, but she knew I heard her.

"Sounds like you failed even in your dreams."

Her eyes narrowed at me then, challenging me with no regard of our latest encounter. Her defiance was beyond sexy, but it only made me want to bend her over my knee and spank her tight ass until she begged for mercy...and even then I wouldn't stop.

I stared right back at her, reminding her she was not in a position to challenge me, but clearly, the message was not getting through. I gently eased myself off the wall with my foot, my hands remaining in my pockets as I took the two steps required to rest my hands on the top bars of her cage and lean over.

She continued to watch me, but her body was stiff and tense as I approached; the intensity of our staring contest grew beyond inferno. I turned my head a little to the side, my lips forming into a tight line, warning her that if she didn't lower her eyes to the floor, I'd pull her out of that cage, bend her over it, and fuck her until she screamed loud enough to wake the entire warehouse.

She finally got the message, and her body released a quick, heavy breath as she turned her eyes to the floor of her cage.

“Now, there’s a good girl,” I whispered to her.

She didn’t say anything, which was smart on her end, but I wasn’t finished testing her.

“Lay down,” I ordered.

She complied, a scowl on her face as she laid down on her back, wincing when she made contact with the padding. Her knees were still up with her feet tucked against her ass, hiding all of the goods from me. I simply couldn’t have that.

“Spread your knees,” I continued, a dark need beginning to come over me.

She looked like she wanted to scream as her little hands balled into tight fists at her sides, but she did as she was told, slowly spreading her knees and giving me access to the most perfect pussy I had ever encountered. She was still red from the last time I had her, and I felt a surge of pride fill me as the memory of pounding into her suddenly made my dick grow even harder.

“Perfect,” I praised as I was half tempted to just take her right there, not giving a fuck if I woke every damn slave up. “What are you?”

Now I was the one challenging her, secretly hoping she’d fuck up so I’d have another reason to punish her, but we both knew I didn’t need a reason. I just liked having one.

“A slave,” she said right on cue, no hesitation, no refusal, and God, if it wasn’t one of the most satisfying things I had heard all day.

Her defiance was sexy, but her submission was even sexier. I wanted more of it, wanted her crawling on her hands and knees between my legs as I fucked her mouth, wanted her bent over my lap while I spanked the life out of her, wanted her chained to my bed while I fucked her tight little pussy until she knew nothing else but me and my cock.

But why did I want that?

I could easily have any woman I wanted, all of them more than willing to be mine, but yet I found myself wanting a woman who wanted absolutely nothing to do with me. Maybe that was what made it so hot. She'd have no choice in the matter. The idea of actually owning a person was intriguing. I had many clients who now owned dozens of women, but I had never partaken in the luxury of such. I didn't have the time. I was the busiest person I knew and never had the time or the patience to maintain a relationship with anyone. I didn't need the added stress of some girl whining to me every day about how I was never around because I never would be - another reason I didn't do relationships. A good fuck was all I needed and I could easily get that anytime, anywhere. I could even get my real satisfaction with breaking the errant slave here and there and be on my way. I had everything I could ever want or need right at my fingertips. So why did it suddenly feel like something was missing?

I leaned into the cage, staring deep into those bright and burning amber eyes as she gazed up at me, fear and anger all in one seeping from her face. I loved it. I loved every single bit of it. But then I wondered what those eyes would look like when they finally became hollow and empty from the undeniable years of torment she would receive as her potential buyer's sex slave. The idea of it instantly had me raging inside. She'd be caged like a wild tiger at a zoo for the rest of her life. Caging was one thing, but taming was entirely different. At least the fire was still alive, just well controlled. And I liked the idea. I suddenly realized I didn't want Jaden fully broken. I enjoyed her fire far too much to simply extinguish it for good. I wanted to feel the burn so I could snuff it out with my own ice and melt her to the ground.

“Good girl,” I finally whispered and left her like that, my footsteps echoing in the hall as I walked out of the door, leaving her in the dark where she belonged.

*hat the fuck was that?*

**W**I sat up, tucking my legs to my chest and rested my cheek on top of my knees. I felt ill. My heart pounded in my chest, my head ached with confusion, and fear laced through my blood like a poison, burning through every single vein.

Why had he come? What did he want?

I wanted to question him so fucking bad. But I wanted to punch his face in with my fists even more. My palms were now aching from the pressure of my fingers digging in from clutching them too tightly. He noticed. I could see the smirk on his face, even in the dark. He was a cruel man, and I suddenly wondered if there were men out there worse than he was. I was sure of it. I just hoped they weren't among the buyers at the auction.

I laid down on my side and curled into myself, holding my legs tight to my chest as I fought against the tears that threatened to spill. I woke from the worst nightmare I had ever had to find the man I feared the most watching me from outside my cage, obviously enjoying the view.

At that moment, I wanted Jason more than I wanted to breathe. I wanted him to hold me and tell me everything would be all right so I didn't have to be strong anymore. It was exhausting and I felt my threads begin to thin and snap under the constant torment of this place. I wanted out. I wanted to go home, but those choices were not on the menu. In fact, there wasn't even a menu for me to choose from anymore. It had been taken from me several days ago, but I wasn't going to give up on getting it back. I wasn't done yet. I couldn't be.

Tears finally broke free of my emotional fence as they slowly slid down the side of my face. I silently cried myself to sleep that night.

Two more days had passed since the owner's late night visit, and my body was finally beginning to feel better after his latest onslaught. I kept his nighttime visit to myself, not wanting to worry Kayla any more than she already was. It was never far from my mind though; the theories were running through my head of why he was there. I didn't want to admit what I thought was obvious because that would terrify me even further. I didn't want to become of special interest to the owner. I didn't even want him to remember my name, yet I had a strong feeling he would never forget it, even after I'd been sold.

I had been spending most of my time sleeping the aches away, and it finally seemed to be paying off. I was still stiff from being cramped in my cage, but I stretched as often as I could to relieve the tension. We had received another brief shower earlier in the morning, this time with zero hiccups, as I just wanted to wash away all my grief without issue. It was nice to feel somewhat clean again.

It was in the middle of the day, and Kayla and I had just finished eating lunch. It was particularly quiet that day, depression hovering like a fog that clouded the entire room as everyone dwelled on the thoughts of being sold.

The auction was getting closer every day; we could all feel it like a dark cloud over our heads. I hated it - hated my lack of control in the situation, and I could feel myself growing angry all over again. How the fuck could these people do this to us? Like we were fucking cattle sold off because our lives obviously held no other value to them.

I looked around at all the other girls huddled in their cages. I didn't know their names since they rarely spoke, too afraid to draw any attention to themselves. Every now and then I'd catch them talking to their closest caged neighbor, but most of the day was filled with tears and stifled cries. I hoped they found a friend in each other as Kayla and I had. It was the only way we were able to get through this.

Yesterday, I had tried to speak to the girl next to me, but she just shook her head and turned over, giving her back to me. I didn't understand her rejection of support and comfort, but it occurred to me that she had given up a long time ago...or maybe she resented me for her failed attempt at escape. I didn't know. I told her that I was here for her regardless.

There was so much hopelessness in this room it was toxic. As if the harsh reminder of our horrific reality poisoned the air we breathed. We were never getting out until we were bought and paid for. I briefly wondered what would happen if a slave wasn't purchased in the auction. Would they go back to their cage until the next auction came back around? Or were they killed and considered an equitable loss? I didn't want to think what would happen, but I imagined they wouldn't just cut their losses so quickly. Perhaps the product would be more successful in a different market.

I hated thinking about another human being that way, but I didn't have a doubt in my mind that was how these people saw us. They were running a business, and we were the product they were selling. The obvious success of their previous transactions honestly scared the shit out of me. Clearly, sex slaves were in high demand these days and the whole idea disgusted me.

In an attempt to distract myself from the growing flames inside me, I started humming one of my favorite classic songs - "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey. I loved this song. It reminded me of my dad back when he was still in his prime. We used to sing it together when we cruised downtown in

his old bright red 1977 Trans Am convertible. My dad loved the 80's, and consequently, so did I.

After a few minutes, humming turned into words and I found myself singing quietly to one of the best anthems of all time. I was a decent singer, or so I had been told many times, but I usually kept my voice to myself.

It wasn't long before the contagious tune found its way to Kayla as she picked the song up, singing along with me, smiling the entire time about a singer in a smoky room.

I wasn't sure where the sudden surge of bravery came from, but soon the rest of the caged girls around me started quietly singing with us, joining in on the distraction with small smiles on their lips. It was quiet at first, but as the song came to the chorus, we all started shouting, "don't stop believing," at the top of our lungs and jamming out to the guitar solo. We even started dancing!

It was an exhilarating feeling; the chorus of a bunch of slave girls echoing throughout the hall brought a small light of laughter back into our lives. The tension was lifting, and it felt so good to raise my voice to bring about a little fun if that were even possible. But it was short lived. Before the song was even over, three of the guards smashed through the door.

"Shut up! Shut your fucking mouths!" screamed one of the guards as he rushed through the doors. At first I thought it was Jared, but the man who stormed down the hall only looked like him. Maybe he was related? He was a little shorter, but just as rough looking, same hair color, too. Other than that, I had never seen him before.

I felt pure rage as he thundered his way passed the cages, eyeing all the girls. The other two guards started slamming the butts of their rifles against the cages as they prowled down the hall. The voices of the girls immediately went from singing to screaming in fear. They just had to fucking ruin everything.

“If I hear one more fucking word from anyone, they’ll receive the ass beating of their lives!” shouted the new guard as he continued down the hall.

Everyone was silent then as he continued his way down, finally stopping in front of my cage.

“Your presence is requested,” he sneered.

I rolled my eyes. Of course, it was.

He unlocked my cage before stepping aside and pointing at Kayla. “Her, too,” he said, nodding to the other guard.

“What?” I asked, panic rising in my blood as I stood outside of my cage.

Kayla looked confused and scared as the guard pulled her out of her cage and lined her up with me.

“I wouldn’t open your mouth again anytime soon. It’s gotten you in enough trouble as it is,” the new lead guard said to me bitterly.

*Then why the fuck was Kayla coming?*

“Move,” he said as he pushed us along to follow the guard ahead of us.

Kayla was so terrified behind me that I could practically feel her fear like a towel across my shoulders. I, on the other hand, was pissed beyond belief. I didn’t see the harm in a little singing. Did the buyers want broken down, barely there sex slaves? Or did they want women who still had life left in them? I supposed I would find out soon enough.

As we made our way up to the destined third floor, we stopped in front of the owner’s double oak doors and waited for permission to enter. I took a quick look back at Kayla, nodding at her to let her know everything would be okay. I wouldn’t let them hurt her if I could do something about it. I didn’t know what kind of promises I had the authority to make, but I would try with everything I had to keep them if I could.

We were pulled into the office, forced to kneel on the floor like usual, and kept our eyes down, but my peripherals were engaged on a single

target. I heard the squeak of the leather chair as the owner rose from it slowly before walking over to stand in front of Kayla and me. He was wearing another expensive black suit with a burgundy tie, the scent of his cologne filling my lungs as I tried to focus on keeping myself calm.

