



HATE LIKE *Runs*

ONLY ENDS WITH DEATH

NIKITA

Hate Like Ours: An Enemies To Lovers Romance

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THE HATE/LOVE DUET BOOK 1 (RIVERSIDE HATE SERIES BOOK 1)

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Blur

Raine

My life has never been perfect, but it used to be simple.

That changed in the blink of an eye when my mom decided to move us to Riverside.

It was supposed to be a new start for us, and it was.

Only it wasn't one I was expecting. The simple life I knew before ceased to exist.

Knox Riverside...

The town's golden boy took one look at me and decided he hated me, turning everyone against me as he stood by and watched his minions make my life a living hell.

I didn't know his reasons for hating me, but slowly as the torment went on, I became a shell of my former self.

And things will get worse when he finds out the news that he's going to be my stepbrother soon and I'm not ready for that.

But by the time he decided to change his mind, I was already too far gone in my attempt at self-destruction.

Because hate like ours might only end with death.

Knox

The moment I became aware of her existence, I hated her.

Raine Carrington...

Because of her, I lost the most important person in the world to me. So, I knew what she represented.

I let my hate rule our every interaction from the beginning.

So, color me surprised when I started to feel something other than hate for her.

As time goes on, I realize that I might need her more than I care to admit.

She was close to breaking by the time I realized the destruction my actions caused, and I vowed that I'd make it right even if she didn't believe me.

But I'm keeping a huge secret from her, and that secret is the reason for my hate in the first place.

I don't care about it anymore because she's mine now and I hope she never finds out.

Because I won't let this hate end with her death.

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Dedication

*To my younger self and Raine...
Raine carries so many different pieces of me from when I
was a teenager and trying to fight my demons away.*

I survived and I know she will too.

*We were some of the lucky ones, because there are so
many girls fighting invisible demons that no one else knows
about, but they don't make it out. This one is for them as
well.*

*Beautiful girls, you fought as long as you could, but
sometimes those demons end up winning instead. I see you
and I remember you.*

*This book is for those people who fought hard and broke,
but they made it. This is also for the people who didn't.*

*Xoxo
Nikita.*

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Author's Note

Hate Like Ours is the first book in the **Riverside Hate Series**. Each book in this series can be read as a standalone with the exception of the first two books.

The first two books will be Knox and Raine's story, which will be labeled as the Hate/Love Duet.

Hate Like Ours is an enemies-to-lovers romance that contains some dark elements that may not be suitable for some readers.

Some of the **triggers** include: some bullying from other students and a little from the MC, blackmail, noncon, somnophilia, self-harm, drug abuse, eating disorder, rape, and assault.

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Prologue

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KNOX

I GUESS clichés are cliché for a reason, because when you find yourself in a situation that's one, you realize just how right they were. Let me start with mine...

The road to vengeance is paved with purpose.

Just like the road to hate is paved with nothing but destruction.

My own road to hell was paved with purpose, and that purpose was to hate.

I found out some secrets that I didn't know about until it was too late, but by then, I knew my purpose was to hate her because of what she represented to me.

The road to hate...

Sometimes it makes you feel alive.

And then other times when you let go of your hate for a little while, well, then you realize just how much you fucked up and wish you could just take it back. But by that time, it's too late.

My story isn't a pretty one, but even though I hate her, she's mine.

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CHAPTER

One

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KNOX

SALTY SWEAT DRIPS down the side of my face as I run across the field. The air is filled with tension, everyone in the stands waiting with bated breath to see how the next few minutes will go.

I run as fast as my legs would carry me, knowing that the guys from the opposing team are already running after me so I couldn't make the goal. The jokes on them because I am a determined fucker, and no one is going to stop me tonight.

I just need to make one more touchdown for our team to win tonight's game. I'm not worried right now because I know my team has my back. I keep running like my life depends on it.

Being the quarterback, as well as Riverside's golden boy, comes with some heavy expectations. Everyone expects me to win tonight's game, with no exception.

No matter how much of an asshole I am, and trust me, I am a big one, nothing I did is ever wrong in the eyes of our town's people. Sometimes, for a split second, I would hate all the extra attention people showered me with, but that's

only for a second. Most times, it's what I live for. I love being in the limelight, especially when it comes to football.

I am the king of this town and everyone knows it. I guess it helps that my father is a direct descendant of the founders of this place and no one wants to get on his bad side in case he incites the wrath of hell on them.

My father is a good man, but if you piss him off or fuck with his family or his business in any way, there is no telling what he'd do.

His family—The Riversides—were the founders of this small town named after them, and they never let anyone forget it, even generations later. It is such a cliché to name a town after yourself. Talk about being pompous.

Sometimes I hate the expectations that come with my name, but I can't say I hate the things that come with being filthy fucking rich. I mean, who wouldn't, right?

Three... two... one...

Touchdown!

Tonight is our first Sunday night game. It's the beginning of the last week in August and we have one more week before school officially starts for senior year.

The crowd goes wild as cheers erupt from the stands. This touchdown is the winning one, and I feel exhilarated when I hear everyone in the crowd chant my name. My teammates all come rushing over and throw themselves on me in their excitement at winning tonight's game.

I couldn't have done it without their help as a team, but they all act like I single-handedly won the game.

Football has been my life for as long as I can remember and I am damn good at it. I took to it from the moment I

was old enough to play ball with my father, and my love and obsession for the sport grew from there.

“Get off me, assholes!” I mutter out to my three best friends. While everyone else has already gotten off me, these assholes are still here.

“Come on! You know you love it when we tackle your ass to the ground.” Axel snorts, taking off his helmet and smirking at me.

“Coach will have your asses if so much as one hair is out of place on my head,” I say, smirking at them. “Remember what happened last time during practice when you idiots accidentally busted my lip?”

All three of them let out collective groans as they remember what Coach made them do as punishment.

“Man, did you have to bring that up?” Asher groans.

“I still have nightmares about that day!” Ezra shudders, thinking about it.

Coach made them run laps until they almost passed out in the hot sun for busting my lip. I chuckle at the memory. In reality, I was fine, but I really played being hurt for Coach so they would get into trouble.

The idiots needed to be taught a lesson, and what better way than to make Coach do it for me. Not to toot my own horn or anything, but I am his star player and he won’t tolerate anything happening to me to mess up the team’s winning streak.

“Yep! I would never let you assholes forget that day for as long as I live,” I say, giving them a big smile.

“Maybe we should kill him and hide his body somewhere far away, where they’ll never find him,” Axel mutters and

we all laugh.

They get up off me and I stand as well. I look up at the crowd and look toward the front of the stands to see if my mother made it or not. She promised me she'd be here tonight, but as usual, she's not. I let out a sigh at the disappointment coursing through me at this moment. I'm not sure what's wrong with her, but she's been suffering from bad depression for a few months now and I don't know how to reach her anymore.

I just wish there was something I could do to get her back to her normal self, but everything I've tried has failed. I've just sort of given up hope that she'll ever be herself again.

It's gotten so bad that she barely gets out of bed these days. I know Dad isn't here at my game either, because he's away on business. It's just high school football, so it doesn't really matter that they're not here anymore, I guess. No big deal at all. The guys and I start to walk off the field to get to the locker room to shower before going home.

"Are you coming to the party tonight?" Asher asks.

"Nah, man, I have to check on Mom. She wasn't feeling too hot today," I say.

No one knows about Mom's state, and I'd like to keep it that way. My parents like to act like we're the perfect family even though we're so far from it, but I don't want to upset my mother. Despite how much I hate what my parents stand for sometimes, I love my mother something fierce. She's always been there for me no matter what, well, except for these past few months, since she's been drowning herself in pills and shit.

I haven't told my best friends what's going on in my life and I'd like to keep it that way too. I don't want to burden them with all my shit. Plus, we always fuck around. I don't think any of us has ever gotten into the deep shit before with each other and I like it like that.

We do always have each other's backs and if I needed to talk, they'd be right there for me. As we walk past the stands, Kinsley jumps down from where she was standing, waiting for us.

"Awesome game, guys! You killed it as usual, Knox," she tells us once she's standing next to me. "Are you guys going to the party?"

"Thanks, babe," I tell her, pulling her in for a hug as I watch Asher's face. I like calling her babe just to get under his skin. "And no, I'm not. Have to check on Mom. Why? Did you finally decide to spread your wings by going to a party?" I ask.

Before she can even answer, Asher is answering for her.

"No, the fuck she's not," he snaps.

Kinsley and I became friends after we were lab partners for a whole semester and it's always been platonic with us. I like that she wasn't throwing herself at me since I was the school's quarterback and that was refreshing. It's actually nice to have a girl to talk to once in a while. Though the same can't be said for her and Asher. They both have something more than platonic feelings for each other, though neither one of them seems ready to admit that.

Ever since we became friends and she's been around us, Ash has done everything to argue with her and she's done the same. They can act like they hate each other all they

want, but I can see the underlying chemistry between them. They deny that shit, but you can always find them skirting around each other.

“Bite me, asshole!” she growls in response. “You can’t tell me what to do! In case it wasn’t obvious, you’re not my daddy!”

“Are you saying you want me to be your daddy? Because trust me, babe, Daddy would give you the spanking you never had before. That fucking ass of yours would be on fire by the time I was done with you,” Asher growls at her. Kinsley just gapes at him, her face going red. She doesn’t know how to respond to him.

I snort out a laugh because, half the time, I have no idea what the hell is going on with them. They’re either glaring at each other or they’re fighting. There is no in-between with them.

“Yo-you can’t say shit like that!” she practically screeches.

“Why? Is your pussy wet because of my words?” he asks smugly.

“Not in a million years, douchebag!” she snaps at him.

“Do you want me to tell your mom when she comes into work tomorrow?” Asher asks her and her face twists. Her mom works as a housekeeper in his house, so she knows his threat is real.

She lives on the outskirts of town where the not-so-rich people live. She’s only going to Riverside Academy with us because she won a scholarship here. A scholarship Asher’s dad provided. She’s definitely a smart girl. Asher claims to hate her because she talks too much and she’s from the

wrong side of town. As much as he tries, he can't stop being possessive when it comes to her, even if it pisses her the hell off.

She swings her gaze to me and pins me with it. She pretends to wipe tears from her eyes. "I thought we were friends, Knox. You promised me!"

"Huh? What the hell did I promise and when?" I have no clue what she's talking about because... okay, not going to lie, sometimes I forget things, especially when I'm not really paying attention in the first place.

"You promised me you'd knock his ass down on the field and give him a concussion," she says, pointing at Asher. The look he gives her is not one of amusement. Without meaning to, a laugh bursts out of me just as Axel and Ezra start laughing too.

"If that was your attempt at a joke, it was horrible, and it would never get you to *America's Got Talent*," Asher says to her.

"Did you not hear the three of them laughing just now? You wouldn't get on their either, since your face is too ugly and you don't have any real talent," she murmurs, smiling sweetly at him. Asher looks up at the sky as though he's begging some unknown deity to give him patience before he strangles her to death.

"Don't you have other friends to hang out with instead of trying to be a groupie here?" he asks, and her face twists before she rolls her eyes.

"Being a groupie would imply that I'm trying to fuck all of you, but I'm not. I especially wouldn't fuck you, but what can I say? I just love pissing you off." She smirks at him.

Before this can go further and turn into another one of their peeing contests, I break it up.

"Wait here. I'll come back and get you after we shower and then I'll give you a ride home," I tell her. She nods before going back to sit on the bleachers.

Once we're in the locker room, we start to strip out of our clothes before heading into the showers. The four of us are the last ones in the locker room because we took our sweet ass time getting here in the first place. Before I can even say anything to Asher, he's telling me what's up.

"Don't bother, I'll take the annoying brat home," he growls, and I can't help but hide my smile.

"Oh, really now? And why would you do that? Don't you have a party to go to tonight?" I ask.

"Well, me taking her home makes sense, seeing as it's in the same direction, while you live in the opposite direction. Plus, I'm just looking out for our employee's daughter, you know?" he says.

"I'm sure that's your only reason," I say, laughing at him when he gives me the stink eye.

We step into the shower and half an hour later, we're done and dressed. We head back out to the bleachers. I motion for Kinsley to follow us to the parking lot and she grabs her things before stepping off the bleachers and then following along.

"Change of plans, babe," I say, loudly enough for Ash to hear when we get to our cars. We always park together. Asher and I always drive our own cars while Axel and Ezra carpool. It's not because they don't have their own cars,

but because they've been best friends since before we all became friends. It's a habit for them.

"What do you mean, change of plans?" Kinsley asks.

"Ash is going to drive you home," I say, smiling at her just as she lets out a loud groan.

"It's fine. I'll just walk or take the bus or something. I don't want him to kill me and either bury my body in the forest or throw me into the ocean where I'll become fish food. I really wouldn't put it past him," she says with a dramatic flair, and I can't help but laugh again. Being her friend is one of the best things I've ever done. There's never a dull moment when she's around. She makes a move to walk away when Asher speaks up.

"Get in the car, Kinsley!" Asher snaps, exasperated.

"No. I'm sure you have other things to do," she says, not bothering to stop walking.

"If you don't get in the fucking car right this second, I'll come over there and throw you in myself," he growls at her.

"You wouldn't!" She gasps as though that's the most outrageous thing she's ever heard.

"Oh, I would if you don't get your ass in my car in the next second! Don't test my patience, Kinsley Hendrix!"

"Oh, wow, he just full named me. I'm surprised he even has the brain cells to remember my full name," she says, letting out a long groan before stomping her way to his car. When she gets in, she slams the door and Asher grinds his teeth. His car is literally his baby, and he doesn't tolerate anyone disrespecting it.

"It's like she wants me to kill her," he mumbles before blowing out a breath.

“Have fun with that,” I tell him, chuckling. I wave to him and then to Ax and Ez, who were both looking at the spectacle that is the Asher-and-Kinsley show and chuckling too.

“Why the hell are your clothes soaked?” I hear him yell at her just as I slide into my seat. I’m about to step out again, but think better of it. I know Ash will take care of whatever it is that’s going on with her. I hate to think of people bullying Kinsley.

I’ve had to make some threats to people since she first started talking to me and hanging out with us. I hate the fact that these bitches think they can mess with my friend, I’ll snap a motherfucker’s neck so fast.

I’ll have to remember to find out what went down tonight, because from the sound of Asher’s voice, something definitely did after we went to shower.

“You know where to find us later if you decide to go to the party!” the guys tell me before I shut my door and drive away.

CHAPTER

Two

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KNOX

I'M USUALLY ALWAYS UP for a party but I've been feeling off today. There's this ominous feeling around me, and I don't know what to do with it. I just try to shrug it off, thinking that maybe it's because I'm too tired from all the practicing Coach has put us through this summer to get ready for this season's games.

Plus, I'm also tired from the constant fighting that has been going on with my parents for the past few weeks. It's draining to hear your parents constantly argue. Technically, we should have it all with the amount of money my father has, but it just goes to show that money isn't everything. Just because you have it, it doesn't make you happy automatically. At least Dad is away on a business trip, so I don't have to worry about them being combative tonight.

When I pull up onto our driveway, I come to a stop and turn off my headlights. I sit there for a few minutes by myself. I look at the time and see that it's already ten p.m. which means that Mom is probably passed out already.

I'm still going to check on her though because every night for the past few months, no matter what time I get

home, I always make the effort to look after her. Sometimes we talk for a while or just watch movies whenever she's awake. Those nights have become some of my best memories. I'm sad and it pains me to watch the depression take over her.

I step out of my car, leaving it in the circular driveway as I head inside. One of the security guards will park it later if they see I'm not going out again.

I push open the door straight into the foyer and then walk to the small corridor on the right that leads to the kitchen to get some food. I'm starving. These games always make me super hungry after.

I open the oven and see my food. Our chef always leaves food there for me every night when I'm not here at dinnertime. I take it out and put it in the microwave to heat it up. That'll be faster since I just want to eat, check on Mom and then crash.

When the microwave beeps, I grab my food and sit at the kitchen island and eat by myself. I miss it when we had family dinners together, when my father wasn't traveling so much. But I guess I get it. He has business all across the country and he is the CEO, after all.

I want to play football professionally, but I know that one day I'll have to take over his real estate business. That's how my father and his family before him gained their wealth, through real estate and oil—mega business with mega expectations.

Once I'm finished eating, I put my plate in the sink and then head upstairs to my parents' room. I knock on the door, but there's no answer. She must be asleep, but I'll go

in and check on her. When I step into her room, it's dark except for the little light coming from the television. It's also a bit chilly in here because she left her window open and the night air is coming in.

I turn on the soft overhead light that's by the door to make sure she's okay. Once it's on, I look over at her. She's curled up in a ball and the covers are off her. I begin walking over to her with the intention of covering her with her blankets, but I barely make it a step before my boot steps on something lying on the floor, causing me to almost trip and fall.

I wasn't looking down at the floor. My eyes were just focused on her, so I wasn't paying attention. I look down to see what I stepped on and see two pill bottles lying there.

I crouch down and pick them up. They're empty. I look at the label on both bottles. One reads *Ambien* and the other reads *Xanax*. My heart instantly starts beating out of my chest and I get a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach. One of these is her sleeping medication, and the other is for her anxiety.

The color drains from my face as I snap my head up to look over at her. I shake my head, not wanting to believe what I might find when I get closer to her. I look at her, really look at her. I can't seem to move my limbs in that moment. I realize that her chest isn't moving and mine instantly feels like it's about to cave in.

She looks like she's asleep but... I swallow hard because I know tragedy is about to ensue in the moment. My heart is in overdrive and it already hurts. I just got these refills for her yesterday and now both bottles are empty.

My entire body breaks out in chills and not having the strength to get up and stand, I crawl over to her bed, my chin wobbling as I choke up.

When I finally reach her bedside, I lift myself to my knees and lean over her. I lift my shaky hands to her neck to feel for a pulse, but there's nothing there. I grab her hand to feel for the one on her wrist, but all I feel is her cold hand in mine.

No, no, no, no! She wouldn't! Yet I'm staring at the evidence that she did, right before me.

"Mom!" I scream in a voice that's hoarse and pain filled to my own ears. I shake her, all the while begging her to open her eyes, but of course she doesn't. My heart and my life shatter at my mother's bedside. I don't know if I'll ever be able to survive this pain that consumes me.

"Mom! Mom! Come on! How could you fucking do this to me?" I scream. I keep screaming into the silent room over and over again as I feel myself breaking further.

I let go of her hand as my body crumples in on itself and I have to hit my chest a few times to get rid of the pain I feel. When that doesn't work, I use my fist to hit the floor repeatedly while continuing to scream. My throat constricts as I fight for air, the tears and pain threatening to come out of me, choking me.

For the first time in months, she looks peaceful while I'm lying at her feet, breaking as I come to the realization of my new reality—a life without my mother. This isn't the way I wanted her to find peace.

I quickly call our doctor, who lives five minutes away. He answers on the second ring, and I quickly explain that

there's a medical emergency. He tells me that he'll be here soon. I keep trying to wake her up, not wanting to give up, not wanting to face this new reality either. She can't be dead. She just can't be!

"Mom! Wake up!" I keep screaming and am violently shaking her now. I don't even realize I'm sobbing until the doorbell rings and I wipe the tears off my face to see. I rush down the stairs, wiping my eyes again as I go.

"Are you alright, Knox?" Dr. Stevens asks as soon as I open the door.

"Please, come quick! It's Mom." I say as I run up the stairs while he follows. "I think she took all her pills," I say. A part of me is dying as I say the words because I already know, but I don't want to accept it.

My heart is cracking into a million pieces right now and I have no idea what to do or how to stop the hurt. I can't fathom living in a world without her in it.

She wouldn't do this to me. No matter what was going on with her, she wouldn't do this to me. That's the only thought I'm willing to hold on to while the doctor walks into her room and begins checking her vitals. He uses his stethoscope and places it on her chest to check for her heartbeat.

He slowly pulls it away from her and before he can even turn around, I already know what he's going to say. I know, because I knew from the moment I saw those bottles and saw her lying there.

"I'm so sorry, Knox," he says with sympathy in his voice. "She's no longer with us."

I let out a gut-wrenching scream as I fall to my knees, clutching my face in my hands. Sobs rip out of me. "No! No! She wouldn't fucking do this to me! She wouldn't!" I chant as sob after sob rips out of me.

It feels like someone just stabbed me in the chest and the pain gripping me is unlike anything I've ever felt before. It's crushing me from deep within my soul, and I don't know if I'll ever be able to get rid of this feeling.

"I'll call the funeral home for you," he says, before he walks out of the room. I sit there on the floor, rocking myself back and forth for a few moments before looking over at her lifeless body once again. A fresh wave of tears slips down my face.

"How could you do this to me, Mom?" I scream at her lifeless form, a surge of anger hitting me. "I get that you weren't happy, but how could you leave me! Wasn't I enough of a reason for you to stay?" I sob my questions, even though she'll never respond to me ever again. I'll never hear her voice again.

I sit there sobbing until the people from the funeral home come to take her away. Dr. Stevens let them in. I thought he had left. Well, he is friends with my parents, so maybe that's why he's still here.

"Knox?" Dr. Stevens asks, and I look over at him. My mind is foggy and I can't pay attention to much else right now. "Would you like me to call your father for you, or would you like to do it yourself?"

"I-I'll do it," I tell him. "Can you make sure they get her to the funeral home and everything? I don't think I have the

strength to get it done or drive,” I say in a voice that sounds as hollow and broken as I feel.

“Absolutely. Don’t worry about it, son,” he says. I don’t know if it’s an old people thing, but he’s always called me son whenever he was around.

“Thank you,” I manage to tell him before he walks out of the room once again, leaving to make sure they take care of my mom. I should be the good son she deserves and do it myself, but I feel too fucking raw and shattered right now. I would probably lash out at people.

I look at the time and see that it’s after ten p.m. here. There’s a one-hour time difference between Riverside and New York, so that will make it after eleven. He should still be awake.

Knowing I can’t hold it off any longer, I dial my father’s number. It takes a few minutes before he answers and I’m annoyed that he took so long.

“Knox?” he questions when he answers. “Is everything alright, son?”

“Dad... It-it’s Mom. She’s dead,” I say as a fresh wave of tears stream down my face. In truth, I don’t even know if I’ve stopped crying since I found her body. The image of her like that will forever be burned into my brain.

“Dead? What do you mean dead?” he asks, sounding more alert now.

“She killed herself!” I snap at him through the phone, feeling the anger course through my veins once again. I don’t know what to do with all these feelings bombarding me and I need an outlet for it before it fucking consumes me to the point of dying myself.

"Calm down, son. I'll be there as soon as I can," he says as I hear shuffling around as though he's already on his feet.

"Okay-" I whisper out and then cut the call off.

The next thing I do is call Asher because I don't think I can be alone in this state, especially with my thoughts of killing myself running through my head. He doesn't answer on the first try, so I call again.

"What's up, fucker?" he asks, and I hear music coming from the background. Fuck, I forgot they were going to the party.

"I need you guys to come over now. I-it's Mom..." I say, trailing off when the sobs threaten to choke me. He definitely picked up on the tone and misery in my voice because he became more alert than when he first answered.

"I'll be right over," he says before hanging up.

I take the sheets off her bed. I have no idea why when the housekeepers can do it, but I guess I don't want anyone else to touch anything of hers. When I lift the pillows, an envelope with my name on it falls off the bed. I pick it up and look at it as I walk into my room. I put it in my nightstand drawer. I don't think I can bear to read it right now. I need some time before I can handle that. I recognize her handwriting on the envelope.

Once I'm done, I walk downstairs to the kitchen and grab a bottle of scotch from the liquor cabinet and down a shot right from the bottle. I realize I need more, so I keep drinking and drinking until I'm halfway done with the

bottle. Just then, the guys come in, all of them—Asher, Axel, and Ezra.

“Knox? What the hell happened, bro?” Asher asks as he walks over to me.

They can instantly tell something is wrong because one—I’m drinking scotch like water, which is rare for me, and two—I’m sure my expression alone must look haunted and pain filled. There is nothing I can do about it. There’s no way to fix this. This will be a lifelong memory with too much pain. I try to will my emotions away, but who the hell am I kidding? I can’t hide from my best friends and right now, I don’t want to. I need them.

“Mom—my mom. She fucking killed herself!” I suddenly roar, entering the kitchen, then guzzle down some more scotch before taking the bottle and flinging it against the wall. It shatters into pieces, just like I am.

“Fuck!” I hear, before they’re all rushing over to me. I’m engulfed with their arms around me, in a tight circle. Emotions fill me again as I break down for what must be the millionth time tonight.

“I don’t even know why the fuck she would do something like this! Didn’t she fucking know I needed her?” I cry. I don’t even know why the hell I’m asking them questions. It’s not like anyone has the answers. The only person who would is fucking dead. She can’t tell me why she even thought doing that shit was the only thing for her to do.

“I’m so sorry for your loss, brother,” Ax and Ez both say and I nod my head at them.

“Let’s go into the den. I’m guessing you want to keep drinking?” Asher asks.

“Fuck yes!” I need something to take all this fucking anguish away. “I can’t deal with anything else tonight,” I tell them truthfully.

I need to get wasted before I can come to terms with the fact that the life I once knew is over and I’ll have to deal with a new reality when morning comes. The guys keep me company all night. We all end up drinking and getting wasted until the sun comes up.

It’s been a few agonizing days since I found my mom dead on her bed after she overdosed on her pills. Today’s Friday and it’s the day of her funeral. The pressure in my chest hasn’t lessened one bit, and I’m spiraling as the days go by.

I’ve been numb this whole week. The reality that she’s dead hasn’t fully sunken in it. I’m still hoping that it’s a dream and I’ll wake up from this nightmare soon. But with all the activity that’s been going on, it’s not hard to miss, and it brings me back to reality.

Dad got home Monday morning and found me and the guys passed out after drinking ourselves into oblivion. As soon as I saw him, I broke down again, not even caring about anyone else in the house seeing me in this state. Our house has been filled with a flurry of activity of people coming in and out since the news broke and Dad made it home. After that, I let him take over. I wasn’t fit to do anything.

Right now, I’m drunk and high off weed. Probably not the best state to be in for your mother’s funeral, right? But

I'm so fucking pissed at her for doing this shit to me in the first place. I still have a few hours to get my shit together, so I'm sure I'll at least be half sober by then.

Losing her has definitely messed with me and fucked me up for good. I don't even know how I'm supposed to go on and live without her there to cheer me on and support me. Those thoughts whenever they surface, just make my hate for her increase. I don't really hate her, but when your anger and pain overrides everything else, then hate is the only thing you want to feel sometimes.

Truthfully, I don't even know if I'll have the strength to even make it to the funeral. I have no idea where my dad is, but I'm glad he's not here and on my ass. I would probably lose it.

I admit in the days since my world was flipped upside down, I've been spiraling. I don't know if I'll ever be able to function or be normal again. The agony is just all-consuming.

I stumble into my room after taking a shower to try and sober up a bit. The guys have been over every day and I appreciate them so much for that. But sometimes I wish I was alone to just drown in my own sorrows without having anyone there to watch me fall apart.

After I'm done putting on some boxers, I stumble my way back to my bed and open my nightstand drawer to look for my lighter. I've never been into smoking before, but for the past three days, I needed something to take the edge off and smoking helps.

I can't go too crazy. Coach has us tested and I could ruin my chance at football. That's probably the only thing that

will keep me sane after the funeral. I can't blow my chances and get kicked off the team. He probably wouldn't kick me off the team since I'm his best player.

When I open the drawer, I see the envelope that Mom left me on top of my stuff where I shoved it after I first picked it up. I instantly feel my chest tighten at the thoughts of what could be inside. I'm sure it's a letter and the contents better not fuck me up more than I already am.

After staring at it for what feels like an eternity, I finally pick it up to read it now. I was holding off on it and was going to wait until I was in a better place mentally, but something about it is pulling at me to read it now.

Giving in, I open it and start reading. While reading, my hands clench and unclench as rage like I've never known before engulfs me. A guttural roar leaves me when I get to the end of it and I slam my fist against the wall repeatedly as more agony fills me.

My mother killed herself because—

My fists clench again as I think about all the things I've missed because I was too busy with practice or going to some party with the guys. Now I feel like I'm at fault somehow for her death because I wasn't here for her.

There's a link to an online drive with the username and password in the letter and I grab my laptop and log on. The contents of what she has stored on here makes a hatred so fierce brew up inside me that it takes over my entire being.

I look at all the pictures and read all the information she had gathered. By the time I'm done, I'm disgusted. Forget the pain. All I feel now is hate and I'm not sure anything can change that. It doesn't take long for me to make up my

mind about what I'm going to do and how I'm going to get my revenge.

The hate and need for vengeance festers inside me until I feel like I'm about to burst. I'm not going to self-destruct anymore. Instead, I'm going to use all that energy to make them pay. I'll destroy them. That's the better way to deal with my anger and hatred.

I managed to sober up by the time the funeral service was scheduled to begin. The guys and Kinsley all came over and made sure I was ready to face what lay ahead. I wasn't ready, but I had to.

"Oh my God, Knox! I'm so sorry!" Kinsley says as she rushes over to me and wraps her arms around my waist. She starts to cry and I hug her closer to me.

"Thanks, babe," I say to lighten the mood a little. "I'm fine."

"You're not fine! Can I get you anything? Do you need me to do anything for you? Are you eating?" She fires off question after question.

"What are you, my mother?" I ask with a smile at her protectiveness but a second later, it falls as I realize what I just said.

"I've got you," she whispers, hugging me again. The guys all come in too and they form a circle around me. Honestly, I'm thankful that they've been here for me every day since that night. I don't know what I would've done without them.

"It's time," Asher says a minute later, then clears his throat.

Kinsley finally lets go of me and steps back. We all head outside and I get into the car with Ash and Kins while Ax and Ez follow behind.

When we get there, my father is already there, doing what he needs to, I guess. I stand there and look at him, like I've never seen him before. I don't know this man anymore. Well, I guess in reality, I never knew him at all if what I read in my mother's files are true.

I stay away from him for most of the time, opting to stay with my friends who are now more like family. If I get closer to my dad right now, I'll probably kill him.

When it's time for the actual service, I sit at the front of the church and stare at her beautiful face. Her casket is open. Today is the last day I'll ever see her face in the flesh and the ache inside me burns brighter with that thought.

I don't pay attention to anything the priest is saying because I can't take my eyes off her. I get to my feet and walk over to the casket, not caring if the service is still going on. I want to be closer to her. Just watching her from my seat isn't cutting it.

I bend down to place a kiss on her forehead before whispering to her, "I promise you that I'll make them hurt and suffer the way you've been suffering silently for so long. I love you, Mom," I say and then place another kiss on her forehead before standing up again.

Instead of going back to my seat, I stand there at the head of the casket for the rest of the service. I'll keep my promise and make them all pay for the pain and humiliation she felt for the years when she was alive.

When the service is done and everyone has viewed her body, they take her to the cemetery that's at the back of the church. I grab a handle and my brothers—Asher, Axel, and Ezra—all grab one as well. The four of us start walking with her casket for the burial.

When we get there and her casket is over the grave, the priest says his final prayer or whatever. When it's time for them to lower her down into the ground, my knees weaken and I fall to my knees as the pain in my chest takes over. My brothers all grip me and rub my shoulders as I sob for her and for what I've lost. Death is so final and so soul crushing for everyone who has to live without that person for the rest of their lives.

When I've managed to pull myself together, still on my knees, I happen to look up. There on the other side of the grave, right in front of me, is her. It looks like I don't have to go anywhere because the lamb that's ripe for slaughtering has come to me.

I harden myself and prepare for all that's coming in the next few weeks. The old Knox is gone and I hope people are ready for the new me. Someone is about to wish that they never existed.

CHAPTER

Three

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RAINE

TODAY'S MONDAY, and I have exactly one more week to do nothing before school starts again. I can't believe that summer ended so fast. It was like I blinked and it was over.

But that's fine because this school year I'll be a senior, which means soon I'll be off to college. I can't wait. For my whole high school life, I've had perfect grades. I know that when the time comes, I'll get into the college I want. The idea of being on my own as an adult is scary but I want to experience it.

Feeling hungry, I get up off my bed and make my way down to the kitchen to make something to eat. Hopefully Mom comes home soon. She's been working late all week, and it feels like I've barely seen her.

When I step into the kitchen though, I'm surprised to find her here already. I stop short. She's just standing in front of the window, staring out the back as though she's lost in thought. She didn't even let me know she was home already and I find that weird. She always yells up the stairs when she gets home so that I know.

“Hey, Mom, you okay?” I ask as I step further into the kitchen. She doesn’t answer for a minute and when she does, her words flip my world on its axis. At the time though, I didn’t know those simple words would change the trajectory of my whole life and not for the good either.

“I have some news!” she announces casually. “We’re moving!”

“What?” I shriek. I’m stunned by her words. I must have heard her wrong since we’ve never had any plans on moving anywhere and this is all coming out of left field for me.

“What do you mean, we’re moving?” I finally ask incredulously. I’m so out of my depth here. Granted, maybe it’s because things haven’t been the best for us in a while. But this was home and the thought of leaving the only place I’ve ever known is not the best feeling.

Plus, how could she be making us move when my senior year is about to start? I’m an introvert at heart. I’m not sure I’d do well when it comes to somewhere new. Wanting to experience college and starting a new school senior year are two different things. I mean, from what I’ve read, college is much more relaxed than high school. It’s a new experience for everyone and high school cliques aren’t typically prevalent there.

Adding in the fact that I like things to go a certain way because it’s what keeps me sane. I love a good routine even though I’ve read that experts says it’s not good to have the same routine every day. The slightest change sometimes makes me feel like my world is falling apart. Sorry for the

dramatics here but I just—I'm still reeling from my mother's words.

"Exactly what I just said," she says, sighing as she finally turns around to look at me. I notice she looks tired, but it's not enough for me to stop my complaining for a minute.

"But Mooom! Senior year is about to start for me! I can't just leave my school now and be the newbie at another school this late!" I whine. Starting a new school in your senior year is like committing social suicide.

"It's not like I have that many friends to begin with but still, not the point. Any high schooler in my position would freak out like I was currently doing right now. Everyone knows how crazy it is to transfer this late to a new school.

"I'm sorry sweetheart, but this is important. The CEO called me to let me know I'd need to transfer. They have an opening in his Riverside office and it needs to be filled immediately. Plus, this will be a huge opportunity for me!"

"We're moving to Texas?" I ask, just to be sure I'm hearing her correctly. "Like in-the-middle-of-nowhere Texas?"

"It's not in the middle of nowhere. It's a very populated town in Texas and they're big on football and other things. You'll fit right in," she tells me, rolling her eyes playfully.

"Because I've always been sooo into football," I grumble. Now it's my turn to roll my eyes. "Plus, when have I ever fit in anywhere, Mom? I'm like the poster child for being a complete nerd."

"Come on, you're not a nerd. Besides, it'll be a nice change of scenery after everything that happened..." she says, trailing off.

I know she was about to say everything that happened between her and Dad. Ugh! Just thinking about my dad causes my eyebrow to pinch together, and a pained look to cross my face and build in my chest once again. My parents used to love each other, or at least I thought they did.

One day, everything was fine and the next, everything was a disaster. They started fighting a lot, and it didn't stop until my father packed his bags and walked out on us. He just left without so much as a goodbye to me. I haven't heard from him since.

To say the last few months haven't been easy would be an understatement, that's for sure. I guess I can't blame my mother for wanting a new start. The day my father left us behind was the day I realized that love was fickle and it doesn't withstand everything—like the shows lead you to believe—no matter how good, pure, and everlasting you thought it was.

I let out a sigh because I know I won't fight her on this if it's what she truly wants. She deserves some happiness, and if moving states will bring her that, then who am I to stop her or stand in her way?

Even before they started their constant fighting, things hadn't been good for her and my dad for a long time. It wasn't just in the last few months they were having problems.

Some days, I'd lie in my bed and listen to them arguing. I didn't know what it was about but it always sounded serious. They were hush hush when it came to exactly what they were fighting about and I have a feeling that was for my benefit. I guess I can thank them for that. No kid wants

to be around adults who constantly fight and yell at each other.

“Okay, Mom. I’ll do whatever you need me to,” I grumble sulkily. Even though deep down, I really hate this, I need to do it for her. Maybe she needs a change of scenery or something after all the bullshit she’s been through. Who am I to kill her dreams?

“You’re the best, sweetheart! I promise everything will work out. You’re going to love it there!” she squeals before walking over to me and wrapping me up in a hug. She places a kiss on my forehead. I wrap my arms around her and hug her back. I love her hugs. They always make me feel safe and happy.

“So when do we leave?” I ask, knowing we’re committed to this move now.

“Tomorrow.”

“What?” I practically yell at her. Geez! Way to spring this up at the very last moment.

“Don’t worry. My boss is paying to have the movers come and pack everything. He’s also providing a place for us to live in the meantime, until we can find a place of our own,” she tells me.

“That’s pretty cool of him,” I murmur. She’s been working for the Riverside real estate company for years and is one of their top real estate agents. I mean New York, where we’re currently living, is basically the prime spot for expensive places. Like the prices for some of the places she’s sold were ridiculous!

The company is a huge multibillion-dollar one so I guess I can see her excitement of transferring. It would mean

she's working her way further up their ladder of success since Riverside is where the headquarters is located.

I almost snort at the absurdity of how crazy her employer is. His last name is Riverside and that's his company's name as to be expected, but the man brings filthy fucking rich to a whole new level. He even has a whole freaking town named after him!

That's like some next level kind of shit and holy hell that's where we'll be living soon. I can't wait to see how life will be there. I'm thinking Mom has the right idea and maybe we do need the change. Here's to new beginnings then, I guess.

"Yeah. It is very generous of him. I'm just glad for the opportunity," she says, smiling, but I notice a weird tone in her voice. I wonder what that's about, but I don't question her. She probably already has a lot on her mind.

"Well, I guess I'll go pack a bag and then call Bailee to give her the news," I declare before escaping to my room.

Once I get to my room, I flop down onto my bed face-first and just lie like that for a few minutes. I'm just hoping this move will be good for us. Eventually, I grab my phone and call my best friend Bailee who answers on the first ring.

"What's up, hoe?" she chirps as soon as she picks up.

"I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news," I say into the phone and her cheery voice instantly becomes one of seriousness.

"Why? What happened?"

"I'm moving..."

"Whoa, what? What the hell do you mean moving? Senior year is about to start!" She practically screams my ear off. *Yeah, those were my sentiments exactly.*

"Don't you think I know that bitch?" I drawled, rolling my eyes even though she can't see me.

"Where are you guys moving to and how much longer do I have you for?"

"Riverside, Texas, and we're leaving tomorrow."

"What the fuck? And you're telling me this now? I hate you!" she grumbles over the line.

"I'm sorry. But if it makes you feel better, I just found out myself," I argued.

"It doesn't," she deadpans.

"Mom got a promotion and well, that's why we're moving. Plus, after everything she and my dad went through, I guess she needs a change. She practically jumped at the chance to move."

"Aww, I'm so sorry, babe. I'm going to miss your ass though," she says, sounding sad. I may not have a lot of friends, but the ones I do have are the best.

"I'll miss you too," I tell her.

"You better keep me updated and call me every week. And we have to visit each other whenever we can otherwise, I'll come to Texas just to kick your ass!" she grumbles over the phone and I let out a laugh.

"Obviously! Who else am I going to whine to about life?" I ask sarcastically.

"Good, you better! Or your best friend access card is getting revoked!" she tells me sassily.

"Noted. Anyway, I have to go pack a bag for tomorrow. Love you!" I tell her.

"Love you too, hoe," she says and I chuckle before we both hang up.

Once I'm off the phone, I start packing a bag for tomorrow before showering and crawling into bed. I'm nervous and excited to see what the future will hold for us there.

Today's Friday and it's the third day since we've been in Riverside. We managed to unpack our clothes and some other personal items since we arrived. Well, we had help from the movers to unpack everything that wasn't our clothes so that was a big help.

We left all the big furniture and other stuff behind since Mom was now going to rent the house while we were here. The good thing was that the new house came furnished.

I haven't had the chance to venture out anywhere yet and see what this town is all about. I figure once I start school, I'll have plenty of time to do that, especially once we get a little more settled in.

Right now, Mom and I are getting dressed to attend her boss's wife's funeral. A day after we got here, Mom came home and told me the sad news. I wanted to stay at home but she insisted I go with her. Apparently, everyone from around these parts will be in attendance. Since she's new here, she needs to go to show her support along with the

rest of the employees. They all want to give their support to their boss in this trying time.

I should have expected that since her boss's family is the most influential and richest people here, which means this is going to be a big funeral. Ugh, I hate crowds.

I did some research on this town instead of going out before now and from what I gathered, the Riversides were at the top of the most influential and richest people here. Then there were three other families that were above the rest and those were the Wests, Levines and Andersons. Everyone else was well off here but nowhere near those four names.

"Are you ready to go?" Mom asks as she knocks on my door.

"Just a sec!" I call out as I put on my earrings then brush my hair out, opting to leave it down. I put my shoes on. I'm wearing a knee-length black dress and ballet flats. It's a simple and classy look.

When I walk downstairs, she's already waiting for me by the door. We both walk outside and get into her car. She pulls out of the driveway. While driving through town, I can't help but notice the Riverside name plastered almost everywhere. This place is completely different from the city life I'm used to in New York.

For one, it's so damn hot all the time and two, it's so clean! New York City is the worst because there's always trash everywhere on the roadside. It's literally the worst place to live, on most days. Plus, it's much quieter here compared to the Big Apple.

At any given moment in New York, you either hear all the cars passing by or you hear the trains. It's noisy. Coming here to the quietness has definitely been an adjustment.

I also looked up information on all the leading families here. I mean, a girl has to know these things right? I'm new here, so of course I had to do some research. There are literally so many news articles on all of them, from business dealings to personal matters and scandals. People are really invested in their lives.

Apparently all the sons from each family are major football stars in this town. There was even an article announcing that Mr. Riverside's wife had passed away but there was nothing much on that. Just how she was loved by everyone in this town and all her contributions to it. I wonder how she died?

It only takes about fifteen minutes to get to the church and when we stop, the entire place is already packed. Holy hell, that's a lot of people for this town. I guess this place is bigger than I thought it was.

Mom finds a parking spot. We both get out of her car and then walk toward the church and step inside. The inside is packed as well but we manage to find seats at the back, which I'm thankful for. It feels weird being at someone's funeral when you didn't even know them.

The service is going on and a few minutes later, a guy gets up from the front and goes up to the casket and stands before it for a second. He bends down to kiss the woman on the forehead and I'm assuming that it's the son.

After a few minutes, he moves to the side and stands by the head of the casket. It's now that I can see his face. I don't know if it's inappropriate or not to crush on someone at a funeral but holy shit, the wind gets knocked out of me.

A spark of attraction unlike anything I've ever felt before consumes me as I look at the guy. He's the most beautiful man I've ever seen in my life. I have to look away before anyone spots me staring at him like a crazy person. I mean, the guy just lost his mom.

As the service goes on, I don't really pay attention to what's being said. I keep sneaking glances at the guy. I hate funerals. It's always sad whether you know the person or not. When the service is over, three other guys go up to the one that was standing by the casket and after it's closed, they all grab a handle and help him lift it up.

They begin walking outside the church and everyone gets up to start making their way outside as well. Since Mom and I are at the back, we both slip out easily and watch as they head to the cemetery at the back of the church. It's huge.

At least it's convenient. I let out a smile but then have to school my features. *Come on, Raine! This is not the time to be making inappropriate jokes even if it's in your head!*

Somehow we end up standing close to the front on the other side of where Mom's boss and his son are standing. I take a minute to look at him and observe him. He's definitely the most beautiful boy I've ever seen. He could be a model. The gods favored him when they made him.

After a few minutes, I look away. I don't want to be caught staring. I stand there and look around, waiting for

this to be over so that I can go back home and do nothing. A second later, I feel eyes on me. Somehow, you always just know when someone is watching you and this raises the hair on the back of my neck. It doesn't feel like a friendly one.

I lift my head up to look around but don't notice anyone actively staring. It's weird, but the stare feels malicious in a way, like it's burning my skin. Is a malicious stare a thing?

I don't know if I'm being weird but have you ever felt someone's stare on you and just knew that they didn't have the best intentions toward you?

Eventually, I try to push the feeling away. I think my overactive imagination is running wild again. I'm glad when the burial is finally over and we're on our way home. Once we get home, I shower and then lie on my bed to do some more digging. I didn't look into him before but now I'm curious as hell.

I look for everything and anything I can find on Jonathan Riverside's son and a second later, there are pages of stuff on him. His name is Knox Riverside. It wasn't hard to find him since he's this town's golden boy and football star extraordinaire. He'll also be a senior at Riverside Academy, the new school Mom said I'll be attending on Monday.

I'm happy about that. From the moment I saw him today, I was intrigued. It was like a zing went through me and I felt so attracted to him, which is something that's never happened to me before.

I haven't dated much but I have been on a few dates. None of them made me feel like I wanted to rip my clothes off for them. I let out a sigh. He'll probably never even

know I exist. We're from different circles when it comes to the high school hierarchy—his place being at the top, king of the jocks, while mine is at the bottom as one of the lowly nerds.

I'll probably be as invisible to him as I was to most of the guys at my old school. I wasn't anything special. I was the girl that guys looked over and never picked. The dates I went on were ones my friends set me up with, so technically, those guys didn't pick me either.

Oh well, a girl can dream, right? Dream about the handsome jock falling in love with her and they live happily ever after. I let out a snort at that thought. That's never going to happen.

Anyway, I have this weekend to psych myself up for being the new girl at this preppy-ass rich school. I just hope it goes well.

CHAPTER

Four

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RAINE

IT'S REALLY crazy how you just blink and then the weekend is over. I need a day between Saturday and Sunday just to exist and do nothing.