“Seems I have two superstars in my midst,” he said, crossing his arms over his massive chest. “What to do about that?”

Kayla’s breath had picked up, but I tried to keep mine slow and even. I hated myself for putting her in this position. There was no need for her to be here. I was the one who started singing, for fuck’s sake. Why the fuck was she here?

“I have an idea.” The owner smiled. He charged at Kayla, grabbing her by the hair and tossing her onto the floor over by the guards that stood behind us. “Have at it, boys.” He waved his hands at her, offering her up like a prime cut of beef to a pack of hungry wolves.

I didn’t even bother holding my protest back as I watched the men launch themselves on top of Kayla, her screams coming from beneath them.

“No!” I shouted, throwing myself forward in an attempt to stop them, but the owner stepped in front of me, blocking my advance like a goddamn wall.

He grabbed my throat and dragged me back to a chair stationed next to the fireplace.

“Sit,” he commanded as he plopped himself into the chair and threw me down on the floor between his legs. My back was turned to him as he had me face the horrific scene that played out before me.

“No! Stop it, you son of a bitch!” I shouted, jerking myself forward. The owner grabbed the ends of my hair and yanked me back between his knees, wrapping my strands around his hand like a fucking leash.

“Don’t you dare fucking move,” he snarled into my ear.

“Kayla!” I shouted. “I’m sorry! Please! Stop this!”

Kayla struggled and screamed as the guards slapped and groped her, and it only took a few seconds before I had to look away. I closed my eyes and turned my head, but I couldn't drown out the sound of the laughter and cheers from the guards as they had their way with her. The owner, noticing my deflection, reached down from behind me and wrapped his hand around my neck and up to my jaw.

"You *will* watch this," he spat, holding my face in place.

Tears fell down my cheek as he forced me to watch the guards beat and rape Kayla right in front of me; the scene was gruesome and cruel in its entirety. This was all my fault. I wanted to be defiant for myself. I could take the punishments, I could deliver a little pain in return, but I would not drag Kayla down with me or anyone else for that matter.

"Please stop," I croaked out, my voice broken with defeat. "I get it, you win. I'm sorry!"

It was over. They had found my Kryptonite, and if I wanted Kayla to remain intact, I would have to concede. Game over.

"This is your fault, kitten," he said in my ear. "You wanna play games with me? By all means, be my guest, but you will lose every time."

God, I hated him so much. I could feel the fire rising within me again as I burned with a murderous rage. My body trembled as I fought the urge to act on it, clenching my teeth until I thought they would break.

"This is what you wanted, after all, isn't it? You obviously needed my attention. And now you have it," he said, rubbing his nose along my hair.

I cringed away and practically growled at him.

"Got something to say, baby?" he cooed into my ear.

Now he was just looking for a fight. And I was so close to giving him one.

"I know what you're trying to do," I said, my voice uneven with anger.

"Do tell."

"You're trying to invoke my rage."

This wasn't necessary; Kayla wasn't necessary, but the deliberation here was too fucking obvious to deny. I know I had sworn myself to submission in order to deny him satisfaction, but I wanted to grant myself satisfaction more, even if it meant failing to deny him his. I couldn't do anything to help Kayla at this point, but I could exact a little revenge on her behalf, even if it meant I'd lose in the end. At least I'd make my point. He knew I wasn't broken, that much was obvious, but I certainly wasn't about to sit here and watch this shit for another second.

I could feel him cock his head as he looked down at me, a smirk on his lips. The smile on the guard's face as he rammed himself into Kayla was enough to cause my rampaging fire to explode into full-on nuclear fury.

"And it worked," I seethed and threw my elbow hard back into the owner's face.

It crunched against the bridge of his nose, causing his grip on my throat to loosen, allowing me to turn slightly and land a jab right into his Adam's apple. He grunted at the contact, and I found my hair slipping out of his hold as I quickly stood.

"I am gonna turn that black eye into a matching set," I declared confidently and threw a right hook to follow up on the promise, but his large palm shot up and caught my fist midair. His long strong fingers closed around my hand, trapping it in place. The look on his face was enough to drain the blood from my entire body as a snarl ruptured across his lips and he began to squeeze my hand until I was sure it would break.

I cried out in pain as he rose from his chair, squeezing harder and harder until I found myself on my knees before him. The pain was enough to distract me from any further thoughts of attack, but when I finally couldn't take it any longer, I kicked out at his kneecaps. He expected it and sauntered left out of the way. He then released my hand, trading it for my wrist and gripping it just as tight.

“I think someone wants to play,” he smirked down at me, cruelty shining brightly in his dark blue eyes, and a bulge the size of the Eiffel Tower in his pants.

*Fuck.*

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The owner dragged me across the floor by my wrist to the door of the bedroom so fast I barely had time to find my footing. We passed Kayla, who had now stopped struggling and screaming, and was just staring blankly at the ceiling as the attacks continued, tears flowing like rivers down her face.

I wanted so much revenge for her. This wasn't her fault, it was mine, but this man was vicious and demanding and I wanted nothing more than to rip his fucking throat out.

He pulled the door open and threw me inside on the floor. I rolled at the impact and rose to my feet, hands in the air, ready for another go with him. Closing the door, he leaned back against it and crossed his arms over his chest, a devilishly charming smile creeping across his face as he stared me down. He truly was the devil in a beautiful disguise.

"You," he pointed, "have a beautiful voice...but I much rather prefer it screaming."

"What the fuck is wrong with you!" I shouted at him. "It was just a goddamn song; now let her go!"

He raised his eyebrows in a very nonchalant surprised manner. I was really contradicting my new persona of slave girl, but at the moment, I didn't give a single fuck about it.

"Careful, slave," he warned, cocking his head to the side. "I'd watch that tone if I were you."

That warning was enough to remind me that even though I was full of rage and energy, he was still a lot bigger than I was. Rationality quickly took over my rage as I reflected on the last time I fought him, proving I was seriously lacking in my skills, and I didn't want to relive that again. But if he came after me, I would not hesitate for a second.

In an attempt to calm down, I relaxed my stance into a simple standing position, but still kept my hands up and released a heavy sad breath through my nose.

“It was just a song,” I said, toning down my attitude a little.

“And what do you think that song represented?”

“Nothing. I started humming and then it turned into words! I don’t understand what the big deal is.”

“The big deal is you’re giving them hope when there is none.”

I just stood there with my mouth open like an idiot. He really did want to sell broken women, didn’t he? They were probably easier to deal with and much more likely to be compliant. What a sad, miserable life this man must lead.

“I didn’t encourage them to sing along,” I said smoothly. “They did that of their own free will because they wanted to feel something other than fear and pain. Can you really blame them?”

“Yes, I can,” he said stepping forward. “Silence is what’s safe. They should know that by now, and because of your antics, they’re all going to suffer.”

“What?” I asked in shock.

He turned on the T.V. that was hanging on the wall in front of the bed and a bunch of security feeds popped up. There were at least a dozen of them. But then I saw it in the upper right-hand corner. A guard was holding what looked like a fire hose, and he was dousing the shit out of all the slaves while they cowered away in their cages.

“You motherfucker!” I shouted, charging myself at him with all I had, but he had anticipated it.

He blocked my kick to his chin and threw himself at me, forcing me down to the floor. His big body covered mine while he grabbed both my wrists and pinned them on the floor at either side of my head. I tried everything I could to buck him off me, kicking him in the back, but it was all for nothing, and I was just tiring myself out.

“Struggle, baby,” he growled. “I love it when you fight.”

“Get the fuck off me, you sick piece of shit!”

“I knew you weren’t broken,” he seethed in my ear. “I should kill you right now. In front of all the slaves. Make an example out of you.”

“Good,” I spat back. “Then I’ll finally be rid of you and this shit hole.”

Damn, that was bold, but I said it before I could even think about it. I didn’t know where my head was, but it certainly wasn’t in slave mode anymore.

I saw the twinkle in his eye as the corner of his mouth turned up into a tight little smirk. His face moved in closer to mine and I quickly turned away, looking over toward the bed as the tip of his nose rubbed along the side of my throat. And then I felt his fat, wet tongue lick up the side of my neck all the way to my jaw. I jerked my body in repulsion, but he just kept me there pinned under him while more knots formed in my stomach.

“I think I’m gonna call your bluff,” he whispered in my ear and immediately flipped me over onto my stomach, my wrists now secured behind my back in one of his hands while the tip of a sharp knife magically appeared out of nowhere at the base of my throat. I held my head up as high and away from the knife as I could. A single centimeter forward would cause it to pierce my skin.

“Go ahead, slave. You want out so bad; here’s your chance. But know this is the only way you’ll ever be rid of me,” he sneered.

*What the fuck was that supposed to mean?*

I was silent then, my breaths coming in heavy and harsh as he suddenly presented me with another choice. Submission or death. All I had to do was snap my head forward and it'd be all over. No more pain, no more fear, and no more misery. But he knew full well that I wasn't ready die; I wasn't ready to give up, either. However, I was being stupid. I was letting my pride and emotions get the best of me when I should have been thinking about what was more important: staying alive.

"Is this what you want?" he asked me, now pressing the knife harder into my throat. I could feel it pierce my skin enough to draw a small amount of blood. Panic crashed through my body like lightning, as I feared he might make my choice for me. "Is it?" he repeated harshly.

"No," I replied just as harshly.

"I didn't think so," he seethed, returning the knife to his pocket and I breathed a small sigh of relief. "Lucky for you, I have way too much fun torturing you."

"Yeah, lucky me," I said, trying to keep my breathing even.

He then flipped me back over onto my back and rested his forehead against mine, keeping my wrists pinned at my side.

"What are you?" he asked me.

"A slave," I said harshly without hesitation. They were just words to me now. They had no weight anymore.

"Good girl. Now, I'm going to show you just how much of a slave you really are." He let me go and stood up, backing off me. "Get up," he commanded.

I quickly rolled to my side and stood with ease, my hands in tight fists at my hips.

"Come here," he said, crooking a finger at me.

On tentative footsteps, I slowly made my way over to him, watching as he removed his jacket and tie. I stopped about a foot in front of him.

"Good girl. Now...take off my shirt."

My eyes flicked up to him in question, hesitation clear as day on my face.

“I gave you an order. Do as you’re told or I’ll find someone who will. I’m sure Kayla would make an excellent substitute.”

*Son of a bitch.*

With a serious scowl on my face, I reached up to the buttons on his shirt and began pulling them apart. The smile on his face as he watched me complete his task made my stomach coil into tiny knots, and it took everything I had to keep my hands from shaking. I tried to keep myself from touching the hard muscle that rested under his clothing, but it was not easy to avoid. By the time I was done, my heart was pounding in my chest so hard I thought it would explode.

When the buttons were free, I gripped the shirt and gently pulled it past his shoulders and down his arms, tossing it with his tie and jacket that rested on the chair behind him. He still had a black tank top underneath his dress shirt, and I had a feeling I would have to remove that, too.