It's Monday morning already. I'm excited but also nervous to start this new school. I spent Saturday going to the store with Mom to get last-minute school supplies and then yesterday when I woke up, she dragged me outside. My mouth dropped when I saw the new car in our driveway waiting for me. I was speechless and didn't even know what to tell her.

I know we're well off and that she could afford it, but I didn't think she'd be getting me a new car so soon.

She told me that it was time I started driving myself to school now that we were here. I needed my independence. I got my license last year in New York but since my school was just a fifteen-minute walk from home, it didn't make sense to get a car for me then.

But now that we were here and there was more space, having my own car wasn't such a bad idea at all. Though now I'm in a rush because I don't want to be freaking late

on my first day of school. Mom is already gone by the time I start getting dressed so I hurry it up.

Once I'm done, I hop into my car and drive myself to school. The only thought running through my mind is that I hope I'm not too late. I park my car in one of the empty parking spots and then rush inside.

The bell has already rung by the time I step through the doors. The halls are empty except for the few students still milling around outside and the ones hurrying to get to class. I walk faster even though I have no clue where I'm going. Did this school have to be so huge?

I don't have my class schedule yet so I need to find the office before heading to whichever class I have first today. I stop a guy that's hurrying past me to get to class and ask for directions to the office. He gives me hurried instructions before he's running off in the opposite direction.

Thankfully, he was helpful and didn't run off without answering. In no time, I'm making my way into the office, hoping they aren't too hardass about me being a few minutes late.

"Good morning!" I say as cheerily as I can when I enter the outer office. The secretary lifts her head up and gives me an unimpressed stare. Damn, who the hell pissed in her Special K this morning?

"What can I do for you?" she asks in a bored tone, like she'd rather be doing anything else besides helping me right now.

"Um, I'm here to get my schedule. I'm new and today is my first day," I say, pointing out the obvious and hoping she

won't give me too much shit.

"Name?"

"Raine Carrington," I answer, and she begins typing away at her computer. A second later, she prints my schedule along with another paper before handing it to me. I look down at both and see the second has my locker number and the combination to open it printed on the paper.

"Thank you!" I beam, giving her one of my fake smiles before rushing out of the office. Once I'm in the hallway, I look at the paper for directions to where my locker should be. Once I'm there, I keep walking as I look down at the paper once more to see what my number is. I run face-first into someone's back.

The force of the impact causes me to bounce back and fall flat on my ass. I wasn't paying much attention to where I was going. I let out a groan and a wince at the pain engulfing my butt from the fall plus the hard muscles I ran into.

I'm glad there weren't a lot of people in the halls to see me fall because that would've been embarrassing. There are only a few stragglers still trying to hurry to class.

The guy I bumped into spins around. I realize my mistake and what it could potentially cost me. I just bumped into the school's star quarterback, the king of this school, my mom's boss's son. When he looks at me, I can see the very pissed-off expression on his face.

"Watch where the fuck you're going!" he snaps, baring his teeth. I'm surprised and taken aback at the level of

animosity he has toward me just because I bumped into him.

I look up into electric blue eyes that are cold and hard as he stares down at me in anger. He doesn't even offer to help me up either. What a dickhead. But even though he's being an ass, I can't help but suck in a breath at the weird feelings he seems to be invoking in me at this moment. He has a prominent jaw with a straight Roman nose and thick black eyebrows.

If I thought I felt things before, when I was looking at him from afar, it's nothing compared to how much they intensify with him this close to me. Yeah, this whole interaction is throwing me for a loop.

"I-I'm so sorry. I wasn't watching where I was going," I stammer out when I realize that I've just been staring at him this whole time. I'm so confused at his anger toward me. Like is this how they treat all new students? 'Cause it's not very welcoming.

Then again, I remind myself that the guy just lost his mother, so of course he'd be angry at everyone and everything, right? I mean, I'd probably be feeling the same way if the situation were reversed.

"You better watch yourself from here on out because bad things happen to the trash in this school," he snarls, still glaring at me.

"Look, asshole, I said I was sorry! You don't have to be such a dick about it!" I snap back at him. I don't know what his issue is. This guy is acting as though he's never accidentally ran into someone before.

Then again, he's so spoiled and feared and loved in this town, if he did accidentally run into someone, they would probably be the ones to apologize to him and not the other way around.

Okay, yeah, I got the spoiled part from all the internet research I'd been doing this weekend on the guy. *I was bored, okay?*

He's still staring down at me and I stare right back at the jerk—right into his electric blue eyes that are filled with anger, hatred and what looks like a hint of pain. He also has some freckles over his nose that I didn't notice before at the funeral because he was so far away. But up close, wow, it suits him and somehow makes him look hotter. He has plump pink lips I wouldn't mind tasting sometime. *Whoa, what the hell? Get a grip, Raine!*

He's tall and must be well over six feet with broad shoulders. His body is chiseled to perfection. It doesn't look like he has an inch of fat on him. He has black hair styled with the ones in the front a little long and straight, and the back is cut low. It's definitely one of those fuckboy hairstyles. Every inch of him is just human perfection. I don't even realize I'm still looking at him, my gaze locked onto his perfect features until he speaks again.

"You better watch yourself, new girl, and quit eye fucking me. I don't like fat girls!" he snaps. I'm mortified at his words. I thank God once again that I was late this morning and there is no one around to witness my humiliation. I finally get to my feet.

Before I can even respond, he walks past me, making sure to bump into my shoulder as he does, which causes me

to fall into the lockers. The guy is huge and probably has a good hundred pounds or so on me. I groan at the pain in my shoulder from hitting the locker.

I'm left standing there, wondering what the hell just happened. When I envisioned starting Riverside Academy, I didn't expect anyone to be outright rude to me. My expectations were just that I'd blend into the background and finish out the school year unnoticed.

I shouldn't expect better behavior from a jock, but I did. I was expecting this to be a more refined school without any assholes, since the price tag for attending here is kind of astronomical.

Again, I don't know if he was just rude because of his mother's passing, if that's his normal attitude, or if it's just me he doesn't like. Or does he hate new people or something? I'm just here to get my degree and graduate to go to college, nothing more.

Letting out a sigh, I look at the paper once more for my code since I already forgot what it was after that whole encounter. I open my locker and put my extra books in there.

I groan at the realization that the locker next to mine must be his and that's why he was standing here in the first place. Fucking great. Well, there goes my plan to avoid the asshole. I look down at the schedule in my hand and grab an empty notebook before heading to my first class of the day. I'm already ten minutes late that isn't a good first impression.

I find the class a minute later and it's a wonder I didn't get lost. I'm still a bit shaky from that experience with Knox

Riverside but I try to put it behind me, thinking, no, hoping, that it was just a one-off and he'll leave me alone.

When I walk into the class, it's full and all the chatter comes to an abrupt halt as everyone's eyes land on me. I don't know if it's luck or what but the teacher isn't here yet. Thank God, because I didn't want to be tardy on my first day here.

There's an empty seat at the front of the class and I take it because I always sit in the front. A few seconds later after I've settled in, Knox walks into the class and I inwardly groan at the sight of him.

How the hell am I supposed to avoid the guy if he's in my class? His eyes zero in on me and he walks right up to me in all his swagger with a smile on his face. It's a smile I don't trust one bit. I'm still annoyed with the guy since we clashed in the hallway just five minutes ago.

Like how the hell can you be so fucking rude to someone you don't even know? It takes me a second to realize the class is quiet and when I glance around, I see that everyone's attention is riveted on us.

"You're in my seat," he growls in that harsh tone of his and instantly, I hear some 'ooohs' coming from people in the room.

"Somehow I doubt that. You don't look like the front-seat type and since I'm guessing this class isn't assigned seating, and your name isn't written on this table, I'm not moving," I announce in the most unaffected tone I can muster.

I'm not usually a confrontational person and would rather hide in my shell on most days, so this is out of the

norm for me. This new school is not going how I thought it would in my head. Standing up to the school's most popular jock will definitely not win anyone over.

His jaw clenches in anger and he bares his teeth before grabbing me by the collar of my shirt and pulling me out of my seat and shoving me away. I trip on my own two feet.

My head collides with the side of the table next to mine before I fall onto my butt. This is the second time this morning that I find myself at this guy's feet.

"I said you were in my seat," he hisses before throwing my books onto the floor as well. There are gasps around the room before everyone starts to laugh at the spectacle. No one offers to help me up. They just watch as it all happens.

What the hell was I expecting? Why would anyone help the new girl when their king was putting on a show for them? They're probably afraid it would make them the next target. It's either that or everyone here are just assholes. I'm beginning to think it's the latter.

"What the hell is your problem, asshole?" I yell at him, feeling thoroughly embarrassed.

"Go back to where you came from, you fat-ass cow. No one wants you here," he hisses at me. I'm about to respond but I feel something trickling down my forehead. I lift my shaking hand up to touch it. When I pull it away, I see my fingers are covered in blood.

I look back up at him, and he's staring at me with cold dead eyes. There's no emotion in them. There is no remorse for the fact that he made me hit my head and caused me to bleed. I'm guessing this is war since he just drew first blood. I slowly get up on shaky legs and make my way out

of the classroom to head to the nurse's office for a Band-Aid for my head. Thankfully, it doesn't take long to find it.

"Hello there, sweetie," the nurse says as I knock and enter her office. "I'm nurse Shay. What can I help you with today?" Uhhh, does she seriously not see my head bleeding right now?

"Um, hi. My name is Raine and today is my first day here. I had a little mishap with my bag and the desk. I fell and hit my head on the side of one of the desks and was wondering if you had any Band-Aids?" I ask.

"Oh, yikes! I guess you're having a rough first day, huh? Come in and sit here and let me take a look at it," she says, pointing to one of the chairs for me to sit in.

I take a seat and then she begins to clean the cut before adding some cotton wool and then a plaster on top of it.

"The good news is you don't need any stitches and you should be healed in no time," she says in a friendly voice.

"Thank you," I tell her, feeling choked up and barely managing to hold back the tears. The day has barely started and I already hate this school.

"Here's a note for your teacher," she says, handing me the note. I take it, thanking her before getting up and heading to class again.

Why the hell was he so cruel and mean to me? It's not like I've done anything to him. I don't even know him. So why? I'm pondering this as I slowly make my way back to class. I've never had anything like this happen to me before and I'm not sure how to handle the situation if it persists.

I'm sure going to one of the teachers and telling them what happened won't solve anything because of who he

and his family are. I know how schools work when it comes to bullying. They rarely ever take the side of the person who is being bullied. Plus, I'm new here, and they've known him for a lot longer than they've known me. No one is going to help me. I'll just have to find a way to deal with this myself.

When I get closer to the class, I stop and take a deep breath to calm myself before entering again. I'm hoping the teacher still isn't there but luck isn't on my side for the second time. When I step inside, I see the teacher is here, and he starts chewing me out right there in front of the entire class. I'm guessing this is the typical welcome for this school.

"I'm assuming you're Miss Carrington," he states in a stern voice.

"Yes, sir."

"You're late," he says, like I don't already know that.

"I'm sorry, sir. I had an incident earlier and—"

"Not a good enough excuse, Miss Carrington. You have detention this afternoon and tomorrow afternoon as well," he says, cutting me off.

"But I have a note from the nurse's office—" I start but he cuts me off again.

"Not another word, Miss Carrington. Now, I'd advise you to take your seat," he says, clearly losing his patience with me.

My shoulder slumps for a second but at this point, I don't even bother arguing with him. There's no way I'm going to change his mind.

I hear snickers coming from everyone in class and shake my head. Of course this school is filled with the typical high schoolers. You know, the ones who follow the jocks around like they're the gods who hung the moon and whatever the hell they say goes. So far everyone has just been following this asshole Knox's lead.

Why did I think this place was going to be different? It looks so serene and like nothing bad ever happens here but I'm starting to see differently. It's just an illusion meant to lure you into a false sense of security.

When I look over to the seat I was in before, my book is set neatly on top of the desk and everything is back in place like nothing happened earlier. I look up and around the class and spot Knox sitting at the back with three guys and a girl around him. They're talking among themselves but he's staring right at me.

He's smirking with a satisfied expression on his face. Why the hell did he make such a fuss about a fucking seat that he wasn't even sitting in? Now I know that I'm not being crazy. The guy really does seem to hate me for some reason. Seriously, what kind of bullshit is that?

I let out a long sigh as I make my way back to the seat I was in earlier and sit down as the teacher gets started with the lesson. If this morning was any indication of how this year was going to go then, it's going to be a long one.

Now I'm thinking about graduating and getting out of here as soon as I can and going to a college that's as far away from here as possible.

To say that this morning was a disaster would be putting it lightly. That first class I had where the teacher was rude to me was English and after that I had two more before making my way to fourth period math. After math, it would be time for lunch and I couldn't wait for that because I was starving.

I didn't get a chance to eat this morning because I was late and rushing. Last night I was so nervous about today that I couldn't sleep and now I see that I had cause for concern. By the time I did fall asleep, it was into the wee hours of the morning and it's no wonder I was a bit late.

I can feel this weird energy, like a premonition of some sort. In my mind, I don't see my time here at this school and in this town going well. I know that is probably weird as hell but like they always say that gut feeling is never wrong.

It might just be the stress of moving and starting a new school that's fucking with me. At this point, who the hell knows? After the events of this morning with Knox Riverside, clearly, this was the wrong move. Texas doesn't seem like it's going to be kind to me.

I walk into math class and sit at the front again since it's empty. Most of the students who are here already are sitting more toward the back of the class. I'm thankful for the reprieve since no one seems to be paying any attention to me.

I take my phone out of my bag and open my Kindle app. We still have awhile before class begins so I want to get a chapter in before. I keep my head down, eyes on the phone as I devour the words on the screen.

I started this book last night called *This Love Hurts* by Nikita and holy hell, I think this book is going to break me by the end of it. The main character goes through so much and then the supposed hero puts her through the wringer too. I must have cried like a million times, especially when I got to the part in the book about her past. I'm not even done with it yet and I feel like I already have a book hangover.

I'm deep into my reading when someone takes the seat next to mine. I look up to see a very pretty blonde girl sitting down.

I instantly put my head down again because I don't know if she's nice or not. So far, no one has really made an effort to be nice to me and that's fine. I like being by myself anyway. This girl has other plans it seems.

"Hi!" she says brightly. "My name's Kinsley and you're Raine, right?"

I look up at her, taking in her features. Her blond hair is breast length and straight. She has a round face with perfectly shaped thick eyebrows. Her eyes are sky blue and she has pouty pink lips with a straight nose. She looks to be about five foot three or four maybe and she has a slim figure.

"Um, yeah. How did you—"

"Oh we had English together this morning," she informs me and recognition hits. She was in the back of the class, sitting with the guys who were with Knox.

"Oh, yeah. I think I saw you sitting with that ass—I mean the jock," I say, changing my words. She's his friend so I

don't know if I can trust her. I don't want her telling him what I said and then him finding some way to retaliate.

"I'm so sorry about Knox. He's usually a good guy. I don't know what the hell is happening with him today. I think he's still traumatized by his mom's—" she starts to say but then cuts herself off, not finishing her sentence. She probably thinks she's oversharing his business.

"Yeah, I know his mom died. I went to the funeral with my mom because she works for his dad's company," I explain to her.

"Oh, that's good, I guess. Don't take him too personally. I'm sure he'll be back to his normal self soon enough."

"Are you guys an item or something?" I ask curiously. I'm not fishing for information on the guy because he's a jackass—okay, well, maybe I am. It's good to know these things, right?

"Oh God, no! We just happen to be friends," she says.

"Why?" I ask, then realize how that sounds. "Not that I mean you can't be more with the jock because you're lesser or something... You know what, I'll just shut up now." I groan, closing my mouth before I dig myself further into that hole. She laughs.

"It's fine. I know what you meant. I'm a scholarship student here so I had a rough start too," she tells me.

"When did it become bearable for you?"

"Yesterday," she says with a completely serious face.

"Great. I'll die before I can even adjust to things here then," I grumble out and this makes her laugh harder.

"Relax, girl, I'm just kidding. But to answer your question, Knox and I became friends last semester when we

had to partner up for labs.” Before I can even reply to her, a deep voice comes from the side of us.

“I thought I made it perfectly clear that you don’t belong here, scholarship girl,” a guy’s voice suddenly says.

I look up to see a guy with black wavy hair, baby blue eyes, pink lips and a straight Roman nose, looking down at us. He also has a square jawline and is tall and muscular. He looks like he’s at least six feet tall. He’s a very attractive guy, and he’s looking at Kinsley like he wants to devour her, but also like he seems to be annoyed with her existence.

“That’s not what you were saying the other night, asshole!” Kinsley spits at him.

His jaw clenches for a second before he responds to her.

“I told you, that was a mistake,” he says through gritted teeth. “And to never mention it again.”

“Yeah, whatever, Asher. Just leave if you’re going to be a dick. I’m busy talking to my friend here. So as you can see, you’re interrupting,” she snaps at who I now know is Asher. I can tell by her voice that she’s hurt by everything he just said.

“Leave her alone, asshole,” I snap at him, wanting to defend her. We’re not friends yet but I have a feeling that we could be. She’s not as stuck up as everyone else here seems to be and I like that.

“Ooh, fresh meat. Well, well, well... who do we have here?” he asks, looking at me like he just noticed I was here. He licks his lips. I don’t bother answering him because based on her words alone and the way her eyes just flashed with pain, I’m guessing they’re a thing. And if

they aren't, then they're definitely orbiting around one another and she wants them to be something.

"Leave her the hell alone. Knox has his eyes on her," Kinsley says and I want to die.

"Um, no he doesn't," I squeak out.

"Well, if he doesn't, then you can come let me rock your world anytime, babe," he says, smirking at me.

"I'm not interested," I say.

"Get away from her, you pig!" Kinsley says at the same time I answer him.

We don't get to say anything else because in the next second, Knox is behind Asher and slapping him behind the head.

"We don't fuck animals! Last time I checked, this one looks like a cow." He huffs before pulling Asher away. He doesn't spare a glance my way. Yep! The guy definitely hates me for some reason. I pretend like his words don't sting and pay attention to the book on my screen again.

"Ugh, they can be such fucking assholes sometimes," Kinsley mutters under her breath.

Thank God I'm saved from replying when the teacher walks in and is ready to begin our math class right away.

Don't ask me how I know it's him, but I feel his stare on my back. It's like that for the duration of class. Every time I happen to look behind me, my eyes clash with his electric blue ones.

It feels like they want to consume and devour me with their intensity. He doesn't hide the fact that he's staring. The hostility there seems to say that there's more coming

my way and I have to quickly turn around to face the front again.

Everyone who ever said that demons come with a pretty face has been right. I have no doubt that there is a demon lurking beneath the surface of everything that is Knox Riverside. It's apparent that I'm the one he's set his sights on, to toy with. I just hope I make it through this year intact.

After we're done with class, Kinsley and I head to lunch together, which turns out to be a disaster. I wasn't allowed to sit at the same table with her because that was Knox's table, but I expected that. She was the one who dragged me there because that's where she usually sits. I had insisted that I didn't want to. We just ended up moving to another table.

By the time school lets out, I'm tired to the bone. Apparently, Knox is in five of the seven classes I'm taking this semester and I hate it. Through every class, I can feel his stare burning through my skin.

I'm about to leave when I remember I have detention this afternoon and I let out a groan. Heaving out a sigh, I make my way to the classroom where detention is held and sit there for the hours it takes to complete.

Hopefully my mom isn't mad at me for getting into trouble on my first day here. I've never been in detention before. I'll just have to find some excuse to tell her. If only I could tell her that the devil has set his sights on me and not in a good way.

CHAPTER

Five

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KNOX

I SAW the new girl at my mom's funeral and knew who she was because of the pictures that were in Mom's files. I hated her the moment I laid eyes on her. I didn't get to fully take her in at the funeral but yesterday I got the chance.

It was her first day at Riverside Academy and I finally got to see her up close and in my personal space. I wasn't prepared for all the different emotions to slam into me and that just made me mad as fuck.

The first emotion to hit me was the anger and hate I feel for her because of what she represents. Those were the most obvious ones. I'm not going to tell you about the others yet because while I was examining her, I got these weird-as-fuck feelings. I don't know how to or want to explain, so let's just leave it at that for now.

I was tripped because she intrigued me. I'm not supposed to feel anything but hate for her and that was throwing me for a loop.

I have to admit, begrudgingly so, that she is beautiful—like take your fucking breath away beautiful in that classic and calm sort of way.

It's the type of beauty you'd notice from a mile away without her even trying to get your attention. She just naturally grabs it.

When I realize where my thoughts are heading, I'm instantly angry with myself and the hate I feel for her fully sets in. The beast in me comes out to play. I saw how all the guys in our senior class were eyeing her up yesterday and I need to nip that shit in the bud.

She's not here to make friends because I won't allow it. She needs to be as miserable as possible and I'll make sure of it. I won't even have to touch her because everyone else will do it for me. I'm the king of this school and no one will hesitate to follow my orders.

I could tell she was confused by my behavior toward her and I relish in that. It's not often, if ever, that I go after someone new to the school, but she's a special case.

I want to ruin her.

I want to be her worst nightmare.

I want her to feel the wrath that I'm going to unleash on her.

By the time I'm done with her, I want her on her knees, begging me to stop.

I'll be the thing she never thought she had to run from. Every time she thinks about me, all I want her to remember is that the devil is after her.

Maybe someday she'll know exactly why I hate her, but not today. I want to have some fun fucking with her first. It's the only way I'll be able to keep the promise I made to my mother at her grave.

Just thinking about my mother has the ache in my soul resurfacing. If I was being honest, the pain never left since I found her lifeless body on her bed.

This morning I made it to school thirty minutes earlier than I usually do and the anticipation of seeing my newest toy again is making me burst at the seams. She doesn't know she's my toy yet, but she will. Reveling in her torment will make me happy, even if it's for a fleeting moment.

Once I start my campaign against her, everyone in the senior class will follow my lead. They always seem to do that. I don't care about the rest of the school and what they do as long as no one in the senior class goes against me because I'm the god here.

My friends and I, we rule this place. Everyone else follows us because they want to fit in and stay in our good graces.

They're all so predictable but it usually suits my agenda. That means they'll all do my dirty work while I sit back and watch. Moments like those are when I'm glad to be the king of the school.

They're all my domino pieces that I've carefully laid out and once I tip the first one, they'll all fall just the way I want them to.

This past weekend, all I did was drink myself into a stupor and get high off my ass before coming up with ways on how to make this girl's life unbearable.

I promised myself that last weekend was the last time I'd be off the wagon. It was time to start with my plans of vengeance.

I went easy on her yesterday but it was just enough to let everyone know that I didn't like the new girl. No one knows why, not that it's their business, but they'll take my lead, nonetheless.

My thoughts swing back to my mother and I can't believe it's only been a few days since we laid her to rest. Those days have felt longer than they actually were. It sucks to be at home and not see her face or sit and watch movies with her.

I hate how much it hurts just thinking about her. After everything I found in her letter and seeing how long she was suffering alone in silence, made me want to smash everything around me. There is a haze of rage that always seems to blanket me. I just hope that wherever she is, she's finally at peace.

Sometimes though, the hate I feel for her, every time I think about what she did, is so consuming, it's a wonder I'm not drowning in it. I'm so confused and angry. I'm not sure if I'll ever forgive her for what she did. Even if I don't, I still fucking love her deep down inside. At the end of the day, she was still my mother.

My father has barely been home as usual, but at least now I know why. I'm fucking pissed at him. My mother's letter put so much into perspective. I also had my own investigation done and everything she documented was true. To say I was fuming would be an understatement. Now, every time I saw my father, all I wanted to do was strangle him.

I keep my cool though, because in the end, I'll be the one who wins. I guess it's a good thing he's barely home

anyway.

His actions, along with his selfishness, is what drove her to the brink of insanity. I wish she was stronger, and I hate them both for it.

I guess that final bit of information is what really sent her over the edge and that's why it's been hard to control my boiling rage whenever I'm in his presence.

I should get an Oscar for the acting I've done over the last few days. I've had to act like I don't know anything. I don't want him to know I know what he caused.

I don't even know if he realizes that he's the cause for what Mom did. I'm assuming he has no clue. But yet, still, he's content with going on with his life like nothing happened.

He probably thinks we were still in the dark, unaware of what he was doing, and that's why he kept doing it. Too bad for him, his dirty secrets are no longer a secret. My plan for now is just to avoid him as much as I can.

I think about some of the plans I have and a smile crosses my face. This might be the first real one in days. Yeah, my plan is much better than if I confronted him. Maybe someday I will but for now, I need to get my pound of flesh first. I'll let it play out and see who has the last laugh.

The asshole was so far gone when it came to our family. He wasn't aware that he was slipping or that my mother knew. Maybe he just didn't care. I wish she would've handled things differently. It's too bad I can't go back and change the past.

He knew she was sick with her depression and instead of being with her, he left her to fend for herself, while he was out doing whatever he wanted. None of that matters anymore because I'll be getting my own version of revenge. For as smart as he is when it comes to business, he really is fucking stupid when it comes to his personal life.

I shake my head to dispel the thoughts in my head. If I continue thinking about it for much longer, my anger will just get out of control. I don't need that right now. No one wants to be in my path when shit like that happens. Plus, it's too early in the day to be pissed off.

I finally get out of my Range Rover and shut the door behind me. I walk to the front and hop onto the hood to sit and wait for the guys. They'll be showing up soon. I light a blunt and then take a long pull to calm myself from my earlier thoughts. There's nothing better than weed to calm you the fuck down and mellow you out.

A few minutes later, while I'm just chilling by myself, Ivy, the girl I've been fucking for the last few weeks, walks up until she's standing right in front of me. I take another pull of my weed and blow the smoke out into her face. She starts to act annoyed.

That's the first sign that you should cut them loose, when they start being annoying. I was going to cut her off anyway because my guys brought me up to speed on what was going on.

"Jesus, Knox, knock it out!" she says in a whiny voice, giving me a look that's meant to be reprimanding or some shit. I literally couldn't give a fuck right now. *Has she always been this whiny and annoying?*

“What do you want, Ivy? I’m trying to have some *me* time right now,” I drawl in an uninterested tone.

“Look, baby, I know you’re having a hard time because of your mom and shit but you don’t need to act like an asshole!” she snaps at me.

Ugh, it is too fucking early for this shit. I grab her by the throat, pulling her closer to me. I lean forward a little so that my face is right in front of hers. I squeeze hard enough so that she knows I mean fucking business.

“Don’t ever fucking talk about or mention my mother to me!” I snap through clenched teeth, letting her see the full extent of my rising anger.

“I’m sorry, baby!” she gasps. “It’s just that I haven’t seen you in forever and I miss my boyfriend.” She pouts and it isn’t a cute look.

She’s one of those girls who thinks they’re going to be an *Instagram* model or something. She’s a cheerleader that’s looking to climb the social ladder and trap someone who has money.

She comes from money as well but these girls always want more. They all want to marry someone richer than them so that they can have a more lavish lifestyle than the one they currently have. They don’t think about anything else.

I don’t have to be a genius to know that she’s had her sights set on me for ages. I’m not one of those idiots who are led by their dicks and are oblivious to everything around them. I’ve always known what she wants. Too bad for her, whatever plan she has cooked up in that head of hers will never work.

She's just a fuck but it'll never go further than that. One, I don't like my women to be total bitches and two, I don't like the ones who spread their legs for anyone else while they're with me.

I honestly don't even know why I fucked her in the first place since I never even liked her that much to begin with. I guess I was bored and she kept throwing herself at me. She was easy and convenient. Well, technically, they all are because they think they'll be the one to change their star quarterback, but they don't know it'll never happen. I've yet to meet a girl who I wanted to possess. *Well, until recently...* but that can't happen.

I've never had a girlfriend. No one in this town really interested me in that way before. None of them seemed like girlfriend material, especially the ones I know and have had contact with.

This one is delusional enough to think that because she's the head cheerleader and I'm the quarterback, we're somehow meant to be together.

I don't buy into that sort of high school bullshit and she should know that by now. Her constant bullshit about me being her boyfriend is grating on my nerves and just makes me want to chuck her off a cliff.

If there was one thing my asshole dad taught me, it was to make sure I wear a rubber and to make sure I knew enough about the women I took to my bed. There were vipers who would try their best to try and trap you because of the dollar amount in your bank account.

"I don't do girlfriends and you know that. I told you that from the beginning, didn't I?" I question, my voice coming

out harsher than I meant it to. Maybe she needs me to be an asshole so she can understand what the hell I'm saying. I hate clingy bitches.

"What the hell are you talking about?" she screeches. She claims she's my girlfriend for bragging rights, but she never even called to ask me how I was doing during my mother's death and funeral. Nor did she come over to offer any comfort or even attend the funeral. If she did come over, I would've sent her ass away. But real girlfriends would check up on you and care about you more.

"You knew the score from the beginning so don't act clueless now. And in case it wasn't fucking obvious, we're done," I snap at her while taking another pull from my blunt.

Obviously we're not supposed to smoke on school property but since my father owns the town, everyone is too afraid of him to say shit to me.

"What the fuck, Knox? You can't do this to me!" she shrieks in a shrill voice that hurts my fucking ears.

"You want a boyfriend so bad? Go ask the guy you were fucking at the party the other night. I'm done with you. I don't fuck bitches who fuck other guys while they're fucking me. Sloppy seconds aren't my thing," I sneer at her and her face pales. If I cared, I'd say that shit was comical the way her face turns sour.

"Wha-what are you talking about?" she stammers out.

"Oh, you didn't think I'd know what a slut you've been? Here's a little tip for you... there isn't anything that goes on in this town that I don't know about or will eventually find out," I say smirking.

"Baby, I was drunk. It didn't mean anything. I didn't even want to sleep with him. He forced me—" she says as if that will help her case.

"Nice try but let me stop you right there," I cut her off. "If you didn't want it, then you wouldn't have been bouncing on his dick like a fucking porn star." I laugh. It's always the "I didn't want it or I was raped" storyline with these manipulative bitches when you find out that they were hopping on someone else's dick behind your back. Don't get me wrong, this doesn't apply to anyone who is truthful.

"But—" she starts, but I cut her off again.

"Get the fuck out my face because you won't want me to make you! I said I'm fucking done with you so don't test me. I'm not in the mood," I snap at her, my patience finally wearing thin. This was supposed to be a peaceful morning and here I am dealing with this shit on top of my already sour mood.

"You heard him, Ivy. Get the fuck out of here. You shouldn't have hopped onto another dick if you still wanted to ride Knox's pole," Asher says to her as he walks over to me. She gives him a nasty glare and huffs before she stomps away from us, heading inside.

But not before having her last word. "This isn't over, Knox! Don't forget I'm the one you always come back to," she spits.

"What the hell did you even see in that psycho? Were you high off your ass or something?" he questions.

"Fuck, man, I didn't know the bitch was that crazy! And it took you long enough to get here," I say sarcastically.

“Hey, I’m not the one who decided to come to school early at the last minute!” he says, while I hand him the new blunt I just lit. He takes a long drag before handing it back to me.

Just then, two cars pull up, one on the other side of mine and the other on the other side of Asher’s since he’s parked next to me. I gave him a “what the hell” look because it’s Axel and Ezra.

“You’re seeing this, right? Please tell me you’re seeing this too and I’m not just high off my ass right now,” I say to Asher.

“Nope. You’re not high. We’re both seeing this,” he replies, his brows furrowed.

The guys came in different vehicles, in their own cars! This has literally never happened in the history of their existence. They’re always stuck at the hip so I’m confused right now.

“Do you know what’s going on with them?” I ask quietly.

“No, but they have been acting weird since the party,” Ash says. I don’t have a chance to respond because the guys are already in front of us.

“Hey, guys,” Axel says and then looks at me. “You good, bro?”

“Hey,” Ez says, while he’s leaning against my hood next to me.

I look over to Ax and answer his question, “As good as can be.” He nods his head. “Are you guys good?” I ask, looking at them both.

“Yes!” they both yell at the same time and then turn to scowl at the other. Yeah, clearly they’re fine, I think, rolling

my eyes. But I'm not about to ask until they're ready to tell.

Just then we turn to look as an unfamiliar vehicle pulls up into the parking lot a few spots away from us. The new girl steps out of the car and the first thing noticeable on her is her fiery red hair.

It makes her stand out more than anything since most of the girls here are blondes. Only a few of them are brunettes and black haired. She walks up the walkway and straight through the door with her head down. Ah, she learns pretty quickly. Ash lets out a whistle and when I look back at them, they're all staring at me.

"Oooh, fresh meat from yesterday. Now I know why you were so early today," he says to me as a smirk crosses his face.

"I don't know what the fuck you're going on about," I say innocently.

"Oh, so you won't mind if I make a move on her?" he asks smugly.

"Please, you're so pussy whipped over Kinsley, it's not even funny," I say, rolling my eyes as a scowl forms on his face.

"I'm still single. I wouldn't mind getting to know her a bit," Ax says, smirking at me. Ugh, what is with them today?

"She's off-limits!" I snap before I even realize the words are out of my mouth. I quickly clamp it shut but the guys home in on me like bees to fucking honey.

"And do tell us why she's off-limits," Ax says with a grin on his face. I groan. Now they're going to turn this into a thing since I've never declared anyone off-limits before.

"Yeah, I'm interested in this answer too because the great Knox Riverside has never so much as openly claimed a girl before," Ez says, grinning like an idiot.

"Yeah, my interest is piqued as all hell right now, especially since you pulled me away from her yesterday. I don't even know the details and I'm this asshole's best friend," Ash says grumpily while rolling his eyes a second later.

"God! You guys are worse than girls! There's nothing to tell except that I hate her and she's going to be my new toy," I grumble, hoping that'll be enough for them. If they only knew what I plan to do with her.

"Hate, huh?" Ax questions.

"Define toy," Ash says, laughing.

"Fuck off and let's go! All I'm going to say on this is I'm going to be her worst nightmare, and no I'm not ready to discuss the details," I say, and then hop off the hood of my Range Rover before making my way toward the building.

We stand in front of our lockers for a few minutes like we always do every single morning. It's fun to watch people try to talk to us, or squirm when we're just standing there. We get our kicks out of watching them trip over themselves.

The bell is about to ring so we decide to head to class. I'm not really feeling it but I have to go just to keep my mind occupied with something else besides my life.

My mind somehow goes to her instead of thinking about something else. Her red hair is long and straight down to her waist. Her eyes are blue like the ocean. She has a cute button nose and plump kissable lips if I was into her like

that. She also has some freckles covering her face and thin eyebrows. She looks like she's about five foot six inches and she's curvy.

I pull myself out of my thoughts when Ash snaps his fingers in front of my face. Yesterday when she bumped into me, I got a good look at her features. I'd definitely fuck the shit out of her if I didn't hate her. Well, maybe I could do with some good old hate sex.

We're heading to class again and we're just about to pass through the door when she bumps into me for the second day in a row from behind.

"I thought I told you to watch where the fuck you were going yesterday, fat ass!" I snap loud enough for everyone to hear. The class is already full and everyone starts to snicker at her expense. There's a flash of what looks like hurt in her eyes but I don't care. Right now, all I care about is hurting her.

"So-sorry," she mumbles before trying to walk away, but I grab her by the arm before she can go anywhere.

"What did you say? I couldn't hear you. When you're apologizing to me, say it properly," I snap at her in a cold tone that causes her to flinch.

"I said I'm sorry for bumping into you," she says through clenched teeth.

"Good. See that it doesn't happen again, cow!" I say, before walking to the back of the class and taking my seat. I wait for the guys to start their shit and they don't even make it a second before it starts.

"Whoa, what the hell did the newbie do to you?" Ash asks.

"I don't know if that was some sort of weird foreplay or not," Ax says next.

"Yeah, I could feel the sexual tension from all the way over here," Ez says, giving his two cents.

"We're not talking about it. Just remember, she's fucking off-limits," I snap at them quietly. They all start laughing like I said something funny. Great, now I'm a fucking comedian too.

I have five classes with her this semester and every class I enter that she's in for the rest of the day, I can see how the look of despair crosses her features and how she tries to avoid me at all costs.

But too bad for her because this predator has already set his sights on her and there's no way she's getting away from me unscathed.

After our last class ends for the day, I head to the locker room to meet with the guys before we head onto the field for practice.

As soon as I walk in, I see the guys are already in here changing into their football uniforms and I follow suit.

"So don't keep us in suspense, bro," Asher says right after I pull my shirt over my head and let out a groan.

"I have no idea what the hell you're talking about, asshole," I respond, acting like I'm clueless.

"Well how was your day, sunshine?" Ax questions jokingly.

"It must have gone well because the fucker definitely has a hard-on for the newbie," Ez says, smirking at me.

"Why are you pussies so interested in my life?" I groan again. These guys are fucking incorrigible when they want to get to the bottom of something and usually that doesn't take very long because we rule this place.

"How about we talk about the fact that you and you," I say, pointing to Axel and Ezra, "are acting weird, scowling at each other half the time and were about ten feet away from each other at all times today. Plus, you assholes came in separate cars."

The two of them scowl without saying a word and I let out a laugh. "Yeah, that's what I thought."

They grumble something too low for me to hear and then we're all making our way onto the field. As soon as we're on, we begin practicing and I get into the zone. This is what I love to do. It's the only thing that has been keeping my mind occupied from constantly thinking about my mom.

Sometimes I feel guilty that I wasn't there for her enough, but then I remember she was the one who was always pushing me away and telling me to go live the high school jock life. She didn't want me to worry about her trying to fight away her demons, though I didn't even know she had demons in the first place.

The only reason I'm even still playing is because I know she wouldn't want me to stop chasing my dreams just because she's gone now. It still hurts like fuck to think about her. Sometimes, it's like I can't breathe through the grief that is choking me and that's when I spiral.

I'm glad I have something new to distract me from the pain and that is fucking with the cow and making her see that she doesn't have a place here.

We're still playing when Coach blows his whistle for us to stop again. This is probably the fifth time he's done it today since we started practice.

"Am I training fucking preschoolers here today?" Coach yells from the sidelines. "Well, answer me!"

"No, Coach!" we all yell at the same time.

"Well then get your heads out of your asses!" he snaps. "Run it again!"

We all get into position to run the last play we just did. We're not even five minutes into it when he's yelling at us to stop again. Today is not a good day for practice. Everyone's game is shit, apparently.

I have no idea what the hell is happening. One minute, we're all standing there, being chewed out by Coach, and in the next minute, I see Axel throw a punch in Ezra's direction. Ez stumbles back a second before he charges Ax and the two of them go crashing onto the ground in a mix of arms and legs. They're throwing punches at each other and neither one of them is backing down.

"I fucking hate you! You just had to go and mess shit up, didn't you?" Ax screams at Ez as he throws another punch to Ez's stomach.

"I fucking said I was sorry, asshole! You don't need to be a dick about it!" Ez snaps.

"Don't fucking talk about dick next to me!" Ax growls out before tackling Ez again who lets out a grunt from the impact.

"It was a figure of speech, jerkoff!" Ez yells.

Before Ax can even say anything else, Coach runs over to them. That snaps Ash and I out of our statue state and we rush over to break them apart before they kill each other. We've never seen them fight and have never seen them throw punches at each other like this.

"What the hell is wrong with you two?" I snap at them when we finally manage to break them off, but neither of them answers. Axel just shrugs me off. Before anyone else can say anything, Coach is there yelling at us again.

"That's it! Ten laps around the field before anyone leaves today!" he snaps and everyone groans out loud.

By the time I make it home that night, I'm tired as hell and all the muscles in my body ache. I'm surprised to find my dad in the kitchen when I get home. My nostrils flare at the sight of him and I wish I could punch him in the face for everything I found out and now know about him.

But I have to rein in all the anger because I know how I'm going to play this. Revenge is going to be bittersweet by the time I'm done. That's the only reason I keep my cool.

"How was your day, son?" he asks casually, like there isn't a huge elephant in the room.

"It was fine. Practice was grueling today," I say, shrugging. He hasn't once asked how I was doing regarding the death of my mother and I hate him a little more because of that. Maybe he just doesn't care.

"Well that's good. Keep up the good work," he says.

"Uh-huh."

"Well, I have some work to finish so I'll be in my office," he says.

“Sure thing, *Dad*.” I say the last word with a little bite to it but he doesn’t notice.

Deciding I’m not going to let this shit fuck with me, I walk up to my room and start to strip before getting into the shower to wash all this stink off of me. I was too tired after practice to shower in the locker room by the time Coach was done with us.

Once I’m done with my shower, I walk into my room and throw on a pair of boxers. I open my room window and then light the weed I got from the dealers in our school.

I walk over to my bed and lie there, smoking the joint and blowing out the air up toward my ceiling. My mind goes to all the ways I want to fuck with that girl and a smile crosses my face. I hope she’s prepared for the next year of her life.

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CHAPTER

Six

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RAINE

I WALK BACK into my room after showering and pull on a pair of panties and a bra so I can get ready for school today. What do you know? It's another day in hell and today is only going to be the third day since I started Riverside Academy.

I don't want to go but I have to. Otherwise my mom would probably take me to get examined in the head or something since she knows how much I love school. I rarely ever stay home on a school day. That is how much I hate this school that I'm willing to mess up my perfect attendance.

I grab my shirt and then stop when I catch sight of my reflection in the mirror. I stand there and stare at myself for a while.

Well, I'm mostly looking at the pudgy stomach that's sticking out, the one most of the senior class can't seem to stop talking about, unfortunately. In just two days, the amount of fat jokes I've heard is ridiculous. If I had a dollar for every mention, I'd probably have like a thousand or so. As if that wasn't enough, the cow nickname could get me

some too with the numerous times it's been said in my presence.

My eyes trail down to the scar that's on the entirety of my stomach, right down the middle that no one but me gets to see every day. The one I hate to look at whenever I take my clothes off and have to see it.

It's a daily reminder of how imperfect I am, but also a daily reminder of how much I've had to overcome. If I overcame a near-death experience, then I can certainly not pay attention to any of the assholes in school.

As much as I hate this scar, I've sort of made peace with it over the years and have sort of learned to live with it. Don't get me wrong, some days affect me more than others. It starts a few inches right under my breasts and ends all the way down to my pelvis. *Yeah, it's not small, so that's why I hate it.*

When I was thirteen, one day, out of the blue, I was experiencing excruciating pain in my stomach. After weeks of suffering through that pain—which was out of this world—I thought I was going to die after running from doctor to doctor just to get some help and get second opinions. They didn't know what was wrong with me. My mom finally got the news that I needed to have emergency surgery because inside my belly was filled with pus. I was both relieved and so terrified, especially when I made it into the operating room.

Thankfully it all went well. But the after, well those were the longest few weeks of my life, waiting for the pain to end and the scar to heal.

I shiver at the feeling those memories bring back. It's funny how you never think about how fragile life really is until you're put into a position where you have to fight for yours. One minute, you're fine and then in the next, it all goes up in flames.

It's hard being a teenager and having to constantly hide it because you don't want anyone else to see how ugly it looks and you're scared that people would make fun of you for it.

It was especially hard looking at girls that society deemed beautiful and what they perceived beauty to look like—flat and smooth stomachs, with no scars and definitely not a pudgy one like mine. So yeah, hiding myself behind clothes that didn't show my stomach was how my life usually went.

I've never worn a bikini because I was always filled with anxiety that people would stare. I mean, they always tend to do so when you don't look like them or the way they want you to. That's one of the things I hate about this world that we live in. Why can't everyone just be who they are without others judging or putting them down for it?

Since when did society deem it appropriate to judge how beautiful someone was because of their stomach size or even skin color? Everyone would be so much healthier mentally if other people just minded their own business. Size, skin color and even hair shouldn't matter. Everyone is meant to be different, and I wish the judgmental ones would start to see the beauty in that.

Can you imagine how stiff and boring the world would be if we all looked the same, dressed the same and had the

same bodies? Yeah, I shudder to think of such a scenario because I love the fact that we're all different in our own ways.

Sometimes, no matter what you do or how much you try to exercise and diet, it just doesn't help and people's comments are so fucking insensitive. I guess the way my stomach was stitched back up kind of hinders having a flat and toned one.

This town is no better when it comes to that and because Knox has made it his mission to torment me by throwing snide comments my way whenever we cross paths, everyone else has taken it upon themselves to start following him and calling me either fat or his favorite word, cow.

They aren't even original with their insults. So far, I've tried hard not to let their words affect me and I ignore the idiots most of the time because all they want is a reaction. Their words can't hurt me unless I let it, right?

I let out a sigh. No matter where you go, high schoolers will always be the same. They fuck with you and pick on you just because you're not a size zero like them and right now, I'm a size eight. Yeah, I definitely don't fit in with the ones and twos currently walking the halls of Riverside Academy.

"Raine! Breakfast is ready!" Mom yells for me from downstairs, pulling me out of my thoughts.

"I'll be down in a few!" I open my door and call back to her so she knows I heard her. I quickly put on the button-down white shirt and my plaid skirt, completing the look with my knee-high socks and my shoes. Then I brush my

hair out, deciding to leave it down today and then I'm ready to go.

I hate that this school has a uniform. I wish it was regular clothes like my old school. I guess this is how the rich people live and it's the same for their offspring. Everything needs to be done a certain way.

Grabbing my backpack from the chair by my desk, I walk out of my room, down the stairs, and straight into the kitchen. Mom is already there eating her breakfast when I step inside.

"Morning, Mom," I say as I grab some juice before making my way to the counter in front of the food she already placed there for me.

"Good morning, sweetheart. I'm sorry I've been so busy since we got here. I had to get everything at the office set up," she tells me apologetically.

"It's fine, Mom. I get it," I answer with understanding.