“Such a good listener,” he approved, and my fists tightened until my nails bit into my palms. “Now the other shirt.”

Tugging at the bottom of the tank top, I pulled it up as far as I could, and he lifted his arms and actually lowered himself just enough so I could successfully remove it from him. Tossing it on the chair with the rest of his clothes, I turned my eyes back to him and couldn’t help but admire his tremendous physique.

It was the first time I had seen him fully shirtless, and I had a feeling I would be seeing the rest of him very soon. I couldn’t help but stare at his impressive upper body. His large muscles were well defined under his perfectly bronzed skin, and to be honest, I was a little envious of his six-pack as it was so much more chiseled than mine was. His shoulders were broad and thick, while his massive chest radiated power. Fuck, I was so jealous of his obvious strength that it probably showed all over my face.

But among his physical beauty was the evidence of battle. He had quite a few random scars here and there around his torso and chest. They looked like they might have been knife wounds. There was also a circular scar near his left shoulder and another one near his lower right side. Bullet wounds...

“Like what you see?” he asked, amused as I looked him over.

I gave him a look and opened my mouth to say something, but then closed it when I looked back down and noticed his tattoos. An impressive eagle was in full flight on his left forearm as it carried a large shield in its claws with a Latin verse etched into the bottom. “*Absolutum Dominium*.”

*Oh, how I wonder what that means...*

Covering his other arm was a Gaelic design that stretched beautifully from his wrist, over his entire forearm, and up past his bicep. I wondered if he had Irish heritage as I did.

“Nice ink,” I said honestly. I could appreciate someone’s shared love for tats.

“Thank you.” He smiled. “I plan to get more, but I’ve been a little busy lately.”

“Yeah, same here,” I shot back, glaring up at him.

He narrowed his eyes at me then; a clear warning emanated from those beautiful blue irises.

“Take off my shoes,” he ordered, as he placed his hands casually in his pockets.

My scowl returned as I slowly lowered myself to his feet. I gently pulled at the laces of his expensive leather shoes, trying my absolute best to ignore the smirk that I knew was painted across his smug face.

“Mmmm...seeing you down there?” He smiled. “It’s picture perfect.”

*Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you.*

I was seething when he lifted his foot so I could pull the shoe off. I did the same with the other and began to rise when he stopped me, pressing his hand to my forehead.

“I don’t believe I told you to rise, now did I?”

I gave him the look of death as I lowered myself back to the floor at his feet.

“Take off my belt.”

I exhaled a slow deep breath as I swallowed back my protest and lifted my shaky hands to his silver belt buckle. I imagined slipping it around his neck and choking him out as I pulled it from his belt loops and tossed it on the chair. The bulge in his pants had grown even larger, if that were somehow possible. I kept myself where I was, my heart pounding faster and faster as I waited for the inevitable.

“Pull down the zipper.” He nodded at me.

I knew it would come down to this and yet I felt like a deer caught in headlights. I froze. I couldn’t explain it, but the thought of my hands being anywhere near his dick made me want to vomit all over the place. And then the smack to my face woke me from my state of shock.

“That’s for hesitating. Don’t make me tell you again,” he growled down at me.

Shaking off the pain now pulsing in my cheek, I brought my fingers to the zipper that was pressing out of the black slacks he wore. I bit the inside of my mouth as I pulled the zipper down and placed my hands back in my lap, praying to God I wouldn’t have to do what I knew he wanted.

“Good girl.” He patted the top of my head like an obedient dog. “Now stand up and take off your dress. Slowly.”

I groaned in protest, trying to hide it and failing. I was going to murder this son of a bitch. I swore on it. I rose gently, my hands balled into tight fists at my side as I eyed him something fierce. The look he gave me back was just as intense, another warning radiating from his eyes if I didn’t listen.

Biting hard on the inside of my cheek, I took the flimsy material of my stretchy tube top dress and slowly pulled it down my body until it fell

passed my legs and pooled around my feet. I stood there exposed, shaking with rage as my fists returned to my side, my muscles tensing as his hands remained relaxed in his pockets. My eyes were glued to the floor as he took a step towards me. I inhaled a sharp breath through my nose as I felt his lips graze my forehead.

“Beautiful,” he whispered. “Now lie down on the bed and close your eyes.”

What the fuck? As if forcing me to undress him wasn’t enough, he had to add to my misery by giving me instructions that didn’t require an ounce of physical force. If I didn’t do as he said, he would bring Kayla in and have her replace me. I couldn’t let that happen.

Biting back my tongue, I turned and walked over to the bed. I tried not to think about what he was going to do to me and it killed me knowing I couldn’t even fight him because he would just hurt Kayla. I would have to let him do whatever he wanted.

Lying back on the bed, I kept my knees bent and closed together while my hands clawed the sheets at my sides. I shut my eyes and tried as hard as I possibly could to control my breathing and force my heart to calm down. My stomach was in tight little knots that threatened to tear me in half, and I had to focus greatly on not fidgeting. For a while, I simply tried to focus on my breathing, but when I realized how quiet it was, I knew he was watching me, probably enjoying the show.

*Bastard.*

I listened as he fidgeted for a second before his footsteps came closer and closer to the edge of the bed, causing me to grip the sheets even tighter. So silent. So much tension, it was driving me insane. I could feel his eyes on me as if he were devouring me right then and there. It was almost painful to keep myself still.

And then I felt his fingertips trace along my shoulder and down the length of my arm, causing me to flinch. Goosebumps followed his path on

my skin as I tried to suppress the shiver threatening to give me away.

“So beautiful,” he whispered again as he traced his fingers back and forth. My skin was on fire where he touched me, like a slow trail of acid running down my arm, scorching everything in its path.

Before the burn was over, he climbed on top of me, straddling my hips and resting on his forearms on either side of my head. I could feel the warmth of his breath on my face, minty with a side of malice. The tip of his nose was mere inches from mine as his hands pushed back my hair from my face.

He was being so gentle, so careful, and it was scaring the shit out of me. I was waiting for the fire, waiting for the rage to unleash itself from within him all over again. The anxiety was killing me.

“Open your eyes,” he finally said.

Tentatively, I lifted my lids and was met with nothing but deep ocean blue. It was beautiful and terrifying all at the same time because I knew who those eyes belonged to. I knew exactly who was staring back at me and I could feel my soul cringe inside me as if it, too, were trying to hide from his gaze.

“God, you’re eyes...” he said. “I could get lost in them.”

What was happening? Why was he telling me this? Was he trying to relax me with compliments so I could fall into the illusion of his trust? That would never happen. I would never let my guard down around him - ever.

I looked away from him then, turning my head slightly. He could get lost in my eyes all he wanted, but I refused to lose myself in his. His hand gripped my jaw, forcing it back to its original position and locking me in place.

“You just love to force my hand, don’t you?” he smirked.

“Yeah, seems like it’s the only thing I’m good at these days,” I grunted under his grip.

He chuckled at that and the sound of his laughter made my insides shrivel into nothing but tiny sharp rocks. He released my jaw and sat back up, smiling down at me.

“Well, when you’re right, you’re right.”

“Yeah, but you forget one thing,” I declared.

“Oh? And what’s that?”

“You. Love it.”

He narrowed his eyes at me then, a cold draft emanating from his stare that chilled my entire body, but I wasn’t backing down.

“Don’t play games with me, little girl,” he warned. “You know the outcome of that.”

“I’m not playing games,” I shot back. “I’m just calling you out.”

His hand shot out to grip my throat, squeezing it tight while my hands wrapped around his wrist.

“Not one of your smartest moves,” he seethed. “But I can commemorate your bravery.”

“Because you know I’m right,” I croaked out.

“No. Because you don’t get to make declarations anymore. You don’t even have a voice unless I allow it.”

“Then explain to me why you were at my cage that night,” I challenged.

His eyes blazed with rage as I called him out for an explanation, panic boiling in my stomach and causing me to shrivel back inside myself. I wasn’t sure if I even wanted an explanation now.

“I don’t have to explain shit to you, slave,” he scowled, squeezing my throat even harder. “But if my mere presence is the only thing needed to turn your dreams into nightmares, then goddamn if I won’t relish in every moment of it. Open your legs.”

He got off me then and stood at the foot of the bed, waiting.

“Now,” he ordered.

Biting my lip hard enough to draw blood, I gently parted my knees, fighting back the tears that threatened to spill.

“That’s it, baby,” he approved. “Show me that gorgeous pussy of yours.”

I tried to imagine I was somewhere else. Somewhere warm, with lots of sunshine and maybe a beautiful white sandy beach with clear blue water. I could practically hear the ocean as the waves crashed against the shore, and the seagulls flying around in the sky, making that annoying sound they made as they fought against each other for food. That was paradise.

“Wider,” came his voice, destroying my distraction. I let my legs fall apart even further and allowed all of myself to become completely exposed for him. The air hit my sensitive tissues and cooled the heat that formed there, creating more goosebumps along my arms.

I listened as he moved closer to me, resting on the bed as the side of his face rubbed against my ankle as he made his way up my leg. He had slight stubble that scratched against my smooth skin, making it even harder to pretend this wasn’t happening. He unleashed his teeth and they grazed up the inside of my thigh making it all the way to the V of my legs before finally taking a long deep breath through his nose as if he was inhaling me in.

“Mmm...you smell divine,” he said against my skin.

I cringed.

His face was so close now; I could feel his breath on my cleft and it made me twitch from anticipation. His arm curled around my thigh, while his hand rested at the top of my hip bone, holding my body down. And then he blew a soft cool breeze onto my clit, sending a tiny wave of electricity through my skin and a small blast of heat blossomed in my core. His fingers continued their wrath as he traced little designs into the inside of my other thigh as he continued to blow a tortuous breath onto my clit.

I tried to suppress the whimpers from escaping my mouth, but it was next to impossible with the sensations he was creating. I knew it wouldn't be long before my body began to respond the way he wanted it to, and when it did, he would take exactly what he wanted. The look of absolute pleasure on his face as he began to make my body shudder was enough to make me envy the blind.

The mix of temperatures he was creating was driving me wild and I fought hard to keep him from knowing it. I wondered how long it would be before his tongue found its way to my most sacred of places...and then I wondered if I would like it. I found myself suddenly wanting a release, needing one, but I loathed myself for my body and its stupid selfish desires.

And then, as if he read my mind, his fat wet tongue licked up my entire center, flicking at my clit and drawing it into his mouth. I couldn't stop the gasp that escaped my mouth and my body shuddered from the touch of his animalistic tongue.

"Damn," he growled. "You taste fantastic. Just like honey."

My body was on fire now and I felt a gush of heat rush to my core and I knew it would give me away. Clutching the sheets, I bit my tongue as I fought against the heat, my body wanting more, but my brain screaming in protest. Yes, this man had a sexy exterior, but his interior made me want to empty a full clip into his head.

And then a deep chuckle rose up from his throat. "Someone's enjoying themselves."

*Dammit!*

I shook my head, gripping the sheets so tight I was sure my knuckles would pierce through my skin.

"Don't lie to me, little girl. Your own desire coats you. That pussy's practically begging for my mouth to finish what it started. But I'm not gonna do that," he said, climbing further over me, resting himself just past my hips. "Not until you beg me for it."

“Never gonna happen,” I spit out at him.

“Unbutton my pants,” he retorted.

Releasing the sheets, my palms were sweaty as I unwillingly brought my hands to the button that held his pants together. This was the worst form of torture, forcing me to undress him so he could take from me everything that didn’t belong to him. And I had zero choice in the matter.

When the button released, my hands returned to grip the sweaty sheets beneath me. His face was so close to mine, and a low growl reverberated from his throat as he rubbed his nose up the side of my neck. I felt so trapped, like a small deer under the prowl of a mountain lion, waiting to be torn to pieces for the predator’s pleasure.

He was drawing this out nice and slow, savoring my fear and discomfort like a fine wine. He then shimmied out of his pants with devious deliberation, staring at me the entire time, but I refused to indulge him.

“Look at me,” he demanded. Shaking my head, I brought my eyes to his, and I found myself drowning in his all-consuming gaze, summoning my worst fears. His hand curled around the curve of my face, his thumb tracing back and forth along my jawline. “I am going to wreck you,” he said slowly, deliberately emphasizing each word.

And then he plunged into me, pushing me back into the pillows above my head, and I cried out from his violent invasion. He roared from the impact above me, pleasure crystal clear in his eyes and a smirk forming in the corner of his lips. “Like a fucking glove,” he groaned.

My hands balled into tight fists in the sheets, as he began slowly pumping in and out of me. I turned my head to the side, the only thing I could do to inch away from him, but he wasn’t having any of it.

“Nope,” he said, taking my hands from my sides and pinning them above my head. “You’re staying right here with me.”

“You’re a monster,” I seethed.

“You have no idea,” he growled into my ear.

He slammed into me then, his big body hovering above mine as he pinned me down, his weight crushing me beneath him. Suddenly, his lips came down on top of mine, kissing me with a passion that bordered on a feral type of possession. It terrified me. His lips forced my mouth open, allowing his tongue to snake through and twist with mine.

By the time he finished kissing me, I was breathless and begging for air. He laughed out loud as he continued to pound into me, the force of each blow like a giant punch to my lower body. I thought he was going to rip me apart as the pain of his onslaught tore through me. And then it occurred to me that I was still sore from the last time he fucked me. That was days ago!

Just when I thought I couldn't take much more, his mouth suddenly latched onto my left breast. Still pumping away inside me, he bit down on my nipple, sending a new wave of pleasure straight to my clit. I cried out and my back arched involuntarily, pressing my breast further into his mouth as his tongue swirled and prodded over my sensitive flesh.

Replacing my wrists in his left hand, his right found its way to my other neglected breast and gently traced the underside of it with his fingertips before making his way around my peaked nipple. His hand then captured my entire breast, massaging and kneading it with a strong grip and I moaned at the contact.

As if responding to my dead giveaway, his mouth released me, and blew a cool breeze over the wet skin, sending more electricity to my clit. Somehow, throughout this assault, I found myself coming closer and closer to a release. I knew I liked it a little rough when I was with Jason, but this was more than a little rough; this was possession, pure and unrestrained.

Keeping up his hard, even pace, his mouth targeted my neck. I thought he was going to kiss me there, but instead he unleashed his teeth and bit me hard, the pain pulsing through my body and making my blood rush through my veins like the goddamn rapids. Another gasp escaped me and I quickly felt his grip on my wrists loosen just enough for one of them to slip out.

When he noticed, he released my neck and raised himself up just enough for me to slap him right across the face. His skin was slick with sweat as my hand made contact, and I tried to retract it for another attempt, but he just caught my wrist and laughed as I struggled against him.

“Nice try, sweetheart.” He chuckled. “But you’re not going anywhere.”

“Fuck you,” I hissed.

The smile that spread across his face sickened me to my stomach as the irony of the situation dwelled on me.

“My pleasure,” he moaned and slammed into me harder than he ever had. I screamed as my wrists took their usual place above my head while he held me down and drilled into me like a jackhammer.

My body rocked back and forth under his, and I could feel the release building higher and higher no matter how much I tried to deny it. An unstoppable force was ready to punch through the fragile veil of my dignity.

And then it happened. I could feel my core clench onto the owner’s dick as I rode out an orgasm that shattered my body, straining my muscles and causing me to cry out harder than I ever had. It wasn’t three seconds later before he found his own release and poured himself into me.

“Oh fuck, baby, give it to me,” he sneered down at me as he pumped the last of himself into me, grunting and groaning something ferocious before finally collapsing on top of me.

When it was over, the tears I had been fighting broke from their chains and spilled down my cheeks, soaking into my hair. I had just found pleasure in my own rape. I was nothing more than a sick twisted fuck just like he was.

“Shhh, baby,” he whispered, kissing my tears. “You did exactly what I wanted, and I didn’t even need to tell you. You’re such a good girl.”

“Get off me,” I cried. “Get off me!” I started to fight against him again, but I barely had any energy left, my attempt beyond pathetic. “Please...just get off.”

The tears flowed like a waterfall now, and I didn't even care if he saw; there was no possible way I could hold them back now. After everything I had gone through, after everything he had done to me, this was by far the worst. I had taken pleasure from a man who had taken me from my family, beaten me, raped me, and was planning to sell me so I could live my life under those same conditions until I took my last breath. I felt like I was nothing - like I meant nothing. All I was worth was a good fuck now and the fact that my body couldn't tell the difference when it came to what kind of monster was pleasuring it was more destructive than I could handle.

“Shhh, shhh,” the owner cooed, his fingers tracing along my jawline.

My body was shaking now and all I wanted to do was curl into a tiny ball and disappear.

“Please,” I pleaded with him. “You got what you wanted, now let me wallow in it alone.”

“Kiss me and I’ll let you go back to your cage,” he said, narrowing in on me.

Fine. I could do that if it meant getting away from him, even if it was only for a short period of time. He would call upon me again - find some other way of provoking me - but the next time he would fail.

I raised my lips up to his, but before he dropped to meet mine, he traced his fingers down my nose. “You’d better kiss me like you mean it, or I’ll just do this all over again.”

I nodded in confirmation. He dipped his head and I pressed my lips to him, giving him exactly what he wanted. It was the only way he would give me what I wanted. I kissed him as if I was kissing Jason, with love and passion, as if nothing else at this moment mattered but him and me. But as soon as our lips touched, I felt a darkness come over me - like a shadow swallowing up all the light and forcing it into the dark where it could never be seen again. I couldn’t explain the feeling, but it made me cringe from the inside out.

When he finally released me, I was on the verge of tears all over again. “That’s my girl,” he said and pulled out of me, leaving me in my own mess. “Now go clean yourself up.”

I curled into myself, my body aching and my core throbbing in pain. I somehow managed to push myself off from the bed, but when I took a step forward, I fell straight to the floor, my body incapable of holding myself up in any way. As soon as I hit the floor, I heard the chuckle of the owner echo off the walls as he took a few steps toward me. “I told you I was going to wreck you.”

I tried to push myself off the floor, but I had no energy to do so. The owner walked away into the bathroom and I could hear him cleaning himself off. He came back out a few seconds later to put his clothes back on. By the time he was done, I still hadn’t moved a muscle, and I considered just passing out right there on the floor.

I heard his footsteps come around the side of the bed, and he lowered himself to me. He swiped a piece of my hair away from my face and tucked it back behind my ear with the rest. And then he laughed at me.

“Come on, silly girl,” he said, picking me up off the floor by my arms and leading me over to the bathroom. He placed me on top of the counter and I leaned back against the mirror, exhaustion ready to take me. He ran a warm wet rag down between my legs, collecting all the smeared and dried evidence of our orgasms and cleaning it away. “Do not move,” he warned, glowering at me before heading back into the bedroom. When he returned two seconds later, he had my dress in his hand. “Arms up,” he said bunching it in his hands. I weakly held my arms up in front of me so he could slip the dress through them and over my head.

He tugged it down to my waste only covering my chest before pulling me from the counter and led me out of the room, back to the double oak doors of his office. I pulled the rest of my dress down so that it actually

covered my ass instead of just bunching at my hips like he had left it like an asshole.

Looking around, I was grateful to see that Kayla was gone and hopefully still in one piece, though I doubted it. The door opened and a guard stood there, obviously waiting to take me back to my cage.

Before I could take another step, the owner turned me toward him and stared down at me as if I were the only person standing in the room. “Until next time,” he smirked, running a finger from the center of my forehead and down to the tip of my nose. He then tossed me at the guard, but before he slammed the doors behind him, he asked me the one question that would always remind me of everything I wanted to forget. “What are you, Jaden?” he asked me as he leaned against the door. The sound of my name spiked in my stomach as the cruel joke dawned on me. I would acknowledge what I was, all the while remembering what I used to be - a human being.

“A slave,” I whispered, my voice barely able to go a single decibel higher.

“Good girl,” he said and disappeared behind the heavy oak.

Turning away, I had to rely on the guard to get me back to my cage successfully without falling. When I finally collapsed onto the barely there padding, I had some form of relief knowing Kayla was beside me, breathing normally as she slept off the horrors of the day. I didn’t wait another second to join her.

The rest of the day as well as the following were met with silence and sleep. Kayla and I were too exhausted to do anything else. Even the rest of the girls around us kept to themselves and barely made a sound. It was obvious who had won the battle and the war here, and it affected every single one of us.

Even eating our daily rations of food took more energy than we had available, but we knew we needed nutrients if we wanted to heal. I tried to apologize to Kayla for what happened to her, but she wouldn't hear it. As far as she was concerned, she was the one who really encouraged everyone else to sing. She was just at fault as I was, according to her.

We didn't talk much about what we went through, not wanting to dwell on the horrible things we couldn't change. I couldn't bear to share with her the epitome of my weakness and failure thanks to the owner and his abusive manipulative antics. Instead, we focused on ourselves and bringing back a little sunshine to our lives. I encouraged Kayla to stretch with me every other hour the following day, teaching her specific movements that released tension in the muscles and relaxed the body. By the end of the second day, we were feeling much better.

During those two days, I couldn't help but dwell on my family. I was losing count of the days that I had been gone and I wondered how close, if at all, they were to possibly finding me. I didn't know if there was security footage from my kidnapping, but I was sure it wasn't clear enough to make out the faces of the guards, and they probably had already tossed the license

plate from the van. The problem was that I didn't even know where I was. I could be halfway around the world and never even know it, which would make getting back home so much more difficult.