"So tell me, how was your first two days at school? Are you settling in okay? Do you like it here? Any boys?" she asks, smiling at me. We haven't had a lot of time to chat since we got here and I started school while she started work. I was asleep before she came home most nights and the mornings are usually chaotic for us both. I can't fault her for having to work late to catch up and get used to things since she's new here too.

"It's been fine so far, Mom. I guess I can't complain. No, there are no boys. The ones here are all rich and snobby assholes," I grumble.

"Language, young lady!" Mom playfully scolds and I just roll my eyes.

"I did make a friend though. Her name's Kinsley," I tell her, hoping that will satisfy her curiosity.

I don't want to tell her that things have been rocky from the start at this new school and I definitely don't want to tell her that her boss's son is the ringleader and the bane of my existence. She already has a lot to deal with and I don't want to add to that.

"Oh, that's amazing, darling! I'm so glad you're making friends," she gushes and I leave it at that since I don't have the heart to dampen her mood.

Once we're finished eating, we both get up and grab our stuff before heading out the door. She gets into her car and I get into mine and then we're off. When I park at school, I look around for Knox and his friends but don't see them which is a good thing.

The four of them were there yesterday morning, standing around the hood of Knox's expensive car, smoking weed. I acted like I didn't notice them but in truth, it's hard not to notice those guys, especially when they're all together.

I shrug off my curiosity, having no clue why I even care or why I'm so concerned about the asshole. It's not like I even like the guy.

I do see Kinsley though and I stop to wait for her. When she spots me, she jogs over to me and we both head inside together. The hallway is filled with chatter as we walk in and I keep my head down as we make our way to our lockers.

In just two days, I've learned that it's best to just ignore everyone around me when I'm walking through these halls.

I don't want more attention than necessary on me. So far, the only people following Knox's lead in saying nasty things to me have been the stupid cheerleaders.

If I engage with them, then it'll probably be an all-out fight. I definitely don't want that to happen and get suspended for any dumb shit. First, because Mom would kill me and second, they're just not worth it.

I'm a straight-A student and I take all my classes seriously. It's pretty much the only thing I have to keep me company. When I'm not doing schoolwork, I'm either reading or I'm drawing or painting. Those are the things that keep my soul alive when I have to deal with the words that find their way under my skin.

Cheerleaders can be mean as fuck and there's only so much a person can ignore. No matter how hard I try, some of their words do find their way under my skin. They spew the same words over and over again. You can only ignore it so many times before you start to believe they're true. I've always been a sensitive person, so that made their words get to me faster. I'm not built to handle direct insults.

People are standing and talking, waiting for the bell to ring as we pass them by. We get to our lockers a minute later and I'm in the middle of grabbing one of my books when the sound of multiple cell phones goes off.

It's so loud because everyone's phone is going off at the same time. I look over at Kinsley, wondering what the hell is going on. She has her phone in front of her face, most likely reading what was just sent to everyone.

I take my phone out to see if I got a message as well, but I got nothing. A second later, Kinsley's face pales as all the

blood drains from her face and I'm instantly concerned for her.

"Are you okay?" I ask.

Without saying a word, she grabs me by the hand and begins pulling me with her. She drags me all the way to the bathroom and locks the door behind us. Okay, this is weird as hell. I stand there waiting for her to speak but she just starts pacing the length of the bathroom, still not saying a thing. She still has that weird expression splayed across her face.

"Fuck! Fuck! This isn't good..." she finally mutters, then trails off.

"Are you okay? Am I supposed to guess what's not good? Because let me tell you, I'm not sure if you know but I'm definitely not a psychic," I say, rolling my eyes at her in a joking tone. She spins around and pins me with a glare.

"How can you be joking at a time like this? Now is so not the time for jokes!" She practically yells out at me and I lift my hands up in a surrendering motion.

"Well, it's because I have no clue what the hell has gotten your panties in a twist," I say in response. When she looks at me again, I stop talking because she's looking at me with unshed tears in her eyes.

"I'm so sorry," she says and her tone alone has me on edge.

"Sorry for what?" I question, getting nervous now.

"I-I-I don't know who put this up, but it's not good..." she says, trailing off again.

"What the hell is going on that's making you look scared?" I ask again, feeling myself getting impatient,

waiting for her to spit out whatever it is she has on her mind.

Instead of answering, she grabs her phone and types something in before handing it to me. I look down at the screen to see what's there. It's a website. I'm confused until I start reading it and my face pales.

The website page reads *Riverside Academy Undesirables*. The first thing at the top of the page is a picture of a big fat cow with my head photoshopped on it. Under the picture is a caption that reads *You know the limits so do your worst to the cow*.

I gasp at the information and then scroll through the whole page. I see it's basically a gossip site for everything happening here at Riverside Academy. It contains shit like who you can buy drugs from, which student is fucking which teacher, and everything else in between that you can think of when it comes to the shady side of high school, only this is amplified by a thousand percent.

I'm the hot topic that everyone is discussing right now. I scroll back to the top and look at the stupid picture again. Suddenly, nothing but dread fills me and I begin to get an uneasy feeling in the pit of my stomach.

"Um, what does this mean?" I ask Kinsley in a shaky voice. Somehow, I know this isn't going to be good.

"It's basically a website dedicated to every dirty thing that happens here. No one is safe from it and everyone hopes like hell they never end up on there—"

"What happens if you do?" I question, cutting her off.

"It's basically an open invitation for anyone to fuck with you,"

“Who runs the website?”

“No one knows. There has been speculation that it was the cheerleaders, but no one could prove it,” she says solemnly.

“And the teachers haven’t done anything about it?”

“I don’t think any of them know. This website is probably the best kept secret in this school. Plus, if anyone was to tattle then they’d risk getting on it themselves.”

“So what you’re saying is that anyone can just bully me now because some asshole said so?” I ask incredulously.

“Yeah.”

“What type of freaking school is this?” I groan out to her.

Now I’ll have to find out who the hell is running that website and I have no clue where to look. I’m not a tech person.

Before we can say anything else, the bell rings. Knowing we need to get to class before we both get detention, Kinsley walks over to the door and opens it. As soon as it’s open, there are three girls standing in front of the door. The one at the front is tapping her foot on the floor and she has a pissed-off expression on her face.

“In case you didn’t know, bitch, this bathroom is public property and not just for the likes of a fucking cow!” she snaps before pulling me out by the collar of my shirt and shoving me onto the floor.

The move was so unexpected and fast that I fall flat on my ass. Apparently she’s not done with me because she kicks me and the blow manages to land on my face. I let out

a scream. It caught me right on the mouth. I can already feel the blood running down my busted lip.

Without even thinking, I get to my feet quickly and punch her right in her stupid face. I manage to get her on the nose and I hear the crunch. I'm hoping I broke her nose because fuck this bitch. She screams and starts yelling. It's a wonder my eardrums aren't busted yet.

I move to go in on her again but strong arms grab me and push me up against the wall by the bathroom door hard. I look up into Knox's face. I'm about to tell him to move but the look he gives me has me shutting my mouth instantly.

"Baby! Did you see what she just did to me? Are you going to just let that happen?" the girl screeches in a whiny and annoying voice.

"Somebody get her out of here!" Knox snaps, his eyes on mine the entire time. He didn't even turn around to look at her.

I don't even know if anyone does as he asks because we're both lost in the staring contest. It's like we're in our own world and neither one of us is willing to look away first.

His electric blue eyes are focused on me. They're still filled with the hate I saw in them the other day, but there is also something else in his eyes. Something I can't quite name.

"I told you no one wanted you here. We don't like cows in our school," Knox says harshly in my ear.

"I'm sure they don't like assholes either, yet here you are," I snap at him. "Now move before I'm late for class."

When he doesn't move, and because he's so close to me, his body almost touching mine, it makes what I'm about to do so much easier. I lift my leg up and knee him in the balls. He instantly stumbles backward and I use that opportunity to move from in front of him and run.

"You're going to wish you never stepped foot into Riverside!" he snarls after me. I'd only made it about four steps away so I heard the promise in his threat. I'll think about what I just did later, but for now, self-preservation is more important.

My heart is beating so hard with the adrenaline rush I just experienced. Dealing with Knox Riverside is a minefield of epic proportions.

I make it to class and in my seat just as the English teacher walks in. Thank God I wasn't late today. I know he would've given me detention again, the asshole. Just then, Knox walks into class with his friends and the look he gives me promises retribution. His mask is back in place and he doesn't even look like what I just did hurt him at all.

"Miss Carrington, are you okay?" Mr. Smith asks.

"Um, yes, sir."

"Then I'd suggest you get your face cleaned up," he says and I groan while everyone laughs. Shit! I forgot about the blood on my lips after that bitch kicked me.

"Sorry, sir. I'll go get it cleaned up now," I say and he nods. I get up out of my seat and rush to the bathroom to clean my face.

I make it back to class in no time and just as I'm about to sit in my seat again, the guy sitting behind me pulls the chair back and I go crashing onto my ass. The entire class

erupts into laughter which causes Mr. Smith to turn around from what he was writing on the board.

“Is there a problem, Miss Carrington? Do I need to send you to the principal’s office for continuously disrupting my class?” he questions in a strict tone like this is my fault. I wish he’d take that tone with all these assholes in here.

“Her fat ass was too heavy for the chair, sir,” the stupid guy behind me says and everyone is laughing again. Apparently, this is a fucking stand-up comedy show.

I try to keep my poker face in check because I will not let these assholes win or have the satisfaction of seeing me cry, even though their every word and action slices through me.

I get up from off the floor and take my seat again with no interruption this time. Mr. Smith turns back toward the board and continues to write whatever he was writing. Yeah, I definitely regret being here.

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CHAPTER

Seven

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RAINE

I LIE AWAKE IN BED, staring up at the ceiling in my room. It's been a week already since I started school and this has been the most miserable time in all of my existence.

I've had food thrown at me, tripped while I was walking, had people calling me names and even had a ball thrown at my head in PE.

God, I don't know what I did to deserve this torture but it fucking sucks. I try to ignore them as much as I can but the more I ignore them, the harder they go after me.

None of the teachers in this school seem to notice when I'm being bullied and I've been threatened that things will get worse for me if I open my mouth to say anything. I'm not going to lie, I am pretty scared.

I have a feeling if they did decide to make good on their threats then they could possibly get away with it because of all the money the people here have while I'm nowhere near that range. No one would probably care.

It's well into the night and dark. I can barely see anything with the limited amount of moonlight coming

through my windows, but yet I stare unseeingly at the ceiling.

I've been having trouble sleeping for the past few nights and it's because I can feel the depression I've tried to get away from start to resurface. A few weeks after my surgery when I was younger, my depression started. I've been trying to run away from it since.

The bullying I've been facing has made it worse. I can already feel my mental health spiraling downward. When I got home from school yesterday afternoon, I felt so exhausted physically and mentally. My skin is black and blue with bruises from people bumping into me, pushing me against the wall, and pulling the chair away when I go to sit down. Yeah, that hasn't gotten old yet.

When I get tired of staring at my ceiling, I turn onto my side. I look at the clock and see that it's already four a.m. I've been up for hours at this point. I doubt I'll even get any sleep but I close my eyes and try anyway.

There's this one guy named Trent who freaks me out because he's the weirdest and nastiest of them all. He was nice at first when he asked me to go out with him but after I declined, things got nasty.

Even if I didn't happen to walk past the bathroom and hear my name, I wouldn't have given him the time of day because he just really creeps me out. Yeah, I heard him telling his friends that he'd be the first to fuck me because no one else wanted me and I'd be glad that he was showing me some attention.

Joke was on him because I don't mind if I don't have any friends. I don't mind my own company. All I want is to be

able to exist peacefully without the constant harassment.

After I turned him down, he showed me his true colors. He has got to be the most obnoxious, self-entitled douchebag I have ever met. Even Knox isn't that bad and he's a world-class asshole.

Speaking of Knox, he hasn't laid a hand on me but somehow, he's always around to watch my humiliation as it happens.

Trent keeps harassing me during class even though I've turned him down multiple times and told him to leave me alone just as many. Some guys just don't understand personal boundaries and what no means, and it shows.

And I'm the one who has to deal with all the bullshit. True to Kinsley's words, since people found out that I was on that stupid website, the name calling and harassment began. It was like open season on yours truly.

If this is what I have to look forward to for the next year, then I don't even want to come to this school anymore. My mind turns to something I've never even thought of doing—skipping class.

I took a nap after school yesterday because my body was filled with exhaustion so maybe that's why I'm up now. Even though I'm trying to get some sleep my mind simply won't shut off. I wish I could sleep for the rest of my life.

There are too many things crowding my brain and even though it hasn't been that long living here, I can already say that I hate this place, this school, and everyone in the senior class.

I thought my senior year would be the best year of my life but it's not turning out that way. Instead, it's one never-

ending nightmare. Ever since I punched the supposed queen bitch in the face, she's had it out for me as well.

The insults of how ugly my face is or how fat I am with other insults thrown in the mix are going around on a loop inside my head. I can't seem to make them go away.

They follow me around like a cloak enveloping me and it's making my depression worsen as the days go by.

It's typical mean kids' shit. Whoever said words don't hurt was clearly an idiot and had no idea what they were talking about. They were probably never taunted mercilessly or insulted constantly.

As I moved from class to class, the insults kept pouring in. They were loud enough to make sure I heard them all. All the while, I'd feel his stare on me.

I could feel that broody and angry stare covering my skin. It was like a cloak blanketing me everywhere I went. It was weird walking around like that, and it made me feel super exposed even though I was fully covered.

How the hell can you be so attune to someone when they obviously hate you? *If I ever find the answer, I'll let you know.*

The most insane thing to me is the fact that just one person is able to influence the entire senior class. They're all following his lead like they don't have a fucking brain for themselves. I still don't know why Knox hates me. He doesn't even know me. Like what type of delusional crack is he smoking?

As much as I try to act tough, the constant noise of it makes me feel dirty. The gross feeling about myself starts from the outside until it makes its way into my psyche and

all the way inside me, making me feel like I need to rub my skin raw.

When I'm alone, I get pissed at myself for letting these assholes cut down all the self-confidence I've built over the years. I can't let that happen no matter how much their words hurt to listen to.

But that's the thing with depression, isn't it? One little thing about yourself will fester and turn into something giant that you don't know how to get rid of.

Knox doesn't join in. He's too good for that. But then again, why would he when he has people doing his dirty work for him? No, his words are reserved for me when he corners me and we're alone. That's when he's harsh and doesn't care what comes out of his mouth.

I hate the asshole but I also think I'm broken because why else would I find someone like him attractive? Someone who has no morals and likes to see other people in pain. He must be a sadist or something. I've never been attracted to the athlete type before so I don't know what makes him different from the rest.

I've always been the shy nerdy girl who didn't even know boys existed because I was content in being in my own little world where it was peaceful.

Now that I'm here though, my peaceful little world has gone up in flames. Suddenly, my hormones are acting up like I've never seen what the male species look like before, which is annoying.

The ones who taunt me, their hatred seems so real like they actually have a reason to hate me. That in itself has me confused. They're all acting like I did something to

them personally. How the hell can you hate someone you don't even know or haven't even spoken to? All because some dude who knows how to throw a ball disliked me from the beginning said so. It honestly makes no sense at all.

Anyway, none of this matters to me since the only goal here is to get my high school diploma, graduate and get the hell out of here to attend college. Mom can stay here if she wants but I'll be out of here as soon as I can swing it.

She can stay and work for the father of my enemy. That's what he is to me, isn't he? *My enemy*.

I'm still awake by the time the birds are chirping outside and I can hear the telltale sign of Mom moving around as she gets ready for work before going downstairs to make breakfast for us. When I can't stay in bed any longer or risk being late, I get up and start to get ready for school.

Might as well get this day started and over with. Wanting to ditch school has never been a thought before and now that I'm thinking about it, it sucks.

This place is changing me. How the hell have I only been here for such a short time and it already feels like a lifetime? I've withdrawn into myself more than I ever was before moving here and it's all because of Knox. I mean. I wasn't a social butterfly or anything like that before moving here and the only friend I have is Kinsley.

I let out a sigh before heading downstairs, hoping to expel the heaviness in my heart and soul that's weighing me down at the thought of what life will be like for the foreseeable future. Somehow I know, I haven't seen the worst of what Riverside has to offer and that scares me. I have no clue what anyone here is capable of. I'm clueless.

I mean, when you're rich and have an excessive amount of money, what's to stop you from doing whatever the hell you want? I just hope that no matter what happens, I'm strong enough to survive what Knox decides to throw at me. I can already tell it'll cost me all the strength I have.

When I put my bag down on the counter, Mom turns to look at me. She looks happy, happier than she's ever been. I'm guessing this place has been good to her so far. She doesn't look stressed and like she has the entire world on her shoulders anymore and I'm happy for her.

"Good morning, sweetheart," she says cheerily. The happiness in her voice is one I don't feel right now.

"Morning, Mom," I reply, as I take a seat on the chair by the island.

"Are you alright, baby? You look like something is bothering you," she says, studying me. Her voice changes from happy to concerned in a matter of seconds. and I feel like crap for causing this change in her.

I need to dial back my unhappiness and fake it for her. She deserves this new start and I don't want to be the one to spoil it for her. Especially not after all that she went through with my father before we moved.

"I'm fine, Mom. Just settling in and getting used to the place," I tell her, pasting a fake smile on my face and hoping she believes me.

"Are you sure, baby? You know you can tell me if anything is bothering you, right?" she questions as she comes around the counter and gives me a hug. Her hug alone has me wanting to bawl my eyes out but I manage to keep it together.

"I know, Mom," I admit in what I hope is a happy voice.

"Okay. Hurry up and eat and let's get going," she says after a minute more of looking at me and examining my face for any signs of something being wrong. Thank God she thinks I'm fine and stops scrutinizing me. I don't know how much longer I could've kept up the facade with her staring me down. She just has that way of making me spill things which any teenager would find annoying.

We both get into our cars as usual and head off in different directions. When I get to school, I'm a little early today which is a good thing. If I'm late to Mr. Smith's class one more time, I think he'd probably give me detention for a whole year just to fuck with me.

I swear it feels like that man hates me as well. Either that or he definitely has a stick the size of Texas up his ass.

I walk over to one of the outdoor benches on the lawn in front of the school and sit, taking in the sun for a while. The heat of the morning sun feels nice on my skin and it makes me feel kind of refreshed even though I still feel kind of out of my element.

Just a few more months before I'm off to college...

I repeat that mantra in my head for a while until I start to believe that everything will turn out fine. It has to, right?

Fifteen minutes before class usually starts, I get up from my seat and head into the building and straight for the bathroom. I quickly pee and when I step out of the stall, I wash my hands. Just as I'm about to pick my bag up from the floor, queen bitch and her cronies step into the bathroom.

I let out a sigh. As cliché as it is, I know where this is going. One of them locks the bathroom door behind her and they all stand there and stare at me with hate in their eyes.

"Can you be any more of a basic bitch cliché?" I ask and she turns her nose up at me.

"I just have a little something for you. You think I don't see the way you look at Knox? Which is pathetic by the way since he hates your guts and has made it quite known around school. I also need to remind you that he's mine!" she sneers at me, an ugly expression crossing her face.

I look at her and want to smile but I restrain myself. Her nose is still bandaged up. I broke her nose when I punched her in the face. Deciding what the hell because it's going to happen anyway, I begin to taunt her a bit.

"Oh shit. Did you have to get a nose job? You should thank me since I made you get it early. Basic bitches like you will get one sooner or later in their life," I tell her, smiling. If it could show, I'd definitely be seeing steam coming out of her head right now.

She advances on me and the others do as well. They all gang up on me at the same time and queen bitch punches me in the gut as two of her cronies hold on to both my arms, preventing me from moving.

A scream rips out of me as she continues to lay hit after hit on me. I manage to get one of my arms free after some tugging and I rush her. I catch her off guard with the move.

I manage to push her all the way back into the wall, slamming her head against it. She lets out a high-pitched scream, sounding like a banshee.

“Get her off of me, you idiots!” she screams at the other girls and they rush to do her bidding. I’m taken down in an instant as all four of them begin to kick around my back, stomach, and legs. Fucking hell, this is going to hurt like a son of a bitch later. “You’re going to pay for what you just did, you stupid skank!” she screams with so much rage.

I curl into a ball on the floor and take their assault. There’s no way I can move to defend myself with all four of them simultaneously attacking me. This whole ordeal only happens for a few minutes but it feels like hours as they continue kicking me while calling me fat, a whore, a slut and whatever else they can come up with, with their limited vocabulary.

The bell rings, signaling that classes are about to begin. They finally stop their assault on me. I’m still lying on the floor, breathing hard as I try to catch my breath. My body aches and I feel my throat close as tears threaten to fall, but I keep them in. I will not look weak in front of this bitch.

“Get in my fucking way again, bitch, and I will bury you! You have no idea who the fuck you’re messing with!” the bitch snaps before they all rush out of the bathroom to avoid being caught.

I start laughing as the tears I was holding in finally slip down my cheek. What teachers? They’re never fucking around when I’m getting attacked but they sure as hell are sticklers for punishment when I’m a few minutes late. I guess I should thank my lucky stars that they avoided my face. I groan out loud as the pain courses through my stomach and my back.

I'm dizzy as I try to sit up and it takes me a while before I'm able to. The bruises from before, the ones that haven't healed properly yet and the ones from today, will no doubt make a horrible sight. I can feel all the different spots on my body aching.

The door to the bathroom opens and for a second I'm worried that they're back. It wouldn't take much for them to do more damage since I'm vulnerable right now. But when I look up, I see it's only Kinsley.

"Oh my God! Are you okay? What the hell happened?" she shrieks as she rushes over to me. She gets to her knees in front of me and starts to examine my face. Bless her heart.

"I'm fine. Just had a run in with the bitches of this school," I say as she helps me up to my feet. I'm slow and when I finally get to my feet, I wince at the ache in my back and stomach. Those two areas got the most hits.

I look in the mirror to see that I look disheveled. I definitely look like I just got my ass beat. My white shirt is dirty and rumpled and my skirt is twisted. I look like a mess.

"I'm so sorry, babe. I wish there was something I could do," she says with unshed tears in her eyes.

I don't respond because what the hell can I say? All of this is beyond either of our control and we have no say in the matter. The assholes here will continue being assholes and nothing we could ever do would be able to stop them.

I slowly lift my shirt up to assess the damage. There are already some huge bruises on my stomach. I hear Kinsley

gasp from behind me and I'm guessing my back probably looks worse.

"Is it bad?" I ask.

"Bad? Oh my God! It looks like you've been through war!" she yells. "That fucking bitch! I can't wait for the day that she gets hers!"

"I'm fine. Let's just go to class." I'm not fine but I want to put her at ease and not make it such a big deal. "At least they avoided my face," I joke but she's not amused. She gives me one of her death glares.

"We should get you to the nurse for an ice pack or something," she says.

"I'm already late as it is. Mr. Smith is going to be pissed as hell." I groan at the thought of facing him in front of the whole class right now.