I missed my family so much. I wanted to hold my mom and tell her everything was okay; that I was back and the people who hurt me were gone. I wanted to sock both of my brothers in the shoulders for even thinking that I might not come back. I wanted to sit on the beach with Jordan, sip on a Captain and Coke, and tell her all about how I got my revenge against the fucks who stole me. But most of all, I wanted to feel Jason in my arms as I held on to him and kissed him like I would never let him go. I would show him how much I loved him every second of every day until we were old and gray.

I thought about all the times I had trained with him - sparred and wrestled with him, successfully getting him to tap out even though he didn't want to. He was always so proud of me when I finally beat him because he was relieved to know that if I could handle someone of his size, I could handle others. Jason didn't go easy on me either, but then again, he was never really trying to hurt me to begin with. Maybe that's where we screwed up. Maybe we didn't take it seriously enough. Or maybe I was fucked no matter what. I knew I was strong, knew I was capable, but I wasn't Superwoman. I couldn't take on the whole world, but goddamn if I wasn't going to try.

I often found myself waking up in the middle of the night, a cold sweat covering my body as I quietly wept from how much I missed Jason. I was terrified I would never see him again, and as each day passed, the tough pieces of my weakening heart would shatter a little more. I wanted to be strong for him. I wanted to survive for him, but the constant reminder of the amount of control I had over this hellish situation made it so difficult to remain hopeful.

As my thoughts settled on my family, my body shuddered as I realized there was a chance I might never get to do what I so desperately wanted to do. The future that I had worked so hard to build was being robbed from me as well as my family. They wouldn't be able to enjoy the rewards of my hard work like I wanted them to. My whole life was built on making something of myself, of giving back, of helping those in need, yet now I was the one in need of help.

And then my thoughts lingered on someone I hadn't thought about in years - my father. I hated thinking about him and often tried not to because it only brought me pain. He was everything to me as a child. When others said I couldn't, he made sure I could. When others saw me as weak, he made me change their minds. And when others told me no, he taught me how to make them regret it. And when cancer finally took him from me, I hated him for it. I hated him for leaving me, for making me think he was strong enough to last forever, but like so many others before him, he had lost his battle and shriveled away into nothing. It was so hard to watch my father shrink into a shell of the man he used to be. But even though his physical appearance dwindled, his mind remained strong. Strong until the very end.

If only he could see me now, I was sure he'd be disappointed. When I finally escaped this place, I would make damn sure I made him proud then. I had to stay positive. I had to stay strong. So I *could* make my father proud.

"Thank you," Kayla finally said to me.

"For what?" I asked, breaking my train of thought.

"For staying strong. For being who you are in spite of everything we've been through."

I shrugged. "I don't know what you're talking about. You're the one who's kept me going this whole time."

"Come on," she smirked.

“I’m serious, Kayla. I couldn’t be more grateful than to have a person like you stuck in a cage next to me.”

“Thanks.” She smiled. “But I seriously think I’m the luckier one.”

“Oh my God, will the two of you seriously just shut the fuck up already?” came an aggravated female voice next to me.

I jerked my head around, shocked as hell to find the girl next to me eyeing me as if she wanted to claw my eyes out. Her dark pixie cut hair was wild and dirty as it littered around her face making her look more animalistic as ever.

“What did you just say?” I asked her, surprised she had said a word at all.

“I said shut the fuck up already!” she practically screeched, silencing all the other girls around us as they turned to watch.

“The fuck is your problem?” I asked, narrowing my eyes at her. *Besides the obvious...*

“You’re my problem! The both of you are! All your talks about finding hope and getting out of here? It’s not going to happen, so stop trying to encourage false hope! We are never getting out of here, so just shut the fuck up already!”

By the time she was done with her little rant, her chest was heaving up and down and her eyes looked wild with fear as she stared at me.

“What’s your name?” I asked her calmly.

She just shook her head at me.

“What’s your goddamn name?!” I repeated with more force. She wanted my attention, and now I wanted hers.

“Megan,” she finally said, her eyes still on the floor.

“Well, you listen to me, Megan,” I said calmly and then changed my mind. “In fact, all of you listen to me!” I raised my voice so all the girls could hear. “I don’t know about you guys, but I’m not giving up! I refuse to let these fucks break my spirit because it’s not theirs to break! They want

you beaten. They want you down. But only you can let them! You have to be strong and keep fighting! These are your lives they're taking away! Are you going go out in silence, or are you going to make them hear you?"

I looked around at all of them, their eyes wide with fear, but I could see the small glimmer of hope that had the potential of a rising sun. There were so many of us - black, white, Hispanic, Asian, blonde, brunette - but none of that mattered. On the inside, we were all the same dollar sign to them, but I wanted to change that. I wanted them to know they were more than that.

"Whatever happens to us," I began again, staring right into Megan's eyes, "we have to stay strong and keep fighting. We're all we have, and if we don't fight for ourselves, then who the fuck will?"

Megan stared at me, tears forming in her eyes as her breath came out in heavy heaves. She knew I was right, but she was scared. We all were.

"I'd be lying if I said I wasn't scared, Megan. I'm terrified, but I won't let them consume me. And neither should you. Please don't give up. Don't give in," I pleaded, holding my fist out between the bars.

After staring at it for a few seconds, she finally nodded and bumped it with her own fist. I smiled and exhaled a breath of relief.

"Remember," I said, "what doesn't kill us will only make us stronger. If we can survive this, we can survive anything."

Megan nodded as she stared out her cage, a new aura of confidence surrounding her already. I hoped it lasted this time.

About thirty seconds later, the doors down the hall opened and the three usual men walked in carrying the set of trays that contained the food and water. Following through their routine, the men made their way down to me, placed the bowl and water in my cage, and went on to the rest of the slaves.

Kayla and I scarfed down our food in record time and placed the bowls back for pickup, resting against the back of our cages. The guards collected

our bowls, but when they got to Megan, I could have sworn I hallucinated as she actually threw her half-empty bowl at one of the guards as they reached in to take it.

“Fuck you, you pieces of shit!” she screamed and lunged out of her cage.

An uproar ensued as the rest of the girls around me screamed, while some cheered for her to run. She managed to kick the guard right between the legs, and he tumbled back against the wall, clutching his groin and wincing in pain. The other guard was at the other end of the hall during the debacle and he ran after Megan as she took off for the door.

“Go! Go!” I shouted for her amongst the yelling, hoping she could hear my support, my heart racing in my chest for her. But as she neared the door, it opened and who would charge in but the fucking owner as if he were standing out there, waiting and watching the whole time.

Fear enveloped her as she skidded to a halt, but still ended up slamming into the owner’s body. He grabbed her and turned her around, her back to his front while both of his hands trapped her neck and her jaw in a tight grip. She fought against him as best she could, but there was nothing she could do.

And then the owner’s eyes found mine as I watched, crouched from my cage, fear rising up my spine as he smirked at me from behind a devious and evil glare.

*Oh no....*

It was as though slow motion had consumed the air around us as time nearly stopped. I shook my head, pleading with all my heart as his face went from smirk to intense rage.

“No...” I whispered. “No!”

And just like that, he snapped her neck. Even among the screaming, I could have sworn I still heard the crunching sound of her bones breaking as it crashed into my ears, her lifeless body falling to the floor in a heap before

him. My heart dropped into my stomach in pieces as my mouth fell open, my screams joining the rest of the slaves as they cried and wailed in their cages.

“No! You son of a bitch!” I screamed at him, slamming my palms into the bars of the cage.

And yet he continued to stand there, deliberately, watching me as tears fell down my face, acknowledging his silent message that was meant only for me.

I couldn’t believe what I had just witnessed; I couldn’t process it. And as if nothing had even happened, he walked out of the hall and left her body there for the guards to clean up.

I felt myself begin to hyperventilate as my breath came in and out in heavy gusts. I closed my eyes and tried to take slow deep breaths in through my nose and out my mouth, trying to ignore the screams and the undeniable urge to vomit all over my cage. It took me about thirty seconds, but I was finally able to calm myself down enough to turn and focus on Kayla who now had her hands over her ears and her eyes closed shut.

“Kayla,” I yelled, trying to reach her over the screaming and crying around us. “Kayla, look at me!”

Her eyes burst open, tears running down her face as she stared at me. Her chest heaved up and down as she tried to get a grip on herself.

“It’s okay, Kayla. It’s going to be okay.”

“It’s not okay, Jaden! It’s not fucking okay! He just fucking killed her! In front of all of us!”

“I know! But we need to stay calm. We’re going to get through this.

“I don’t know if I can, Jaden.”

“Yes, you can, Kayla. You have me. We’re gonna get through this together. Look at me; breathe with me.”

She tried to calm down with me then as we took deep breaths together. We closed our eyes and counted down from ten and when we finally got to

one some five minutes later, we were calmer and the crying and screaming had lessened. The body of the poor girl was gone, as were the guards; the only thing left now being the horrible memory of it all.

Some hours later, Kayla and I laid curled up in our cages, staring off into the abyss. I couldn't help but somehow feel responsible for what happened to Megan. Sure, I wasn't responsible for her running, but I had a feeling the owner killed her simply to spite me, to remind me that she could have easily been me. I got the message. I should have been dead days ago, yet I was still alive even after all the shit I've pulled.

Why?

Why was he so hell bent on keeping me around? Was I so much more special than all the other slaves? I supposed they certainly behaved better than I did. And maybe that was what he loved - my defiance because it didn't just come with screams and cries, it came with fists and blood. I had been giving him exactly what he wanted, the challenge he so clearly craved. He wanted to break me so bad; he wanted to prove that he was the victor and I would be the sold sore loser. Well, that wasn't going to happen. I wasn't going to let him beat me at his own game. He could push and pull all he wanted, but I would only bend with the wind and bounce back when it was over.

The following day, breakfast was served, but Kayla and I barely had the stomach to eat after yesterday's horrific events. When the guard eventually came back to collect my bowl, he left my cage door open. Standing aside, he gestured for me to exit the cage.

"Let's go," he said. "Your presence is requested."

*Shit.*

I wasn't ready for this - to face him. Not yet. It was just too soon. The wound was still too fresh. I looked over at Kayla, and her face washed with fear for me as she watched me crawl out of the cage and stand before the guard.

"Let's go," he said, taking my elbow in a tight grip and heading for the door. They were going to let me walk unrestrained again? Shit, this was a test. One I would need to pass with flying colors if I wanted my body to be ready for the auction. Even though I was better, my body was still not in tip-top shape yet and my emotional state was far less than optimistic.

I kept up with him, but a dull ache laced every step I took and I winced as I sluggishly pushed myself to keep going. Several minutes later, we made our way to the elevator and he pressed the button for the goddamn third floor. My heart was racing with anxiety as I tried to regulate my breathing. I would have to put on the best performance of my life this time.

I watched blankly as I stared at the TV screen, surveying the crying faces of Jaden's family. My lips sneered in disgust as I observed the

man I recognized as her boyfriend, claiming his love for her. What a joke. The guy was tall, lean, and muscular but didn't hold a candle to me. I could kill him with ease; wipe him from this Earth and anyone else who thought they had a claim to something that was in my possession. Even her little brothers vowed to have her home and safe once again. That was adorable. The worry on all their faces told me that they cared about Jaden, but the tears that fell from her mother's face didn't even flare a spark of regret or empathy for their obvious pain. What was mine was mine, and no one would ever change that unless I allowed it.