"Fine. But if you feel like the pain is too much at any point in the day, I'm getting you out of here!" she sasses me.

"Fineee," I mumble just to appease her. She picks my bag up from off the floor and carries it for me. My body aches so bad right now that I'm slow getting to class. I try not to wince or anything in case she sees. Besides, I don't want to show anyone that I'm in pain.

CHAPTER

Eight

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RAINE

IT TAKES a huge effort for me to get to class and by the time we make it there, we're already ten minutes late. Well I am, since Kinsley had a bathroom pass earlier.

As usual, everyone stops what they were doing to look up and stare at us as we enter into the room. A second later, the normal whispers start up. I don't know if I looked like I was jumped or not but I'm using all my energy to act like everything is fine.

I tried to straighten up my clothes as best as I could before we left the bathroom but now I'm not so sure. With all the stares, I feel exposed, like somehow they all know what happened just now. Then again, I wouldn't be surprised if they already knew.

"Miss Carrington, how nice of you to join us with your presence today," Mr. Smith says in a heavily sarcastic and annoyed tone. I inwardly wince. "See me after class," he finishes. I wish I was anywhere but here right now. I know that whatever he has to say after class won't be anything good.

"Thank you," I tell Kinsley as I turn around to take my bag from her.

"Are you sure you're alright?" she whispers and I shake my head.

"Oh look, guys, if it isn't the Riverside Academy cow," Trent says from next to me as I take my seat. Everyone around us who heard start snickering.

I truly hate this guy. He's one of those preppy rich assholes who think they can do whatever they want without consequences because they have Daddy's money.

"I don't want any more disruptions from you, Miss Carrington! And the rest of you, be quiet!" Mr. Smith turns around and snaps. Kinsley heads to her seat next to Asher and Knox while mine is still in the front.

She sits with me in some of our classes and she sits with the guys in some of the others. I can't be mad at her for that because she knew them long before I ever came into the picture. I don't want her to stop talking to her friends just because one of them hates me.

Sometimes I feel a little jealous at the ease in which I notice they communicate because he and I will never have that. My attraction to him hasn't dimmed. I want to know everything there is to know about Knox Riverside. As they say, the heart wants what it wants, unfortunately. I have a feeling if we ever did get together, it would only end in disaster.

The day has barely started and it already feels like too much. The exhaustion I feel is just weighing me down more. I'm trying to pay attention as Mr. Smith speaks but my mind is a million miles away.

I feel my throat closing in as I get choked up with emotions. I have to will myself to make all those emotions go away so I don't embarrass myself further in front of the entire class.

I chance a glance behind me and see queen bitch sitting a few tables away from Knox. Guess they're on the outs because her whole face looks sour. She's staring at me like she wants to kill me but she also has a smirk on her face.

She must be so proud of herself for ganging up on me like the coward that she is. I don't even look at Knox directly because I don't think I can bear looking at him and that smirk he usually has on his face, at least not today.

This morning when I woke up, I was hoping that it was going to be a good day, but within minutes, it all went to shit because of that twit. I just have one more day before the weekend gets here and hopefully then I'll be able to relax without the bullshit.

"Why does your face look like a mix between a cow and a pig? It's no wonder you ended up on that website," Trent says from next to me. He laughs at what he thinks is a funny joke when in reality, it's as lame as they come. It doesn't even make any sense.

"At least I don't have a face that looks like a shriveled-up dick. You really shouldn't be talking about other people when your face is not much better. You should use some of Daddy's money and consider getting plastic surgery," I snap at him.

His eyes widen for a second as he stares at me. Everyone here might hate me, but those of them who heard

my response laugh while Trent's face turns all shades of red. He gives me a nasty glare.

"You're going to get what's coming to you soon, bitch!" he sneers.

If looks could burn, I'd already be ash. I know that this isn't the last I've seen of him. He's going to be a problem and I need to watch out for more trouble from him. Guys like him, when they feel like they've been humiliated, they retaliate instead of remembering that they were the one who insulted you in the first place.

I don't know if they expected me to just sit back and take their shit but that is not happening. I'll always fight for myself even when there's no one fighting beside me. I mean, not doing anything was my original plan because when you react, you're giving your bullies more power.

But fuck that shit! They're all taking it way too far. I haven't had a moment's peace since I came here. No one deserves to go through that shit every day of their lives. If someone has the audacity to be nasty to me, then they should expect a reply.

"Miss Carrington, I'm fed up with you disrupting my class. Head to the principal's office," Mr. Smith turns around and hisses at me.

"What? Why me? Did you not hear him insulting me?" I ask incredulously.

"Haven't you ever heard the phrase you shouldn't let another person's words affect you?" he asks.

"So I'd be in my right to say that you're an asshole who has favorites since my words won't affect you?" I ask. I'm so done with his stupid-as-hell behavior as well.

“Office. Now!” he yells in that no-nonsense tone of his.

“Fine. Whatever!” I mumble under my breath. Gah! I hate this fucking school.

The teachers don’t seem to be any better than the students because they won’t help me. Instead, they’re picking on me too by getting me into trouble when I’m not even the one who’s starting shit.

If he heard what I said to dickface Trent, then he had to have heard what he said to me first, and yet I’m the only one being punished. This is so unfair and fucking ridiculous. I just want to scream at the injustice of it all.

I grab my bag and slowly stand before making my way out of the class. My body still aches so I decide to head to the nurse’s office before going to see the principal.

“Hello again, dear, what can I do for you?” Nurse Shay asks as soon as I step foot into her office. I wonder how she likes being here in this stupid school.

“Um, I was wondering if you could give me something for pain? I have a terrible headache that won’t go away,” I say, hoping she’ll give me what I need.

Headache meds should be able to help with the pain in my body as well, right? There’s no way in hell I’m about to tell her about my bruised body.

“Sure thing. I’ve got what you need right here!” she says in a bubbly voice as she opens a bottle of Tylenol and hands two to me along with a bottle of water.

“Thanks,” I say to her as I drink it down and then make my way out of her office and on my way to the principal’s office.

"Hi there, I'm here to see Principal Stevens," I say to the lady in the outer office. She looks me up and down before responding. Seriously, does everyone make a big deal out of the new students that attend here?

"Take a seat. He'll be with you shortly," she responds in a snooty tone. I walk over to the chair and don't bother acknowledging her anymore. I sit and look around the office for a few minutes. The decor screams "we only deal with rich people here."

The walls are painted in a brown color that gives the place an old-world feel but also screams pretentious. There's even a freaking chandelier! *Like what?*

A few minutes later, while I'm still caught up in dissecting the place, the principal comes to his door and calls me into his office.

"Hello, Miss Carrington, have a seat," he says, motioning to the chair in front of his desk while he makes his way behind it. "I assume you know why you're here?"

"Yes," I say. It's because of that asshole teacher.

"Well, I'd like to know why you're being so disruptive in your classes, Miss Carrington. I've had a chance to look at your grades and you're quite the intelligent young woman. I'm not sure what this behavior is about," he says in a stern tone.

"I'm sorry, sir. It won't happen again. It's just taking a minute to get settled in here," I say in a sugary-sweet voice that hides how I'm really feeling about this school.

I've learned my lesson with Mr. Smith and I'm not about to tell this guy about what's been going on. I have a feeling that he won't even care. He looks like he's a kiss-ass to all

these rich people. I'd bet my fucking life on that. You can always tell when someone is a fucking suck-up.

I bet his focus will be on everyone else since they're all rich beyond words. My mom makes good money but nowhere near what the people here earn.

That thought stops me in my tracks. How the hell is she even affording to send me here? I'm not sure what the tuition price is for this school but I'd bet my organs in a black-market sale that it costs a pretty penny. I'll have to do some digging.

"Well, that still doesn't excuse your behavior so I'll be giving you a month's worth of detention," he says.

"But you can't be fucking serious! I wasn't—" I start, but he cuts me off.

"That's enough, Miss Carrington. Save your excuses. You'll find that this school is different from your old one and we don't do things the same way. Detention after school for a month and I'll expect you to get your behavior under control. Is that clear?" he asks.

"Yes, sir," I say. Why defend myself? He looks like he already has his mind made up about me and nothing I say is going to change that.

"You're dismissed," he says finally, and I get up and walk out of his office as fast as I can. Once I'm out of the office and into the hall, I look down at my watch to see the time. I missed a class because I was holed up in his office. It's time for lunch now.

I head to the cafeteria and on my way there I find Kinsley coming out of one of the bathrooms.

"Hey, you okay?" I ask as I catch up to her. I only ask because she's usually at lunch with the guys already. Then it hits me. Asher must have done some dumb shit to upset her because that's what he always does.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just not feeling so good today," she replies.

"Does it have anything to do with Asher?" I ask curiously just to be sure. From all the interactions we've had since I've known her, the only person she's ever had her eyes on is Asher. The guy has been a major douche and doesn't deserve her but what the hell do I know? I'm infatuated with a guy who hates me so I have no room to say anything.

"Yeah, you know, the usual. Asher's being the manwhore that he is," she says, sighing heavily.

"I'm so sorry," I say, hoping that helps.

"You don't have to be sorry for anything. It's not your fault the guy I love is a player... I mean, not love, just interested in—" she says, then cuts herself off.

"Hey, I'm not judging you for what you feel. I know nothing about relationships so I have no room to talk or even give advice when it comes to the opposite sex," I tell her and she laughs. Well, at least she doesn't look sad anymore.

When we finally get to the cafeteria, we both walk up to the counter to get our food. I get a salad along with a burger and an apple while Kinsley gets pizza along with her burger and fries.

Once we're done getting our food, we look around the room for an empty table. Kinsley spots one and we start

moving toward it. We have to pass Knox's table to get there and I inwardly groan.

Kinsley usually sits with the guys but I'm guessing she's sitting with me today. Obviously I can't sit with her if she sits with them. I'm not welcomed in their world.

"Kinsley, get over here." Asher's voice rings out and everyone in the cafeteria quiets down.

"I'm eating with my friend, Asher, so piss off!" she snaps.

Asher gets up out of his chair and walks over to where we stopped. He bends down and whispers something in her ear that has her flushed red before he's pulling her back toward his table.

Not knowing what else to do, I begin walking toward the empty table by myself. I don't mind eating alone since I'm used to it. But just as I start walking, someone sticks their foot out and I trip, landing on my hands and knees right in front of Knox. Oh great, now I have to deal with the asshole.

"Looks like the cow's legs can't keep up her own weight!" someone yells and every one in the cafeteria bursts out with laughter. I'm so humiliated but I don't say a word. I'm so tired of all the fucking fat jokes around. Since when does size determine whether or not they should like you?

I'm about to get up when Knox grabs the collar of my shirt and pulls me closer to him. I'm on my knees between his spread legs as he's still holding me in place. He looks up at everyone in the cafeteria and just says one word, "Leave." They all scatter to do his bidding.

"If you wanted to suck my dick, you ugly cow, you could have just asked. I'm not sure I'd say yes because I don't usually let ugly bitches suck my cock," he says.

I look around and see that the cafeteria is completely empty except for his friends who are all sitting at his table. I'm completely dumbfounded. How the hell does one person have so much power? Even the people who serves us lunch are gone. I think this is the moment I really comprehend just what I'm dealing with and how much power he holds here.

"Please! No one wants to suck your dick. With that attitude, you're probably overcompensating for a tiny dick," I snap at him a second later when I finally find my voice and try to put on a brave face.

He doesn't say anything. He just pulls his cock out and my mouth drops open. I'm shocked that he would whip his dick out right here.

"Look at you, your mouth is already open to suck my cock, and I didn't even have to ask," he says, smirking at me.

"What? That wasn't... I wasn't—I'm not fucking sucking you off, asshole!" I screech.

He pulls me closer as if he's pulling me down toward his cock and I'm left speechless again. Then he laughs while looking down at me.

"I know you want it, but you don't deserve to have the pleasure of sucking my cock," he says in a mocking tone. I release a sigh of relief, hoping that this is the end of my humiliation. I should have known better.

A second later, he starts to jerk himself off. *What the fuck?* Does he have no shame doing this where people can see? Albeit only his friends are here and not the entire senior class but still it's humiliating.

He's still holding my collar with one hand while using the other to jerk off, and I'm still there on my knees in front of him. A few minutes later, Knox comes and aims so that his semen sprays all over my face and over my shirt. He quickly covers himself before shoving me away. I land on my back sprawled out on the floor still stunned. I can't seem to process what the fuck just happened.

"That's the only thing you're good for. Being a plaything and a cum dump. You're nothing!" he snaps and puts his cock back into his pants before turning away and facing the other members at his table like nothing just happened. Like he didn't just utterly humiliate me in front of them.

In the next second, a sob rips out of me and I quickly get to my feet and run out of there as fast as I can, heading in the direction of the bathroom to clean myself up. Today can definitely go down as one of the worst days in my entire life.

CHAPTER

Nine

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RAINE

I THINK it's safe to call myself a freak because what the hell is wrong with me? After I ran into the bathroom, I stood and took a good look at myself and realized that I looked like that goddamn slut that everyone keeps calling me with Knox's cum on my face and clothes.

I still can't believe the asshole had the audacity to do that in front of his friends. The sting still lingers at the humiliation I faced in front of everyone. Knox has no shame. Why else would he just whip his dick out?

Why the fuck do we feel things for people who don't deserve it? No matter what he says to me or calls me, there's still that foreign feeling inside me that I got the first time I laid eyes on him at that funeral. It's the same thing I'm feeling right now. I'm thinking that I must be a fucking masochist or something since nothing else makes sense right now.

This attraction I feel toward him is inconvenient. I'm sure it's one-sided and I wish it would just go away, but so far, no luck. My brain won't agree with my heart and vice

versa. Life has definitely been beyond stressful at this point.

Back to the “I think I should call myself a freak part” because I do something I’ve never done, though it’s something I’ve always been curious about. It’s something that makes me feel ashamed right after doing it because I know I shouldn’t have. I hate myself a little for being so weak in the moment. But even though I feel all those things, it doesn’t stop me from doing what I do.

I lift a finger and swipe some of his cum off my face. Instead of washing it away, I do something dirty. It’s downright filthy if you ask me. I bring that finger covered in cum up to my mouth and lick it off. I have no idea what part of my brain is making me do this but I can’t seem to stop myself.

This is the first time I’ve ever tasted cum. It has a weird and salty taste. I could become addicted to it if I’m not careful. I don’t just want anyone’s cum, I want his. I hate the guy as much as he seems to hate me, but I couldn’t help but wonder what he tastes like, and now I know. *Salty and musky with a hint of I want to keep tasting it.*

I take some more from my clothes. The more I taste it, the more I start to like it. This is literally the craziest and weirdest thing I’ve ever done in my life. A second later, I stop myself and let out a groan at my uncharacteristic behavior, not believing that I’m stooping so low like the other girls around here. The ones that are always vying and trying to get his attention every second of the day.

Then I have to question myself, why I even like anything from the guy who hates me, especially his cum. Yep!

Something is definitely wrong with me in the brain, and I'm going to say it's this place that's causing me to act like this. I believe this school is turning me crazy like the rest of them.

Finally snapping out of whatever the hell was happening a few moments ago, I grab some paper towel from the dispenser and clean the remainder of his cum from my shirt and then wash my face.

When I'm done, I look back up into the mirror to make sure every inch of my face and clothes is spotless. Once I'm satisfied, I dry the water from my face. I can still smell the faint scent of semen but there's nothing I can do about that right now. At least today is Friday so I'll have the weekend to myself. A second later, the door to the bathroom opens and Kinsley rushes in.

"Are you okay? Sorry it took a while to get here. I was dealing with Asher, the asshole," she grumbles as she looks me over.

"I'm fine," I say, letting out a sigh. "Just utterly humiliated, but what else is new since I've been here. Am I right?"

"I'm so sorry. None of this should be happening," she says glumly.

"Understatement of the century and it sucks. I don't even know why the guy hates me when we don't even know each other," I say, grinding my teeth, thinking about the unfairness of the situation.

"He's my friend and even I have no clue," she grumbles.

"Anyway, I'll see you later. I can't stay here for the rest of the day. I'm about to head out and explore this town or

some shit," I tell her so she knows and doesn't look for me later.

"Ooh, we're ditching. I love it! I have just the place in mind," she says, grinning at me.

"You don't have—" I start but she cuts me off.

"I'm not leaving you alone when you clearly need someone right now," she says, pulling me out the door. I guess there's no stopping her now. It looks like we're going on an adventure.

The bell had already rung a few minutes earlier so when we step out of the bathroom, the halls are empty.

There's no sign of Knox or his crew that always seem to be around him and I'm especially glad for that. I don't want to see his face right now, not after everything that went down earlier. I feel like if I did see him, I'd end up with some kind of felony charge or something for trying to murder him.

"So, where are we going?" I ask quietly as we sneak out one of the back doors of the building. The coast is still clear and I feel like for once, something is going in my favor.

"There's an abandoned train track at the edge of town," she tells me as we continue on our way.

"Hmm, do you go there often?" I ask curiously.

"Yep. It's actually not far away from where I live. I usually go there when I'm lonely, and just need to get away from the people here or to de-stress and chill by myself."

"Sounds like a good time," I tell her.

"Oh, it definitely is. I'm tired of dealing with these bimbos always throwing themselves at the guys," she says in a huff.

"Asher specifically, right?" I ask in a teasing tone and she blushes.

"No," she says and I stare her down with a raised eyebrow.

"Okay. Fine. Yes. Ugh!" She groans out loud and a huge smile crosses my face.

"Knew it!" I say happily.

"Well, it doesn't matter because the guy is an asshole who hates me. Can we talk about something else for now? I need alcohol in my system if I'm going to talk about him," she grumbles.

"Fine. But don't think you're off the hook! How long does it take to get there?" I question, changing the subject for her benefit. We're finally out the door and we're walking to the front.

"Fifteen minutes to get to my house by bus, longer if we walk. But I also need ice cream before liquor!" she informs me and I shrug. I'm not about to object. After the few hours I've had in that school, I'm ready for something that will take my mind off of it.

"We don't need to take the bus or walk because I drive," I say, winking at her.

"Ooo, yay! That is so much better!" she squeals and we both make our way to the parking lot. I get into the driver's side and she gets in the passenger side.

I drive off a moment later, and she directs me to the ice cream shop. I pay for both of our ice creams and we sit there and eat it before we leave. We drive all the way to her house and I park in her driveway.

We then walk to the liquor store. When we walk in, there's a guy that seems to be a few years older than us.

He greets her like they're long-lost friends and she asks him for a bottle of vodka. I'm surprised that he's giving it to her since we're still in our uniforms. We're obviously not twenty-one yet. But since we're in her part of town, I guess it doesn't matter.

Once we're out of the store, we begin walking to wherever she's taking us. As we walk, we talk about random things, getting to know each other a little better.

I'm enjoying getting to know her but all I want is for us to get where we're going so that I can get drunk and forget that Knox Riverside exists.

"We're going to have so much fun together!" she says excitedly. I wasn't in a good mood earlier but her excitement is starting to change that. This is the first class I'm ditching even though I wanted to do it a while ago.

We come up to a bridge that crosses the lake and goes through the woods on the other side. It's abandoned and grass is growing down the middle. It's one of those bridges that has the steel top but the sides are bare. You can stand on the edge and look down if you want to.

I don't think a train has run through this town in ages. All the other houses were a good distance away from each other and I liked it. It seemed peaceful and there were no risks of anyone getting into your business here.

We stepped onto the bridge and walked until we got to the middle. We both took a seat in the middle where the grass was because it seemed like the comfier option.

We sat cross-legged and looked out at the water for a little while. Listening to water moving and the sound of a storm were two of my favorite things to do. That was why I also loved the beach so much. Those things always grounded me and made me feel at peace when I was anything but.

Kinsley took the bottle of vodka out of her bag along with two cups and the snacks she bought as well. I look at her with a raised eyebrow. She definitely came prepared. I didn't even see her purchasing the snacks.

I guess whatever was bothering her concerning Asher looked like it was taking its toll on her.

"Sorry! I eat when I'm stressed," she says sheepishly.

"Hey, I'm not judging in any way. At this point, anything works for me. I just want to get drunk," I tell her with a laugh because it's true. I want to forget about my life for a while. She puts everything between us before pulling a blunt out of her bag as well and my jaw drops. I didn't even know she smoked and I say as much.

"I didn't know you smoked," I say with surprise coating my voice.

"Don't tell anyone," she says.

"Wouldn't dream of it," I say and she hands it to me. "Um, I've never smoked before,"

"Never too late to try and I know you won't say anything. I was just kidding. But if my mom ever found out, she'll most definitely kill me," she says, giggling as she lights the blunt.

"Mine would skin me alive if she knew I wasn't in school right now." I sigh dramatically, while taking the blunt from

her. I take a pull and instantly a coughing fit takes over me. She laughs as she begins to pour us both a shot of the vodka and we clink our cups together in a toast.

"Here's to hoping our moms don't kill us," she says before we both down our shots in one go. I wheeze at the burn the alcohol causes going down my throat. Holy fucking hell! That shit was strong as fuck!

"What the fuck was that?" I squeal.

"What? You've never had vodka before?" she questions.

"Uh no. This is the first time I've ever had alcohol and smoked weed," I tell her.

"Damn, you really haven't been living at all," she says, laughing. She takes another pull from the blunt and then hands it to me again. I figure I'd keep going because why the hell not, right? YOLO and all that shit.

"So how long have you been in love with Asher?" I ask after we take another shot. I already feel like I'm in the clouds with how good this feels and I'm definitely tipsy. This feeling is one I've never felt, and it's addicting.

"The first time I ever saw his stupid face. Ugh, I used to think love at first sight was stupid and it never happened in real life. But then it had to happen to me and now I'm screwed. I don't think anyone will ever compare to him." She sighs.

"Have you ever, you know, told him how you feel?" I ask her.

"Oh, he knows. I mean, how could he not? But we're from different worlds. He's uber rich and I'm uber poor. Plus, sometimes he acts like he cares and then he goes

back to acting like I'm trash. So yeah, I don't ever see us having a future together," she says sadly.

"That really freaking sucks and I'm so sorry you have to go through all of that," I tell her as tears well up in my eyes, thinking about everything she's just said.

I know it couldn't have been easy for her going through that. I've only been here for a short period of time and I know how ruthless and callous the students at Riverside Academy can be. I hate it.

"What's the story with you and Knox? I've never seen him act like this. Usually he's the king of not giving a fuck but for you, he seems to go out of his way to give a fuck."

"Honestly, I wish I knew. That guy is a fucking psycho." I huff. "Like, who the hell just looks at someone and decides—hey, you know what? I should hate this person today. How does that even make sense? He confuses the fuck out of me," I groan.

"I know I'm not around all the time, but how have you been dealing with being on that website?" she questions.

"I try to ignore it as much as I can. It's the only thing I can really do." I sigh with exhaustion.

"And what the hell was up with you and Knox in the cafeteria?! I mean, he just whipped his dick out all willy-nilly, not caring."