I was the type of man who took what he wanted in life, whenever and however he wanted, and anyone who had the guts to get in my way was met with a bullet to the kneecap or worse. I was not a man to be taken lightly. I exerted my control and dominance over everything and everyone around me as I was raised to do, no exceptions. In my world, it was kill or be killed, and I made damn sure I stayed at the top of the food chain. I was not an enemy you wanted to make in this life, and the entire underground world knew that.

I didn't get into this business by being soft and sensitive. My empire required ruthlessness and an appetite for carnage, and I was born to rule it. Of course, human trafficking wasn't the only thing I dabbled in. I ran several other businesses and trades, ranging from weapons to drugs, to clubs and resorts all over the world, keeping me in that top 1% and the local authorities in my pocket. I also found the stock market to be an interesting playground for chaos and financial ruin. I knew exactly where and when to invest my money, keeping a good portion of my finances legal and legit enough to satisfy the FBI just in case they ever decided to check in on me, but I had too many moles in their network who kept them far away from my trail.

I looked down at my phone, anticipating a call that should have been a meeting, but instead I had to be stuck here. I wasn't even supposed to be at

the warehouse this often. I usually only came in once a week, had my fun with an errant slave girl, checked in on how things were going, and moved on to the next task on my list, which was usually never-ending. Most of my business was done from my office at home, but since I killed the manager of my warehouse for jeopardizing my business, Scott and I had to step in until a new replacement could be found. No such luck yet.

As I watched the man on the television plead for Jaden's safe return, it just made me more possessive, bordering on obsession. She was in my head all the time, more than I wanted to admit, and even when I looked in the mirror, her mark on my face was still present...and it always brought a smile to my face. No woman had ever left such an impression on me before, and she was a slave, no less. It made me laugh a little every time I saw it, bringing back the memories of her brave attempt to fight me, and the sweet satisfaction I felt when I crushed her into submission. It was honestly exhilarating to watch her cave.

Her reaction to my little message the other day was priceless. The girl whose neck I snapped could have easily been Jaden. It should have been Jaden days ago, but I wasn't willing to give her the easy way out and I didn't think I ever would. She could probably escape the compound, and I still wouldn't have her killed - just brought her back for another dose of me until she was completely gone and broken.

I think maybe that it was time to test her devotion to her new way of life. I knew I had taken another notch out of her spirit when I forced her to enjoy me - a punishment I knew not many women could stand. She had shattered underneath me after that orgasm I gave her took her over, and it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. Her tears had confirmed the success of my pursuit, and I was surprised at the rate she let them spill. I supposed at that moment, she no longer cared. But I did. I did because I wanted more tears to spill, more cries from her mouth, and more pleasure from her body...as well as pain. I wanted to push her, test her, challenge

every inch of her body and mind just to see how far I could stretch it before she snapped. And when she finally did, I'd remold her all over again until she was exactly the way I pictured her in my dreams - bent over and begging for me. That image always brought a smile to my face.

I sent one of my guards a text to have her brought up, the smile on my face unrestrained as I thought of what I would do to her this time.

It was becoming harder and harder to deny how much more I wanted from her. The desire, no, the need, to control and dominate every single inch of her, mind, body, and soul, was overwhelming to the point of insanity. She was like a drug I couldn't kick, and her resistance to me only made it worse.

After a few minutes, the knock on the door made my chest and dick swell with anticipation and excitement. Time for my fix.

**M**oments later, a voice came through and the guard opened the door and motioned for me to enter. As I walked through, he quickly pulled me to the center of the room, then turned around and headed back for the door, leaving me stranded again with the last man I ever wanted to see.

I stood awkwardly for a second before realizing where I was supposed to be. Hating myself and everything around me, I slowly lowered myself to the floor and sat back on my heels as I was supposed to. I kept my head down, too pissed off to look anywhere else, but paid close attention to my peripherals.

From the corner of my eye, I could see the owner was sitting at his desk, typing away at his computer, when he finally lifted his gaze to look at me. He was dressed in a shiny silvery gray suit with a bright blue tie and black dress shirt. He looked impeccable with his short light brown hair perfectly styled into a spiky set with five o'clock shadow lingering on his chin and jaw. As his eyes settled on my kneeling form, his lips curled into a cruel smile.

"Well, look at you." He smiled, leaning back in his chair. "I think submission is a good look for you."

I exhaled slowly and quietly so as not to upset him as I tried to ignore the jab. He seemed to be in a considerably good mood after killing an innocent girl only just yesterday. I hated him for that, but what was worse was that it only made me more terrified of him.

"Come here, slave," he commanded. "I want to test your obedience. Make sure you haven't forgotten anything since yesterday's debacle."

*Sure, he does.*

I started to rise, but he shook his head and stopped me.

"Crawl," he ordered.

*This bitch.*

Begrudgingly, I leaned forward onto my hands and knees and slowly crawled my sore and sorry ass around his desk like the worthless animal I was. The owner then spun his chair around to me when I finally closed the distance, kneeling in front of him.

His eyes glazed over me, an intensity that made me want to run far away where they could never find me, but that was wishful thinking. Instead, I sat there, burning under his gaze as the smirk on his face made the butterflies in my stomach feel like a stampede of elephants. He then quickly leaned forward from his chair, the sudden movement almost causing me to flinch in reflex, but all he did was continue to stare into my eyes. I found myself staring back, now captivated and challenged at the same time.

I felt the tip of his finger slide up under my chin, lifting my face up to him as he brought his face closer to mine.

"You are so sexy when you crawl like that," he groaned.

I said nothing but attempted to hide my disgust. A response wasn't necessary.

"Stand up," he ordered.

I stood before him, his eyes tracing up and down my body and my skin felt like it was on fire all over again. I was still lightly bruised all over; my wrists and knuckles more than anything while his bite marks were still visible on my neck from the last time he touched me. His smile told me that he approved of the appearance of my tattered flesh, most likely because he was the one responsible for it. Almost as if he marked me for himself.

His hands went to my hips and his fingers curved around to my back. He kept his one hand in place as his other traveled lower, across my thigh and up to the gap between my legs. My heart continued to pound in my chest as I came to the realization of where his hand was destined to stop. I was honestly still sore there from his last assault on me, but I wouldn't let him know it.

I wanted so badly to just take his head in my hands and slam my knee into his face until it caved in and his blood was all over my body. It took way too much self-control not to. I had to avert my eyes so as not to acknowledge the large bulge in his pants while his hands possessed my body.

Eventually, his fingers found my still swollen slit and he pressed past my tender flesh, stroking my clit back and forth. I was screaming in my head as I fought my hardest not to retreat from his cruel touch.

“Such a good girl, today,” he praised, and it made my stomach want to lurch up the breakfast I had barely finished.

Finally, he let me go and went for his belt, releasing the buckle and all my fears came tumbling back, reminding me of previous horrors.

“On your knees,” he ordered as he unzipped his fly.

Panic flooded my body as I came to terms with his demand, and I didn't even notice my hesitation. “Now,” he demanded, his stare penetrating my resolve, daring me to defy him. Slowly, and fighting back tears, I lowered myself to my knees and knelt on the floor before him. “Picture perfect.” He smiled.

*Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you!*

I looked away as he pulled out his enlarged dick and rubbed his hand up and down the shaft. It was the first time I had gotten a good glimpse at it and my assumptions were correct. He was fucking huge.

Taking the back of my neck in his hand, he pulled me closer to his lap. “You know what to do; now show me how well you know your place.” His words made my skin crawl, and all I wanted to do was cut the damn thing off and feed it to him. Maybe I could if I bit it off fast enough, but then I’d still have the problem of escaping here unnoticed.

As I began to raise my shaking hands to his cock, he gripped my hair and jerked my head hard. “You even think about biting me, and I’ll crush your skull with my bare hands. Got it?” Somehow, I didn’t doubt his ability to accomplish that, but I really didn’t want to find out.

“Yes, sir,” I whispered, barely able to get the words out.

Releasing my hair, he leaned back in the chair, folded his hands behind his head, and nodded for me to continue. Tentatively, I lowered my mouth to his bulging head and parted my lips to take him in. A groan slipped past his lips as his body relaxed in the chair. Fighting back the urge to vomit, I ran my tongue up and down his shaft and sucked his head, tasting the salty drops of pre-cum that were already beginning to seep from the tip.

“That’s it, baby,” he moaned.

Up and down, my head bobbed as my mouth sucked and teased, and it wasn’t long before his hands reached down to grip the sides of my head as he began to thrust his hips into my face, pumping himself into my mouth. Faster and harder, he drilled into the back of my throat and I fought like hell against my gag reflex as his dick started to compromise my oxygen supply.

He pulled out for only a second to let me suck in a gasp of air and then went right back in, thrusting away. “Oh, fuck, baby,” he groaned, and without warning, the hot jets of his cum shot in the back of my throat. I swallowed quickly so as to not let his horrible taste last any longer than it

had to, but as I fought for my air supply, I also inhaled some as it continued to pour out. Once his spasms passed and his length began to soften in my mouth, he pulled out and shoved me to the floor. I coughed involuntarily as my lungs rejected the bodily fluids that invaded them and I hoped my stomach would be a little more cooperative.

“Well, look at that,” he said, leaning back in his chair and turning to me. “Turns out your mouth is useful for something, after all.”

I scowled at him from the floor, but softened it quickly when his face grew dark. He stared at me for a while from the chair as the slight hint of a smirk hid in the corners of his mouth. I stayed where I was, a huddled mess on the floor, afraid to move for fear of setting him off. I just wanted to curl into a ball and hide myself from his burning gaze, but I stayed put.

“You know, your family misses you terribly,” he said to me, waiting intently for my reaction.

My heart stopped and my stomach dropped to my legs at the thought of him watching my family, probably on the news, begging for my safe return. He was testing me, provoking me again in the cruellest way possible, but I refused to bite. I wouldn't give him the satisfaction. Not this time. “Kind of pathetic, really,” he continued. “Your brothers huddled around your mother as she cried and prayed for you to come home safely.”

I released the breath I had been holding and did my best to stay calm, but I wanted to hurt him so badly. Instead, I concentrated on his bruised eye and face and a small twinge of joy flowed through me as I reflected on my elbow making the contact. “Too bad that's not going to happen,” he said, leaning forward in his chair, resting his elbows on his knees and folding his hands.

Unable to take his stare anymore, I very slowly pulled my knees to my chest. My eyes never left his, afraid he might snap. I kept my hands firmly planted on the carpet at my sides and waited.

“Even your friends miss you terribly. They’ve practically turned your Facebook page into a memorial. Everyone is waiting for you to come home so you can tell them how you kicked the shit out of your kidnappers and saved yourself. Especially Jordan.”

I didn’t know what came over me - if it was the adrenaline, the butterflies, or the fact that I was so numb I didn’t know how to function. But when it dawned on me that he had taken the time out of his day to research me and view my social media profile, I couldn’t stop the smartass smile that formed on my face. The fact that he was obviously looking for a specific reaction was enough motivation to turn it around on him.

“Finding something amusing?” he asked.

“Yes, you,” I almost giggled.

“Oh?”

“Yeah...you’re just trying so hard, aren’t you?”

He raised an eyebrow at me in surprise of my boldness.

“It’s actually kind of pathetic.”

His hand instantly reached out for my throat, grasped it tightly and pulled me to him as he remained seated in his chair. My hands clasped around his wrist as I fought for air supply.

“Maybe I should pay Jordan a visit and the two of you can enjoy your captivity together. Isn’t that what best friends are for?”

“Go ahead. Then you’ll have two pains in the asses to deal with,” I retorted.

Why I said that, I didn’t know. I could never stick to my plans. Maybe I just wanted to provoke him for once. He was really trying hard now, using threats like that, and I prayed with all my might he wouldn’t follow through. I was sure Jordan was going out of her mind with worry, and it pissed me off that he had been monitoring my social life, violating me further. But then again, I wasn’t exactly surprised. I was sure he knew a lot more about me than I wanted him to.

“Do not challenge me, slave. You know I’m a man of my word.”

“And I’m a woman of mine,” I choked out.

He slowly rose from his chair, dragging me up by my throat with him.

“Do you want to know what the saddest part of all my research was? That poor excuse for a man you called a boyfriend.”

*Motherfucker.*

He was really pushing it now. Especially as he presented the statement in a past tense form, as if my captivity automatically severed all my current relationships.

“Maybe I should pay him a visit as well and put him out of his misery? I’m sure he’d appreciate me alleviating the pain from his obvious broken heart. It’s not like you’ll ever be seeing him again, anyway.”

“He’d kill you before you even knew what hit you,” I spat.

The owner then let out a loud boastful laugh, his chest rising up and down as he chuckled. I scowled even further as I cringed away from him and his obvious confidence. He knew I was talking out of my ass, but I didn’t doubt Jason’s ability to pull the trigger when it came to life or death, especially if he knew what this man had done to me; he wouldn’t even hesitate.

“Do you even know who I am?” he asked, still laughing to himself. “You have no fucking clue who I am or the things I’m capable of, the things I’ve already done and continue to do,” he growled at me, squeezing harder on my throat. “Your ignorance is adorable, and it makes me wonder if I should introduce you to the dangerous depths of my world. Show you all the horrors that occur on a daily basis because of me and my empire; the empire that practically rules this goddamn country.”

I almost started to shake my head, and he saw my reluctance as a shit-eating grin crossed his face.

“I bet you’d like that. I’d bet you’d love for me to take you away and show you a life worth living.”

“A life with you isn’t worth living,” I seethed.

“We’ll see about that,” he shot back, a glimmer of a dark promise in his eyes.

My body shuddered with fear at his words. After everything he had already done to me, this was one of those times where my self-control was seriously tested...and I was failing. The idea of him purchasing me made me want to vomit all over the floor. He was cruel and sadistic, and he obviously drew pleasure from my pain. I could only imagine the life I would live under his constant control and abuse, and it almost brought me to tears as I hoped he wasn’t serious. But I had a feeling he would miss me if I was sold to someone else.

I tried not to dwell on it as I could feel my anger raging through my body. I wanted so badly to physically lash out at him and make him choke on his words, but I kept my mouth shut. I would not give him what he wanted any more than I already had. I just kept staring at that beautiful black eye, my hands still tight on his wrist.

I knew it would be so easy for him to just end me right there, snuff the light out from my eyes with the simple flick of his wrist and it would be all over for me. But I also knew he wouldn’t. He had too much fun torturing me. His big body came closer, blocking out everything else in my sight until I saw nothing but broad chest, wrapped in a pretty package. His grip on my throat loosened, no longer life threatening, but just...possessive.

“I can tell how difficult this is for you,” he said above my head, his thumb traveling up the column of my throat. “I can admire your attempt at self-control, as well as your bravery, but I can still see that fire in your eyes. You’d love nothing more than to lash out at me again, but you won’t. You know better now.”

Fuck him, but I did. Mainly because I knew he loved my defiance. It gave him the excuse he needed to hurt me and to put me back in my place.

But if not fighting denied him any sort of satisfaction, then maybe that was what I would do. That was the only way I could get back at him.

“Still...” he continued, “those flames of yours...are addicting. I often find myself wondering just how strong you really are. Or perhaps how strong you think you are.”

“Guess you’ll never know,” I taunted him.

*Why? Why the fuck did I just say that?!*

“Don’t be so sure of that,” he smirked.

“Yeah...you’d miss me wouldn’t you?” I said softly, taunting him further.

I really don’t know why I was. Maybe I just wanted to fuck with his head for once like he fucked with mine. It was so fucking stupid, but at this point, I had lost my ability to simply give a shit anymore. I was fucked no matter what I did. But then a smile slowly formed on his face and my stomach instantly twisted in knots. I suddenly became fucking terrified.

“You have no idea,” he replied with a sick twinkle in his eye.

I didn’t like where this was going. I could feel the fire he had been addressing slowly turn to an icy cold fear as I saw the evil wheels begin to turn in his eyes.

“I’m sure the auction will be interesting to watch. I have a feeling you’ll be among the highest bids. I can’t wait to find out.”

With that, he finally released my throat and I clutched it, knowing a nice lengthy bruise would circle it in the next few minutes. My throat was beyond sore after all the times he had manhandled it, and I attempted to massage the dull ache away. He turned his back to me, which would have been stupid had we been in any other scenario, and placed a call on his phone. He turned back around as the guard came in through the door.

“The auction is tomorrow,” the owner said turning to me, and I felt my heart slam into the back of my throat. “And I am so looking forward to it.” His smile confirmed his revelation.

The guard came at me, took my arm in his hand, and pulled me to the door. I didn't even look at the asshole as the guard brought me past him and out into the hallway. If the auction was tomorrow, I needed to prepare myself mentally and physically for anything.

Once I was safely back in my cage and the guard gone, I told Kayla everything that had happened. Her eyes widened as she realized she and I would be sold tomorrow. Her breathing started to increase, and she looked like she was about to have a panic attack.

“Hey, hey! Kayla, look at me!” She turned her head toward me, but her rapid breathing didn't slow. “You're going to be okay, all right? We're gonna make it through this.” She looked at me as if I had lost my mind. “And I swear, Kayla, when I'm sold, I will find a way out and do everything I can to find you. I'm gonna stop this, Kayla. I will end all of this so that no one will ever have to suffer like this ever again.”

She shook her head at me.

“You're delirious if you think you're going to accomplish all that,” she said.

“No, Kayla, I'm not. When I set my mind to something, that's it. It's like steel and won't break. I promise you.”

She continued to shake her head.

“God, I hope you're right,” she whispered and leaned back against the wall of the cage.

“We're gonna get through this,” I said. “Just don't give up on me.”

A tear slipped from her lids, and I watched as it cascaded down her cheek.

“Okay,” she said. “I won't.”

The following morning, I woke up and my body was finally starting to feel a lot better. It was still sore, and my muscles were tense, but it was manageable. Lying on my back, I waited for Kayla to wake up and contemplated the events that I was sure were mere hours away.

I really wasn't sure what I was going to do, but I would figure it out once I knew exactly what I was up against. I looked at the camera mounted on the ceiling above my cage and stared it down. Somehow, I had a feeling I knew exactly who was watching me at this very moment and I wanted nothing more than to flip the camera off, but I thought better of it.

Today would be the day my life would change significantly, and I would have to adapt to an entirely new situation. Thinking that someone was about to pay money to own and abuse me did not settle well in my stomach. I vowed to myself that no matter who bought me, I would always only belong to myself and no one else. They could say they owned me and that I belonged to them, but it would just be a figment of their imagination - the illusion that I would allow them to believe. The only thing that would essentially belong to them was my freedom and that was it. But I would eventually take that back no matter how long it took me.

With my silent vow, I raised my body from the padding and started stretching. I was normally very flexible, but the strain in my muscles hindered my ability. After a few hours, I would regain strength and my body would bounce back. As my muscles stretched under my skin, I felt the

relief as the blood flowed in and out of the tissues - the most amazing feeling.

A few minutes later, Kayla awoke and gave me a puzzled look. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"Prepping," I said, my face laying against my leg as I lengthened by back and forced the muscles to release their tension.

Her brow furrowed, but she got up and started doing the same, following my lead. Caged yoga was a new thing for us, but it would have to do for now. My stomach was in knots thinking about the impending auction ahead of us, but I did my best to push aside the anxiety fluttering inside me.

Once we had received our breakfast and I downed my entire bottle of water, I tried to relax. I was sure it wouldn't be long now. My body was getting tense with more anxiety and I fought against it, needing my muscles to be ready to deliver. In an attempt to calm my mind, I meditated for a while, encouraging Kayla to do the same. I focused solely on my breathing and the sound of my own heartbeat. As far as my mind was concerned, I was nowhere near this place. I felt my chest rise up and down as I took long slow breaths, in and out, until I could feel my body and mind start to relax.

When I finally felt calm and ready, I stretched a little more, but not so much that my limbs would turn to butter. They needed to be strong. It was hours later before the guards would finally come back to address us. There were five of them this time.

"Listen up, slaves!" shouted one of the guards over the other whimpering girls. I felt disgust suddenly shroud my mind. It was the same guard who resembled Jared. Had he officially replaced him? Had I killed him? Holy fuck, what if I had? There was no way I'd still be alive. No possible way. "The time has come for you to meet your new owners. So, we're going to let you out one at a time and you'll line up against the wall. You will not say one fucking word! If anyone puts up any kind of resistance, I *will* kill you where you stand!"

My heart rate suddenly increased as I watched him and the other guards open each cage and let out the girls. One by one, they all lined up against the wall as they had been told, each one of them crying with fear. I had turned to Kayla before they reached us.

“Keep breathing, Kayla,” I whispered. “We’re gonna get through this.”

“I know.” She nodded.

When our cages were opened, we crawled out and joined the rest of the girls against the wall. There were fourteen of us all together. I kept my breathing regulated as I took long slow breaths in through my nose and exhaled through my mouth. I started rolling my neck and stood on my tiptoes to stretch my feet and hamstrings. I was so ready.

“Follow me,” the guard said at the head of the line. “If anyone steps out of line or says one fucking word, you’re done.”

With that, he turned around and headed for the door. The girls followed him down the hall while the rest of the guards flanked either side of us, rifles in hand and at the ready. Kayla was ahead of me, and I could tell she was having trouble keeping herself calm. I wanted to comfort her but knew it would only make things worse. We went up the stairs but headed the opposite direction of the elevator.