"Beats me. He's your friend! But oh my fucking God! I've never been more humiliated in my entire life!" I groan louder when I remember exactly why we were skipping school and drinking our body weight in alcohol right now.

"Honestly, I'm just as confused as you are. Boys are stupid," she says, giggling.

"I'll drink to that," I say, lifting my cup and downing another shot.

We continue drinking and chatting. By the time we know it, the bottle of vodka and the blunt are done and we're way past drunk. We decide to just lie back and take in the sun's rays against our skin.

I think we've been here for a few hours already but I've gotta say, today has been the best day out of all the days I've been here. I have Kinsley to thank for that.

We lie in silence for a while, soaking up more of the rays when suddenly we hear the sound of gravel crunching. We both lift our heads in time to see two cars pull up at the end of the bridge and they come to a screeching halt a second later. I groan because I recognize them as Knox's and Asher's cars.

"Oh shit!" Kinsley mutters.

"How the hell did they find us?" I yell in a panicked voice. I don't want to have another round with Knox right now.

"Run! He's gonna kill me for being in this state!" she shrieks, as she scrambles to her feet. I'm lost for a moment until I look up again and see two angry-looking jocks stepping onto the bridge while the other two look like they want to laugh.

"Motherfucker!" I groan as I stumble to my feet as well. I get up too fast and the world around me spins for a second. I right myself and begin running after Kinsley.

We run in the direction of the woods. I'm not sure how that is going to work out because this is unfamiliar territory for me.

"I don't think the woods are a good idea," I huff out to Kinsley. "What if they kill us and hide our bodies?"

"Kinsley! Stop! If you move one more step, I'm going to fucking spank your ass for being a disobedient brat!" Asher yells after us.

"I'll take my chances!" Kinsley says to me as she keeps running. Because I don't want to face the guys right now either, I run faster to keep up with her.

We make it to the other side of the bridge before stepping off and running into the woods. I'm breathless. Being high and drunk while running is not the best of ideas. I can barely keep myself upright at this point.

"Umm, Kinsley, I think I'm dying. My world is spinning around and around," I mumble as we stop to brace against a tree.

"Same, babe! Why do they always have to ruin my day? They act like they're all my fathers or something!" Kinsley huffs from beside me.

"Kinsley, if you don't get your ass over here in the next five seconds, you're not going to like the consequences!" Asher yells. It sounds like it's coming from right at the edge of the woods.

"Let's go! If he finds me, especially in this state, he'll throw a tantrum. Like they're the only ones who can drink and party and then treat me like I'm a child," she grumbles at me.

We run further into the woods. I turn to look back to see if anyone is following us but I don't see anything. I wasn't watching where I was going and I trip on something. I fall right down a small hill. Where the fuck did that come from?

My head collides with a rock and I let out a scream from the impact. I'm instantly seeing stars.

"Shit! Are you okay?" I hear Kinsley yell at me from the top of the hill, but it sounds like she's so far away. I shake my head, trying to push the dizziness away.

"Um, yeah, I'm fine," I mumble through the pain, not even sure if she heard me.

"I'm coming down to get you!" she yells but then another voice interrupts her.

"You're staying right here! Don't think for one second you're not in deep shit for this!" Asher growls at her.

I look up and see all four of them have caught up with us and are peering down at me from on top of the small hill.

"Whatever, Asher! Don't do me any favors and act like you suddenly care!" she snaps or rather slurs at him. I wince. Yep, we're both beyond drunk.

A stinging sensation finally registers in my body and I look down to see my arms have a cut and my knees are skinned and bleeding.

Shit, I must have taken a harder fall than I felt. I groan as the pain slowly seeps its way into my consciousness and then everything goes black.

CHAPTER

Ten

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RAINE

MY EYES slowly open and it only takes a second for me to realize that I'm lying on the ground in the woods still. My head is foggy and it aches so bad.

My mouth is dry as hell and it literally feels like I went through hell. A groan slips past my lips when I sit up. I have no idea how long I've been passed out. Who knew taking a tumble in the woods would hurt this much?

"You know, I could bury you here and no one would ever find your fat ass. Plus, the bugs would have a feast, gnawing on all that fat," a voice says out of the blue. I shriek before turning my head so fast in the direction the voice came from, only to find Knox standing there, leaning against a tree, looking at me with a bored expression on his face.

I look around and realize that everyone is gone. It's just the two of us here right now. Geez. The guy really is an asshole. He didn't even help me. Maybe he really does want to murder me or something. That thought causes me to swallow and I become aware of how dry my throat is.

"How long have I been out for?" I question. He doesn't answer, just stares at me like I didn't just ask him a question. When I give up, thinking he won't answer, he finally does.

"A few minutes," he says, shrugging.

"Where is everyone and why am I still here?" I ask as I crawl over to the log that's a few feet away from me and sit on it. I hope to get situated for a few minutes before I even attempt to get out of here.

It literally feels like someone is banging away inside my skull and I want it all to go away. Damn it, I can't believe that Kinsley and I drank so much.

"Stop hanging around Kinsley," he says suddenly in a harsh tone, and I have to look up at him again. What the hell? He did not just tell me to stay away from my friend.

"Excuse me?" I question.

"You heard me," he says, clenching his jaw.

"Hate to tell you this but you have no say in my life, especially not who I can be friends with," I snap at him.

"We'll see about that. All I have to do is tell her not to be friends with you anymore and she'll do exactly what I tell her to. You want to know why? Because we're her family and you're nothing," he sneers at me.

"Please. You don't have that kind of power and she'd never do that just because you said so, asshole!" I snap at him. I'm tired of him and his asshole ways. Who the hell does he think he is?

"In case you've forgotten who I am, I'm the fucking king in this town. And when I say jump, they all jump without

even so much as a peep from them," he says as a smirk crosses his face.

"Is that supposed to scare me?" I grumble.

"Yes, because you'll get everything coming to you soon," he says, curling his lips into a sneer.

"Why the fuck are you even here right now then? For someone who doesn't care about the fat girl, you sure do make it a point to be around me a lot," I say. I instantly see that my words anger him further because they're the truth, but I don't care right now. "If you can't stand me so much then just stay the fuck away from me. It's not fucking rocket science!"

Before he can even respond to my outburst, a scream rips out of me when I feel something slither across my hand. I look down to see a snake's tail by my hand. I jackknife up and off the log in an instant and run right up the stupid hill that I fell from.

I end up running right to where Knox is, not caring since I'm scared as fuck of anything that crawls or slithers. Clearly my flight-or-fight response is broken because he's the last person I should ever run to for help.

"There's a freaking snake there!" I gasp, trying to catch my breath. Oh my God! It could have bitten me if I was moving or if its head was in my direction. A shiver runs through my body as I think about that. Well, this is the last time I ever venture out into the woods.

"Welcome to Texas," he says dryly.

"Gee, thanks," I mumble.

The air around us suddenly shifts when he grabs me by the collar of my shirt and I realize my mistake. I ran from

one predator right to another one.

He pulls me in closer to him so that he's now crowding my space. He pushes me back until I'm pressed up against a tree.

"We should go. The others must be wondering where we are," I say, and hate that my voice has a shaky quality to it. In all honesty, us alone here in the woods makes me kind of scared.

I mean, I wouldn't put it past him to actually murder me and bury me right here in the woods. Who really comes into these woods? Which means that no one would ever find my body. I'd disappear with no trace. It's like he can hear my inner thoughts because he smirks at me evilly.

"I could snap your neck right here and right now, and no one would even bat an eye. In fact, they'd never know because my friends won't tell anyone," he tells me, smiling now. I try to get rid of the fear but it must show on my face because a second later, he's laughing in my face.

"Why are you doing this?" I whisper. I don't trust my voice to sound steady if I go any louder.

"Because I fucking love the look of fear on your face. It's taking all I have in me not to fucking bury you right now. I'll just have to settle for the fear right now. I want nothing more than to hurt you. Every time you look at me, all I want you to feel is pain," he growls in my face, with so much hatred in his voice. It's a wonder his hate isn't choking the both of us right now.

"Why do you hate me so much? You don't even know me!" I cry out as the emotions I tried to keep down bubble up inside me.

"I know enough to know that I hate you and your whore of a mother!" he snaps and I see red at his choice of words. Before I can even comprehend what I'm doing, I lift my hand up and slap him across the face.

He instantly grabs me around the neck and slams my head back against the tree. Pain erupts behind my head from the impact.

"Don't you ever put your filthy hands on me like that again!" he snaps at me.

"Don't fucking talk about my mother like that, asshole! You don't even know her! Newsflash, dickhead, you're the one who is always seeking me out, not the other way around. Every time we touch, it's because you made that move. It's like you're fucking obsessed with me!" I snap, grinding my teeth.

"Obsessed with you? You might be right but not for the reasons you think. I'm obsessed with the thought of slitting your throat and watching you bleed out, or the thought of burying you alive in a shallow grave right in these woods sounds appealing too. Is that enough of an obsession for you?" he growls in my face.

I feel the color drain from my face as he spoke his truth with nothing but hatred in his voice and on his face. I'm actually scared that he actually will snap and kill me. But maybe I'm the one who snaps.

"Then do it, asshole! I'm tired of you and your dumbass threats! If you had the balls, then you would have done it already!" I scream at him. With the same anger I have in me, I push him away and then start to hit him in the chest.

He doesn't even look like he's impacted by my hits and that just makes me madder.

I can't believe the words that just came out of my mouth. I must be tripping or too much alcohol went to my head or something.

In a turn of events, he grabs me and then pushes me so that I fall flat on my ass. Before I can even make a move to get back to my feet, he's on me and straddling my body. I'm now flat on my back. Just great!

He leans down so that his face is just inches from mine. If I moved even an inch, our lips would touch. I must be delirious for wondering what his lips would feel like against mine. Would they be as soft as they looked? Without meaning to, a groan slips out of me.

"Look at you getting all hot. Does the thought of me snapping your neck turn you on that much? I bet if I felt under that skirt of yours, I'd find a wet pussy, wouldn't I? Tell me, did you like the taste of my cum?" he asks with a devilish smirk on his face.

"Wh-what?" I stammer out.

"Oh, come on. Every time I see you, you look like a slut in heat just waiting for me to give you the time of day. So I know with your face full of my cum today, you wouldn't have let the chance to taste it slip by you. Am I right?" he asks and then bursts out laughing when my face heats up and I have to look away. How the hell would he even know something like that?

"No," I snap.

"You really are a little slut, aren't you?" he spits, mad again for who the hell knows why. It's hard to keep up with

this guy's constant mood swings.

"No, dickhead! Of course, I didn't. Who the hell would want to taste your cum when it's probably infected with STDs!" I snap at him.

"Oh, I'm going to have fun playing with you. I can't wait to break you." He smirks before getting off of me and walking away, leaving me there.

I lie there for a few seconds before slowly getting to my feet. My body still hurts and so does my head, but I push forward. I need to get home before my mom does.

By the time I make it back to the edge of the woods by the tracks, I see that he's already a good distance away from me. I start walking. When I get to the middle of the track, I pick my bag up from where we left it earlier after we ran away.

By the time I get to the other side of the bridge where we came from, the two cars are still there, waiting. I have no clue what they're waiting for because I'm not getting into the car with them.

Today has been such a weird day and I'm so confused. I can't be the only one who feels this fucked-up attraction between us right? Or if I am, then why can't he seem to leave me alone, since he's always there watching me constantly?

I don't doubt he's capable of murder. His rich-as-hell father would definitely make it go away. I just hope I'm able to survive him.

I walk past the two cars, intent on going home in my own car. I know I shouldn't drive while I still have alcohol

in my system but I don't think they'd give me a ride since their friend hates my guts.

"Whoa, where are you going, beautiful?" Asher asks as he gets out of his car and comes around to stand in front of me.

"Um, to get my car and go home," I say, shrugging my shoulders.

"If you're as drunk as Kinsley, then I'm not letting you drive," he says.

"You don't have to let me do anything because you don't have any say in what I can or can't do," I grumble.

"Well too bad," he says. He snatches my bag and takes the keys out of it and tosses it to Axel. "Drive her car to her house." I let out a long sigh because I know he won't let this go.

"Why are you being nice?" I question suspiciously.

"I don't want you to get into an accident or some shit on your way home because you're drunk and high from alcohol and weed. Now get into my car."

He drops Kinsley off at her place and then he drives in the direction of my house with Axel following in my car and Knox behind him.

I was kind of half afraid that Asher would leave me at the side of the road and make me walk but he didn't.

When we get to my house, Axel pulls into the driveway and parks while I get out of Asher's car. I thank them both and they just nod. That was weird as hell. I don't know why they did that which confuses me. After they drive off without another word, I'm left staring after them for a while.

When I realize that I've just been standing there, I head inside. I head up to my room and head straight for the shower. I need to get clean and also sober up before my mom gets home. Otherwise, she'll kill me.

When I'm out of my clothes and standing in front of the mirror, I see the handprints that Knox left around my neck and wince. I need to hide that from Mom as well.

I exhale a breath and quickly shower. When I'm done, I put on some pjs, and a hoodie to hide my neck. It's not uncommon for me to wear hoodies so my mom won't think anything of it. After that, I head into the living room to watch some television.

"Hey, honey!" Mom says out of nowhere, which causes me to scream. I was in the middle of a horror movie with all the lights off and I didn't even hear her come in.

"Jesus, Mom! You scared the crap out of me!" I shriek, turning to look at her while clutching my chest. She laughs and I roll my eyes, trying to calm down. I guess the experience today really spooked me.

I look at the time and see that it's only nine p.m. She's early tonight which I'm glad for because we've hardly spent any time together since moving.

"Did you eat dinner already?" she asks.

"Yeah, Mom."

"Okay, good. I'm glad you're still up. Let me go shower quickly and then I have something I need to tell you," she says nervously. I shake my head and she leaves the room.

I wonder what she wants to talk about. From her tone alone and the way she was acting, I know it's going to be something serious. Now my anxiety is on the rise. She's

only ever nervous when she has to tell me something she knows I won't like.

Half an hour later, she comes back into the living room, wearing her pjs as well. She sits next to me and gives me a hug. I love her cuddles. They always make me feel like I belong somewhere.

"What's going on, Mom?" I finally ask when it looks like she won't start the conversation off.

"I'm getting married!" she says, just blurting it out. I'm stunned speechless, wondering if I heard her correctly.

"I'm sorry, Mom." I laugh. "Can you repeat that? I don't think I heard you correctly."

"I'm getting married—"

"To who?" I practically screech, cutting her off. I mean, I want her to be happy but I feel like this is coming out of left field.

"To, um, Jonathan Riverside..." she says, trailing off.

"Your boss, Jonathan Riverside? The man whose family founded this town, Riverside? The uber-rich Riverside?" I yell. Oh dear God! *Knox's father Riverside...*

Please God, let it be some other Riverside because the thought of Knox becoming my stepbrother is one I can't comprehend right now. Especially not with all the secret feelings I have locked away for the guy.

"Yes. That one," she says, giving me an unsure smile. I'm left stunned and a little speechless, wondering how and when the hell this happened.

"Mom. The man just lost his wife!" I groan. I have a feeling if I thought things were bad before for me at school,

then it will get worse once people hear about this. I mean, his wife was buried what, like two weeks ago or so?

"I don't know. We just sort of fell in love with each other and we both want to get married," she says.

"When did this happen?" I question.

"Just recently," she says as she fidgets a little.

"And he wants you to get married already?" I ask.

"He said after his wife died, it just made him realize that life is short, so why wait?" she responds, laughing a little nervously.

"Is there any way I can change your mind?" I ask, already knowing there's not anything I can do. "'Cause I think people are going to hate us," I tell her. I mean, they already hate me but I'm not about to tell her that.

"Afraid not, sweetie. But look on the bright side! Things will be a lot better for us," she says, smiling. "I love him so much already."

The smile on her face is big. I haven't seen one like that on her face for a while. I already know that I won't do or say anything to jeopardize this for her.

"When's the wedding?" I ask, thinking that's what I'm supposed to ask.

"Late October," she says excitedly.

"Mom, are you serious?"

"Isn't it exciting? I mean, when you know, you know. Right?"

"I guess," I say, pasting a smile on my face even though I'm dying on the inside.

I can already imagine how much more Knox will hate me when he finds out about this. I groan at the thought of what

he'll do. I mean, just today, the guy wanted to bury me in the woods. Who knows how he'll want to kill me when he finds out.

"I know this is so last minute but I just want you to be happy for me," she says, hugging me again.

"I am happy for you, Mom. I'm going to head to bed and I'll see you tomorrow, okay?"

"Okay. Sleep well, baby," she tells me as I walk away and up to my room.

I didn't sleep a wink that night because I was wondering if I'd survive if I ran away from here.

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CHAPTER

Eleven

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RAINE

WHY DO the weekends always go by so fast? Today's another Monday, which means another week in this hellhole. As I make my way up to the front doors of the school, just looking at the building causes a wave of depression to hit me harder than it ever has.

The invisible walls around me feel like they keep closing in on me and I'm not sure how to make it stop, or make it go away. It's exhausting to live like this. One minute, you're fine and the next, it feels like everything is crushing you down under its weight.

This move hasn't been easy at all and I'm drowning. I'm glad Mom dropped her bomb on me Friday because it gave me the entire weekend to hide from Knox.

I'm not even sure if he got the news, but I'm hoping he hasn't yet. If he doesn't know, it will give me a few days to not bear the brunt of his wrath. There is no doubt that he'll probably explode when he finds out that my mom and his dad are about to tie the knot in a few weeks.

Knox is going to be my stepbrother soon...

I have no idea how to feel about that so I just put that in a box inside my head labeled “don’t touch yet.”

Who the hell even gets married in October? In fact, who the hell even plans a whole wedding in such a short amount of time? My crazy mother, that’s who.

I guess I should be happy for her, and I am, but I just can’t help the feeling that the fallout for this wedding won’t be any good for me. Knox has hated me before our parents decided to get married, so I can’t imagine how he’d feel about me now that they are.

Just the thought of him finding out has me scared. What if he decides now is the right time to kill me or something. As I’ve come to learn in such a short amount of time, the guy is unpredictable.

I make my way to my locker and am just about to open it when someone bumps into me from behind which causes my body to fall forward and into it.

My bag is snatched away from me and flung across the empty hall, causing my books to spill out onto the floor. Ugh, I came early today so I wouldn’t get harassed by this asshole and, yet here we are.

I spin around and look straight into Knox’s face with a heavy scowl on mine. He has a nasty sneer on his. I can’t tell if that’s just his face or if he’s making it because he already knows about the upcoming nuptials of our parents. He’s a hard cookie to read, if nothing else.

“Gee, thanks, asshole. Are you stalking me or are you blind or some shit? You’re never here early!” I snap at him.

“And how would you know that? Unless you’re the one stalking me,” he says with a snicker.

"As if. But it's just fucking funny how the one day I'm here super early, you're somehow here too," I say, rolling my eyes.

"Hmm, isn't that funny," he drawls in that bored tone of his. I don't know why he even bothered to come annoy me if he was just going to act like he's an uninterested royal asshole.

"Your daddy must be so proud of the asshole he raised!" I grit through clenched teeth. His presence right now is making me super pissed, which is not uncommon when he's around.

In the blink of an eye, he's in front of me, with his hand around my neck again. Ugh. The bruises on my neck from our time in the woods were just starting to fade.

"Watch what the fuck you say to me, bitch!" he snaps in a deadly tone.

"No, I will not! You can't just be a fucking prick and not expect me to defend myself, dickhead!"

"I'm going to fucking ruin you, whore!" he growls.

"How would you know if I'm a whore or not? You've never been between my legs to fuck me, asshole, and you never will be either!" I growl right back.

"Oh, I like a good challenge. Don't act like you wouldn't jump on my dick the first chance you got. I've seen the way you look at me. The way you stare at me like a cow in heat, just salivating for my cock," he whispers in a low and cocky tone. One that has me clenching my thighs together. *What the fuck is wrong with me? I shouldn't like being degraded like this. I am a fucking masochist.*

“Don’t flatter yourself. No one would salivate over your crusty dick!”

I expect him to lash out at me for calling his dick crusty since it probably is. Guys like him are always the fuckboy types, hopping from pussy to pussy without giving a shit. With the amount of girls I’ve already seen throwing themselves at him... yeah, definite crusty dick.

“Challenge accepted, fat ass,” he says before shoving me back against the locker one more time and then begins to walk away.

“It wasn’t a challenge, asswipe!” I snap at his retreating form. Why does he have to be so fucking infuriating?

Classes haven’t even started yet for the day and I’m already pissed beyond measure. He’s in the next few classes I have this morning, so without putting too much thought into it, I decide I’m just going to skip class this morning. I don’t want to have another run-in with the asshole.

School was always my happy place but now it’s the opposite. It’s the place that is now slowly killing me. Being in Riverside makes me want to skip school for the rest of my life.

I walk in the opposite direction of where my class is. When I get to the end of the hallway, I make a right and keep walking until I spot a door with the exit sign above it.

I quickly make my way through the door. Once I step outside, I realize that I’m at the back of the school.

It’s empty as expected and for that I’m pleased. The fewer people I have to deal with, the less humiliation I’ll face. The students here are all assholes.

There are a few small buildings here in the back and they all look empty. One of them is a flat building with three rooms and as I walk over and pass the doors, I look in. It's rooms with old and discarded furniture and equipment.

The last room looks like it might have been an old music room. I turn the knob but it's locked. I walk around to the back of the building and see that the window is open. Hmm, I wonder if people usually come back here?

I don't give it another thought as I throw my bag inside and then climb up and through the window. Once I'm inside, I move around some of the furniture to create a little fort so that I can sit behind it in case any of the teachers pass by.

The room has enough light that I can spend a few hours in here. I'm definitely not going back to class anytime soon. I'm tired of being taunted and called names for no apparent reason besides the fact that I exist.

When I've made myself comfortable. I take my sketch book out of my bag, beginning a new sketch. I get lost in my drawing as soon as the pencil hits the paper. The sketch consumes me and I know I won't be able to stop until I finish it.

Besides studying, drawing is another passion of mine. It's the only other thing that keeps my mind occupied whenever I'm stressed.

I usually get so lost in a drawing that when I start. I'm barely aware of what's happening around me. Most of my drawings are usually people, sometimes nature or whatever inspires me at that moment. They've always been light and made me feel good.

When I look down at what I've created, it looks like how the rest of them do lately. It's much darker and edgier and not at all like how I used to draw.

Maybe it's because of how I've changed so much in such a short amount of time. I no longer feel light and carefree like I used to when I finally felt like myself again, after my first bout of depression when I was younger. I no longer believe that people will treat you good just because you're nice to them. I no longer believe that having a good heart is all it takes for people to treat you like you would treat them.

My life wasn't all roses and sunshine. There were many times where I'd worry about my parents, especially when they were fighting. But it's been a while since I felt this dark cloud looming over me like I do now, and my drawings reflect that. It kind of scares me.

I look back down at the page in front of me. It's a drawing of a girl who has a sad and scared expression on her face. There's also a dark cloud surrounding her. When you look closely, it looks as though she's screaming and begging for her demons to go away. All around her are what looks like monsters but I know it's just people.