All I could hear as we made our way to meet our fates was the sound of tears as they fell from tired eyes. These girls were just like me in so many ways. They had families, friends, jobs, maybe even kids, but none of that mattered now as we marched to what felt like our deaths. Hell, it might as well have been. I wanted to weep for the girls and their loss, but I had to remain strong and focused. Maybe if I could succeed in what I was about to do, it would help them as well. I could only hope.

We came to a set of steel doors and after punching in a code on the door, the guard held one open and we all stepped in. The room was small, but big enough to accommodate all of us. It looked like a simple waiting room

minus any chairs or anything remotely familiar. Once locked in, they lined us up against a door to my left. This was it.

My senses were running wild as I concentrated on everything around me. “Once it’s your turn,” the guard said, “you’ll stand on top of the center pillar, take off your dress, and wait for the door to open again. You will stand quietly with your arms at your side and your head up so they can see your pretty faces. Do not give us a reason to come in there. You will not like what happens next.”

And then, one by one, the girls were shoved through the door. My heart was pounding with anxiety as each session took less than five minutes. Then they were gone. Maybe once or twice the guards would have to go into the room, but they always came back out thirty seconds later, the sound of crying coming from the room before it was silenced by the lock of the door. It killed me knowing each of these girls were lost to me once they closed the door behind them, and I wanted to cry for each one of them knowing they were disappearing forever.

Finally, it was Kayla’s turn, and her body trembled in fear ahead of me. “It’s okay,” I whispered so only she could hear. She nodded, turning back to look at me briefly, tears forming in the corners of her eyes as she sniffed them away. It broke my heart to let her go. Even though we had both been trapped in this hellish nightmare, we came out with something stronger - a friendship, one that I was not about to let go to waste. I knew it was outside of my control as I watched her step forward into the room beyond us, light framing the doorway as she disappeared. My heart rate accelerated and tears threatened to spill at the thought of losing her, but I vowed I would find her. I would find everyone if I could. I took my breaths slow and eased my body, flexing my muscles to make sure they were ready for what I was about to do.

I whispered my good-bye to Kayla and stepped forward, ready for my turn to rock; but just as I stepped forward, the guard leading us grabbed my

arm and yanked me out of line, dragging me to the very back.

“You’ve been requested to go last,” he said, releasing me as I shrugged him off.

“What? Why?” I asked as all the other girls pretended not to notice.

“Did I tell you to speak?” he shouted at me.

“No, sir,” I said and turned my head back into line.

“That’s right. Now shut the fuck up and wait your turn like everybody else.”

*Yeah, because everyone is so eager, ya know...*

Why the fuck was I going last? Save the best for last, I guess? I laughed at the idea, but I had a feeling I knew who was behind it, but it didn’t matter when I went. It didn’t change my plans one single bit, just continued the torture of the anxiety as I watched the remainder of the girls walk through the door. Maybe that was it. If I went first, then the anxiety would be over and I wouldn’t have to watch anyone else get sold, but if I was last, then I would have to endure everyone’s sale. Whatever; fuck them.

At long last, the door opened again and the now empty room ahead of me waited anxiously for my presence. My heart dropped to my stomach as I realized it was now finally my turn to be sold. Sold. Like the fucking object that I was. I silently said good-bye to my life and walked forward, the door slamming with a loud and final thud behind me.

Taking in my surroundings, I was in some kind of observation room. It was stark white and circular in shape. There was another door ahead of me and I figured that was my exit once this was over. Long horizontal mirrors curved along the walls and I was sure they were two-way mirrors. In the center of the room was a large octagonal platform with steps leading up to it. The platform slowly turned to allow the buyers to see every side of the slave on display.

*How convenient for them.*

With more determination than I thought I possessed, I walked up the stairs with my head held high. Standing front and center, I stared straight into the mirrors, glaring at the fucks I knew were waiting on the other side, watching me, and bidding against each other for their chance to own me. Fuck them.

As I turned on the moving platform, I crossed my arms over my chest and leaned on my right hip. “You want a piece of me, you motherfuckers!” I shouted at the mirrors, stretching my arms out and flipping the mirrors off. “Well, good fucking luck!”

As soon as the words left my mouth, the door I had entered from opened and two of the guards came charging in. Serious disappointment flooded my mind as I noticed the guards came in unarmed. I had seriously expected they would come in with their rifles when it came to me and I could then take one and maybe get the hell out somehow. I knew they would just want to subdue me and not kill me. I was still valuable. But now that the element I had depended on was no longer available, my plan of escaping was quickly dwindling into nothing.

At least these assholes were going to get a good show. Time for Plan B.

The first guard, who seemed particularly small, came up the steps and I threw an impressive reverse hook kick right across his smug face and sent him spinning to the ground. I wanted these fucks to see who they would be messing with if they bought me.

The second guard, a little stockier, came at me from behind and as the platform turned, I back kicked him in the throat. I then pivoted around and landed a right hook to his jaw, following through with a few elbows to his face and body before finalizing my onslaught with a hard ridge hand to his throat again, shattering his Adam’s apple.

By this time, the first guard had gotten back on his feet, and I didn't even give him a chance before I jumped from the platform and kicked him

right in the neck with a flying side kick. I was sure I crushed his windpipe as he crashed to the floor, and I landed perfectly on my feet.

I laughed a little out loud for everyone to hear. They really thought two unarmed guards would be enough to hold me down? That was cute. But then the doors on both sides opened and a total of five guards surrounded me, rifles in hand and pointing directly at me. I raised my hands in surrender, but I couldn't stop the smile that spread across my face as I looked over at the two guards who laid motionless on the ground. I wasn't even out of breath and it felt good to know my skills were only useless against one man.

With five rifles pointed in my direction, the blood suddenly drained from my face as I listened to the guard utter the words that I'd been sold. I couldn't believe that after all that, someone still wanted me. Obviously, they must have thought they could handle me. Well, I would show them wrong. I didn't fight as I was led through the other door and came into what looked like an office. The guard pointed at the floor in the center of the room.

"Sit there and keep your mouth shut. Your new owner will be here to collect you shortly." He then walked over to the wall and waited while the rest of the men filed out.

I walked to the center of the room, sat back on my heels, and lowered my eyes to the floor. I suddenly felt sick and scared shitless as new theories began to bounce around in my head. What if my buyer turned out to be an even bigger sadistic fuck than the owner? What if he or even she got off on making me scream and bleed every moment of every day? What if my buyer already had a harem of slave wives and they wanted to add to their collection? What if I was being sold into prostitution and had to pay back the fee I cost them?

God, there were so many possibilities running through my head and it terrified me to know I would discover my future in a few short minutes. Whoever bought me was surely going to regret it, and despite how hard it

was for me to bench my fear, I was actually a little anxious to find out who the poor sad fuck was. My heart pounded away in my chest as the wait became unbearable.

Moments later, the doors to the office were shoved open and they slammed against their adjacent walls so hard that a picture fell from the hooks that held it. I raised my head as the sudden loud bang echoed off the walls and my eyes widened in an uncontrollable fear. My stomach twisted and wrenched, and my heart nearly leaped out of my chest. Standing in the doorway, his hands still on the doorframe, was the owner, wearing the sickest most twisted smile I had ever seen. And then I knew.

“Fuck,” I said, not even bothering to cover it up.

“Oh, don’t worry,” he said, that shit-eating grin spreading across his face. “There will be plenty of time for that when we get home.”

*To be continued...*

*in Book 2,*

## **SURVIVAL**

## **STRONGER SERIES, VOLUME 2**

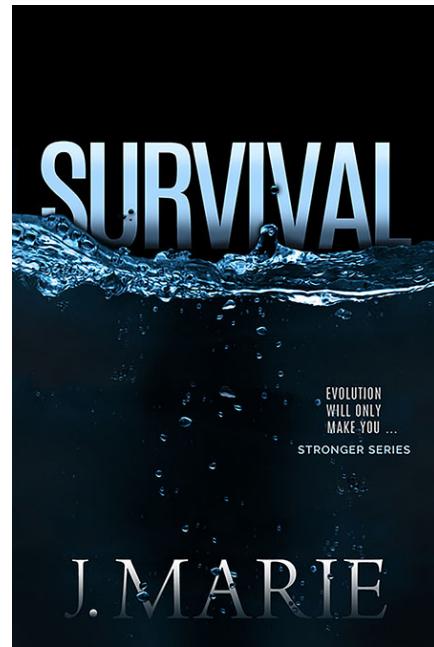
### **HER**

I'm usually brutally honest. I don't like to sugar coat shit or beat around the bush. But this time, I couldn't want to run further from my own destructive truth. I'd been sold. Sold. Like some kind of dog to a man born of cruelty and carnage. A man who rules a criminal organization on a global scale, and now... rules my body but, most importantly... my freedom. I dreaded my days back in the warehouse; caged, beaten, awaiting a fate I had no control over. All thanks to his billion-dollar industry in human trafficking and God knows what other line of bullshit he runs. And now, I belong to him. Forced to live under his roof and his rules, I now live a life of fear and constraint. I don't want to believe it but...it's getting harder and harder to fight him, especially when his touch can burn so painfully good

when I finally surrender to it. My body may want him, but my mind and my heart are far more calculating. I haven't lost hope...no matter what he does to me. I refuse to break. I will escape him and his reign of terror over me. Whether its tomorrow or five years from now, I won't stop until I have him cold and dead at my feet. And that's the real fucking honest truth.

## **HIM**

I never thought I could be this fucking consumed by another person - captivated in such a way that it borders on obsession. Jaden is mine now and the truth of that makes my blood run hot and fast in my veins. The feel of her perfect body under mine is like pure ecstasy, even when she's fighting me...or herself. She can try to deny it all she wants, but she can't hide from me. I know desire when I see it, even when its shadowed by resistance and then ultimately guilt. That fire in her eyes burns me from the inside out, and it just makes me crave her more. I know she's fighting for her freedom, calculating her escape, but in time, she will bend to my will until she finally breaks - until she realizes there is no freedom from me, no escape. Period. She's mine and I won't stop until it's so deeply embedded into her mind that the mere thought of denying it brings her physical pain...because it will. I have big plans for my little warrior princess and I can't wait for the impending pleasurable eternity of it all.



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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

J. Marie has been writing since she first learned the alphabet, but it wasn't until 25 years later that she finally decided to take the deep plunge into the depths of publishing. Her written work conveys the darker side of writing, bringing in to light what most may shy away from and she loves every second of it.

Her inspiration comes to her in the form of a minefield on top of a snow covered mountain. One step and a new idea explodes in her head, and then before you know it, it's an avalanche of ideas rushing through her head and it does not stop!

When she's not writing until the late hours of the night, she's working as a legal assistant at a prominent law firm in Michigan. She enjoys practicing and teaching martial arts in her spare time as well as tearing up the neighborhood riding around on her super fun Honda Grom.

### **CONNECT WITH J. MARIE**

If you'd like to learn more about the author, her series, or to donate to charities for victims of human trafficking, check her out at [www.jmarieseries.com](http://www.jmarieseries.com) or her Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/JMarieSeries](http://www.facebook.com/JMarieSeries)

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