It doesn't take a genius to realize I just drew myself and how I see the people here. Deep down, that's what they are. Nothing but monsters if they can torment someone they don't even know.

I'm still looking at my art in front of me, deep in my thoughts when the sound of voices startles me. It's coming from just outside the door and I freeze. Shit! I hope it isn't a teacher. I honestly didn't think anyone else would come

out here. Why didn't they choose one of the other two empty rooms instead of this one, or even one of the other buildings back here.

I scoot further behind the chairs so that I can remain hidden from whoever is out there. I'm really hoping that they don't come in here but that hope is dashed when I hear the keys engaging the lock and the door to the room opens. *Just great*, I think to myself.

"I'm so glad you decided to give me a chance, Knox! You deserve so much better than that bitch Ivy," a female voice purrs, making me want to gag instantly. Knox, the bane of my existence, is in here. I should have known my alone time wouldn't last long.

"Are you gonna keep yapping that mouth of yours or are you gonna use it to suck my dick? If not, I can find someone else who will," Knox says with impatience in his voice.

"No! I'll do it, baby! I'm so glad you're taking the time out of your life to let that ugly girl know just how beneath us she is," I hear the whiny bitch say. If I could smack her in the face right now, I would. Lucky for her though, I don't want to give up my hiding spot. Like I said, the students at Riverside Academy are vile as fuck.

"I know," he says with a smirk. "Now suck my fucking cock and quit talking."

I raise up to my knees and peek through the chairs so that I can see them. That's how I know he's smirking at her. I shouldn't be looking because it's a private moment between two assholes but hey, they shouldn't be in public doing private things if they don't want anyone watching. Plus, that bitch was just talking about me so...

The girl is one of Ivy's friends. The stupid witch who swears that Knox is her boyfriend and yet even her friends are betraying her. I mean, who the hell needs friends like that? What kind of friend goes after their friend's man?

Clearly no one cares and they're all fucking around with each other, and yet I'm supposedly the whore and slut here? That doesn't even make any sense.

I hear the telltale sign of someone fiddling with the buckle and when I look again, Knox has his pants down and around his ankles, and the girl has her mouth around his cock.

I can't help but stare at his cock from the little I can manage to see. I didn't really pay much attention to it when we were in the cafeteria the other day, since I was in shock. But now I can look without him even knowing that I'm here.

He has his eyes closed. A look of pleasure is written all over his face. I wish I was the one putting that look there. That's when I know I've really lost a screw inside my head.

"Stand up," he tells her, and she does as she's told. "You can leave now."

"Wha—but... we're not done! You didn't come and you haven't fucked me yet!" she whines.

"I never said I was going to fuck you. Besides, something just came up that I need to attend to. Maybe we can pick this up later," he tells her in a bored and uninterested tone. Wow! Asshole much?

"But—"

"Leave before I change my mind and make your life a living hell instead! We wouldn't want that now, would we?"

"You can be a real asshole, you know that?" She huffs.

“Never said I wasn’t anything but. What does it say about you that you’re here sucking off your so-called best friend’s man?” he asks casually, but there’s an underlying hint of steel in his words. It’s almost like he’s daring her to continue just so he can unleash his wrath on her. *At least I’m not the only one he’s an asshole to...*

With a huff, she storms out of the room without saying another word. Guess she finally caught on to what his words meant. I’m sure she doesn’t want Ivy finding out about what just happened here. Lord knows that girl is a psycho.

I’m disgusted with what I just witnessed but also turned on and wishing it was me but not really. Does that make any sense? It sure doesn’t to me. Why must the heart want things it shouldn’t? Why couldn’t I be interested in someone nice who wasn’t a grade-A asshole psycho? I turn back to face the window as quietly as possible to wait for him to leave. In case I didn’t say it already, today sucks.

“Did you enjoy the show fat ass?” he asks suddenly and I jump.

Shit! How the hell does he know I’m here? I didn’t make a freaking sound. I gulp because I know he’s talking to me. He doesn’t call anyone else names. Nope, that privilege is reserved just for me. I don’t answer. Instead, I opt for staying quiet, hoping he’ll just go away.

“Get out from behind there before I make this real unpleasant for you,” he snaps a second later.

“It isn’t like being in your presence is ever pleasant,” I mumble as I slowly stand to my feet and walk out from

behind the furniture. I'm standing in front of him with my head down.

I really don't want to have another confrontation and I don't want to look at him after what I just saw him and that girl doing. Looking down, I have the perfect view of his cock that's still out. He didn't even bother zipping the hell up.

"Answer me, whore. Did you like what you saw?" He questions in a sneer when I don't answer fast enough.

"No. I didn't see anything but what I heard was disgusting. It didn't sound like you were any good since you couldn't even finish her off," I snap at him.

"Oh, don't worry about that. I didn't finish because I was leaving that task for you, my little slut. I'm sure if I felt under your panties right now I'd find that pussy soaking wet and ready for my cock deep inside that hole of yours, wouldn't I?" he asks in a smug tone that has my face heating instantly with how vulgar he's being.

When he sees that, he lets out a laugh which causes my embarrassment to kick up a notch. Yes, right now, I can feel my wet panties sticking to my pussy lips.

"No, it wouldn't be, seeing as though I don't like assholes," I grumble.

"Then why haven't your eyes left my cock yet?" he asks and my head snaps up. He's smirking. I want to punch him in the dick.

"Just making sure that my assessment was correct," I tell him, smiling.

"And what assessment would that be?" he questions with a raised eyebrow.

"Your dick isn't that impressive. I've had bigger and better," I tell him, loving the look that crosses his face.

"So you're not just ugly, but you're a slut as well? How many guys have you let touch your used-up hole?" he questions, mad as hell. I don't see why he'd care when he's done nothing but make his hate for me known from the beginning.

"Enough to know you probably suck, dickhead! It's none of your business who the hell I fuck or don't fuck. The only thing that matters is that you won't be one of the guys fucking me," I say, smiling at him. For once, it feels like I'm giving him a taste of his own medicine.

"Get down on your knees, now!" he snaps as he grabs me by the hair in a tight hold, before pushing me down himself. "It's about time I show you that you're nothing but my slut and my cum-dump whore!" My knees collide with the hard ground and I let out a cry from the impact.

"What the hell are you doing, asshole?" I cry out.

"Teaching you a fucking lesson! No one fucking mouths off to me without facing the consequences. Plus, I'm ready to show you just how much of a liar you are. You might hate me as much as I hate you, but you still want my fucking cock just like the rest of these whores. Don't you?" he growls.

When I don't answer, he tightens his hold on my hair and pulls my head back so that I'm looking up at him.

"Answer me, slut!"

"No, I don't fucking want you! You think you're God's gift to women. Newsflash, asshole! Not everyone wants a dickhead!" I snap at him and he chuckles.

“Obviously not everyone wants me, but you do.” He smirks. “Open your slut mouth.”

I don’t get a chance to respond. In the next second, he’s grabbing my jaw and forcing it open before he slips his cock into my mouth. I contemplate biting his dick off and my intentions must show on my face because he *tsks* at me.

“Bite me and it’ll be the last thing you ever do with that mouth. I have no issue breaking that jaw of yours,” he growls down at me. I have no doubt he’d do it too.

I try to pull away from his cock but he just holds my head in place, keeping my mouth right where it is. “That’s it. Swallow that dick! This is what you’ve been wanting, isn’t it?” he sneers. “Now fucking take it like the good little slut that you are. I’m not sure I’ll ever be this generous again.”

I don’t want to admit it, but his degrading words are turning me on and I hate it. I’m not supposed to like this.

“I don’t want to catch some kind of disease! Your dick is probably infested with something already since you’re always fucking around!” I snap, or try to, with a dick down my throat.

“Oh, are you jealous, slut?” he asks, sounding highly pleased for some reason.

The dickhead thinks I’m jealous of his bed rats. For the record, I’m not.

“Did I ever tell you I hate bitches who love to talk shit? Less talking and more fucking sucking! I don’t have all day to service the horny cow.”

Right after his last insult leaves his mouth, he grabs the sides of my head with both hands and slams his cock all the

way down my throat, causing me to gag instantly from the force and how deep it is.

I slam my hands on his thighs but he doesn't even bother with me. When it feels like all my air is about to be cut off completely, he pulls out until just the tip is inside my mouth.

He lets out a pleasure-filled groan. I have no clue why I'm suddenly pleased with myself because I was the one to pleasure him. He turned to me when he could have let the other girl finish him off.

He can deny it all he wants, but some part of him feels something for me. That's why he can't stop himself from being around me, whether it's to throw insults or just to make sure I know he's there so he can tell me how much he hates me.

"I know you wanted my cock in your mouth no matter how much you deny it. The way you were eye fucking it in the cafeteria and no doubt were eye fucking it in your hiding spot as well. The want and need in your eyes for something you could never have. But lucky for you, I'm feeling a little charitable today." He smirks.

His words sting but all I can do right now is moan around his thick and throbbing cock as he pushes it deeper into my mouth again. I can feel the ring at the tip of his cock touching the back of my throat. It feels weird but good, even though I'm on the verge of choking.

I'm still not sure how such an asshole is capable of pulling any type of emotion other than hate out of me. Is this how self-hate usually starts? You do things that make you feel good even when you know you shouldn't be doing

them, and then as soon as the high of it is all gone, that's when the hate comes in.

His cock must be about eight inches and the girth is thick as hell. It's hurting my jaw just to keep my mouth open for him. He keeps mumbling nasty words to me as he pumps his hips in and out, but I stopped paying attention to them a while ago. All I can focus on right now is how good this feels and how wet my pussy is.

At this moment, I really do believe his words that I'm a slut. I've never given a blow job before and here I am, giving him my first. I want to touch myself and am just about to when he speaks again.

"Don't even think about touching that filthy cunt! You don't deserve any pleasure. You love this cock down your throat, don't you? That's why you want to touch your cunt, isn't it? Fucking slut," he rasps before pulling out and spraying my face with his cum again.

"What the hell, asshole? Why did you do that?" I yell at him.

"You don't deserve to taste my cum with that filthy mouth of yours!" he snaps.

I come back to my senses and realize what the hell I just did. I enjoyed that for a moment and now I feel nothing but humiliation. I bend my head with shame, trying to compose myself. I don't want him to see me falling apart, not even for a second.

The high that I was feeling just a second ago is gone. How the hell could I have let what just happened, happen? This fucking prick is the cause of all my self-hatred moments and I hate him for that.

“Look at me!” he says a second later.

I lift my eyes up to look at him from my spot on the floor still, at his feet no less, and he smirks at me. He shows me the screen of his phone and on it is a video playing of me sucking him off just now.

A gasp leaves me. What the hell? I was so into it, I didn’t realize he was filming me. I gulp because there are so many things he can do with that video.

“I’ve found a way to take my hate out on you so you better get ready to be my fucktoy. Whenever and wherever I demand, you’ll be there, no questions asked. Am I clear? If you don’t do as I say, then this video will end up everywhere on the internet. Everyone will get to see what a slut you really are,” he tells me with a devilish smirk across his face... well, more like evil.

“What have I ever done to you? Why are you blackmailing me?” I question. I never got an answer the last time I asked him why he hated me.

But I have only myself to blame for the last question. I was so caught up in the moment that I didn’t even notice he was recording me, and now he has blackmail material. He’s evil enough to post the video online if I don’t do what he says and I know that for a fact.

He might not be involved in the day-to-day squabbles and taunts and minor incidents that keep happening to me but that doesn’t mean he’s innocent.

“All in good time. For now, just remember that I fucking own you. You will do as I say.”

I feel the sting of tears threaten to well up in my eyes at how horrible things are going, have been going, and

probably will go still. I feel dejected. I guess I shouldn't be surprised that he'd use blackmail to get what he wants. Knowing him, it's probably going to be some kind of sadistic shit.

Now I really feel like the trash that everyone keeps calling me when I walk through the halls.

"Now, go clean yourself up. You look like a two-dollar whore," he snaps in a voice filled with what I think is disgust as he looks down at me, before pulling his pants up and walking toward the door. "Oh and if you even think about fucking another guy while I own you, I will fucking kill you and bury your body where no one on this earth will ever be able to find you." Those are his parting words as he walks away, leaving me there on the floor.

When he's gone and I can no longer hear his footsteps, the tears finally spill down my cheeks. I still can't grasp everything that just happened.

All I wanted was a few hours alone of peace and I couldn't even get that. Instead, I'm getting blackmailed. If I don't do as he says, then that video will go out into the world and everyone here, including my mom, will see it. I can't let that happen.

She just moved here and is happier than I've ever seen her. Now I know it's because she's getting married and I don't want her to lose that.

Plus, if the colleges I've applied to see something like that, I risk being denied a spot at any of them. That is not going to happen because college is my ticket out of this town and a way to end my torment. I can't let Knox Riverside ruin that for me.

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CHAPTER

Twelve

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KNOX

I DON'T KNOW what's happening to me, but if there ever was a time where I was confused by anything in my life, it was now. From the moment I knew of Raine's existence, I hated her. *Hmm, I think that was the first time I've ever even used her name, even if it was inside my own head.*

I'm used to calling her either a cow or fat ass. It suits her because that's exactly what she is. I've never hated anyone in my life before and that in itself is something new to me.

I have the world at my fingertips and I'm the most popular guy in this town, which means no one in this place ever had anything that I'd hate them for, until now. *And I hate her with a passion.*

Things have changed a lot for me since my mom's death—this horrible existence without her in it and the hate I have in my heart now. I have three names on the list of people I hate—Raine, her mother, and my douchebag of a father. Only he doesn't know the hatred I have for him yet and neither does her mother.

I haven't shown him the change as to how I feel about him, though it's not like he's even around much to notice if I was openly displaying my hatred for him.

He thinks I'm still clueless as to what's been happening in his life but I know and I'm glad for that. But it also pisses me off more than anything in this world.

Now when it comes to Raine, because of who she is, I can't seem to get rid of this deep-seated hatred that I have for her. Since she's been here, I've seen the way the kids at school torment her and how she tries so hard to avoid them. I love it because it was all my doing.

She does manage to avoid them on occasions but the only person she'll never be able to hide from is me. I'm always watching her every move and I see the way it affects her, though she tries to hide that too. I see the way her face falls and how she looks close to tears every time someone says something nasty to her.

Do I care? No. I want to see the pain in her eyes because it feeds the pain in my soul. I wish I could lick some of those tears away just to see what they would taste like. Would it taste as forbidden as she is or would it taste of our hate?

Even though her pain won't ease mine, I still get the satisfaction of watching the hurt flash across her pretty face. She became fair game as soon as she made it onto our school's website. I haven't done a thing to help her since they started tormenting her and that's the way I like it.

I'm no one's prince charming, least of all the person I detest so much. I've heard them all pick at her like crows on a dead cow's carcass. Everyone in this town is so

predictable. They all act like their shit doesn't stink. I don't care because it serves my purpose of watching her and hoping she breaks.

I have got to say though, all the hatred and wanting to see her suffer was before I ever laid eyes on her. Now that I've seen her, I can't help or stop the attraction that I feel for her. It's so wrong because of everything I detest her for.

Why do I feel something other than hate when I look at her and she isn't looking back at me? This feeling is throwing me for a loop because it's one I've never felt. How the hell is this even possible? Of course she was the one to make me question certain things in my life.

I'm not supposed to feel anything for her except revulsion and the constant hate in my veins. I am definitely not supposed to be intrigued by her, yet here we fucking are. It makes me want to ruin her even more.

But I'm also confused with myself because when I think about her, doing things to her, it feels like I'm betraying my mother for having any kind of feelings for this girl.

When I finally snap out of my thoughts, I look down at Raine, still sitting there on the floor on her knees before me, right where she belongs. A wave of self-hatred fills me in that moment.

The only reason I'm feeling that way is because of how much I loved her sucking my cock. I love it even more how she looks covered in my cum even though I know I shouldn't. She has her head down, keeping those eyes away from me.

I don't sweat it because I use that moment to study her a little. There's no denying that Raine is beautiful even

though she's not one of these stick-thin idiots that attend Riverside Academy.

Truthfully, I was getting bored with all these model-thin girls and wanted some variety, though I can't have that because I despise the variety that came here. Or can I? Hmm, that's something to think about and self-reflect on. I don't know what the fuck I'm doing anymore when it comes to this girl.

She has me changing my mind and going back and forth with myself on what to do so many times it's ridiculous. If I didn't know any better, I'd say it's like she blindsided me and now I'm all tied in knots over her.

When I heard they were moving here, I had no idea just how crazy she would make me. I'm torn between wanting to make her life a living hell and wanting to keep her ass locked up and away from all the assholes at Riverside Academy.

I see some of the guys scoping her out and it just makes me want to kick their asses for looking at what's mine. *Whoaaa! What the fuck, Knox?* Where the hell did that thought even come from? She's not mine and she never will be.

I can't look past certain things for that to happen and yet I want the bitch all the same. Yep, I've never been more confused in my fucking life.

I look down at her once again and now I'm just pissed at myself, my life, and my emotions and because of that, I lash out at her.

"I've found a way to take my hate out on you so you better get ready to be my fucktoy. Whenever and wherever

I demand, you'll be there no questions asked. Am I clear? Because if you don't do as I say, then this video will end up everywhere on the internet and everyone will get to see what a slut you really are," I tell her as I show her the video I was recording as she sucked my cock.

"What have I ever done to you? Why are you blackmailing me?" she questions.

"All in good time. For now, just remember that I fucking own you and you will do as I say," I say and she hears what feels like sniffles. I instantly feel disgusted.

"Now, go clean yourself up. You look like a two-dollar whore," I snap at her as I pull my pants up and start walking toward the door. "Oh, and if you even think about fucking another guy while I own you, I will fucking kill you and bury your body where no one on this earth will ever be able to find you," I say as my parting shot. I leave her there, still on the floor, on her knees, right where she belongs.

When I'm back in the main building, I'm pissed at myself because what the hell? I didn't even know those dumb words would leave my mouth, but it was too late to take them back, and they were all true.

I meant what I said. She better not fuck around because my claim is on her. My new tactic is to fuck her. Maybe I'll fuck the hatred out of my system before deciding on what to do with her.

I literally will kill her if she lets another man touch what's mine until I get tired of her. Then, she can go fuck whoever she wants.

I might despise her but it doesn't stop my mind from going back to what just happened in that room. I'm thinking about how it felt to have her lips around my cock and said cock is instantly rock hard again, wanting to burst through my pants. The fucker is acting like it didn't just spill his seed on her face a few minutes ago.

When we were in the cafeteria the other day, I didn't let her lips touch my cock because I just wanted to humiliate her. I knew, even from then, that I'd end up wanting more from her if her lips ever touched my dick. And I was right because I do want more. I want to fuck all her holes until they're all used and worn out and she can't take any more cock inside her. I want to fuck her until she's begging me to stop giving her pleasure. I know she'll love it.

I look at the time while making my way back to the cafeteria. Lunch is over now but I know the guys will wait there for me. I left because I wanted to have some fun but I didn't know I'd have an audience or that it would be her.

When I saw her peeking at me from between those chairs, I couldn't let the opportunity pass me by. Using her felt amazing on my cock.

I see Asher and Kinsley whispering to each other heatedly. If I had to guess, he's probably ordering her around while she's definitely not going to listen to any of his commands. That's their dynamic. He tells her what to do and she ignores him.

"You okay, bro?" Ash asks, looking away from Kinsley to me as I make my way back to our table. I'm guessing he must have seen the confused and pissed expression still on my face and was checking in.

"Yep. Just had something to deal with," I tell them. All eyes at the table are now focused on me.

"I bet that something had a little something to do with a certain redhead," Ezra says, grinning.

"No. I hate that girl," I snap. "And you can all get that smirk off your ugly faces!"

"Incoming!" Axel says with a look of disgust on his face.

When I turn around, I see Ivy walking through the door to the cafeteria with a huge smile on her face. I let out a groan. Fucking hell! This girl doesn't seem to understand the words *I'm done with her skanky ass*.

"Hey, baby," she says as she sidles up next to me at the table. I don't miss the glare she shoots Kinsley's way.

"Don't fucking look at her like that!" I snap at her. "And we're not doing this again. I already told you that we're done being fuck buddies and you can go spread your legs elsewhere!"

"What are you talking about? Oh, I see. You're not done with your little temper tantrum yet," she says in a condescending tone, acting as though she has any power. Newsflash to this bitch but I'm the one with all the power here.

She might get the other idiots in this school to do what she wants but that shit will never fly with me.

"Go fuck that asshole you've been hooking up with. I don't do sloppy seconds!" I say, smirking at her while her face turns red like she's about to explode.

"What the fuck, Knox? You really are an asshole, you know that? Don't think you can come back to me when you're feeling lonely next time. We both know you always

come back to me!" she snaps at me before huffing out a breath and walking away.

"I won't!" I say in a cheery voice.

"You do know that she's fucking crazy as hell, right?" Kinsley says from her seat.

"Was she always this delusional? I can handle her."

"Yes she was," Kinsley replies in a venom-filled voice.

"Easy there, killer. She won't hurt you or she'll have me to deal with," I tell her.

"It's not me I'm worried about," is what I think I hear her mumble but I'm not quite sure.

"So, what are we doing now? Going to class or..." Asher says and then trails off, leaving the decision up to me.

"Let's just go out onto the field and smoke some weed. I don't feel like going to any more classes for the day and I need something to take the edge off," I tell them.

They all grab their stuff and we make our way to the lockers so that we can grab our backpacks. Once we get everything we need, we all head outside, all the way to the field, and make our way to the back of it.

The part of the field that's our hangout spot is on a section all the way by the fence where no one from the office can see us.

Not that we'd get into trouble for being here since my father owns this place and the guys' fathers are prominent members of this town too. We have an untouchable status in this town and school.

As for Kinsley, no one will dare touch her. None of the staff messes with her since she's with me and I've made that known around the school. She's the only one among us

that doesn't come from any kind of status but we don't hold that against her. Now that she's a member of our little group, everyone else needs to fall in line or risk our wrath.

When we get to our spot, we all throw our bags onto the grass and then take a seat, all of us in a line with our backs up against the fence. This is our usual place when we want to get away from everyone else and just hang out with each other.

I take one of my joints out of my bag and light it up before taking a pull and then handing it off to Kinsley.

"Not on my watch!" Asher grumbles as he takes it away from her. I roll my eyes.

"This won't be the first time I smoke weed, asshole, so what's your problem?" she snaps at him.

"Who the hell have you been smoking with?" he questions.

"Wouldn't you like to know," she says, smirking at him.

"You have five seconds to tell me or you won't like the consequences," he tells her. Asher takes a pull from the blunt and then hands it to Axel who then hands it to Ezra. That's how we keep rotating it as we listen to Kins and Ash bicker like an old married couple.

"Okay, if you really must know, I was smoking with Knox's girl," she says, throwing me a smirk. I have just taken a pull of the weed and instantly fall into a coughing fit at her words.

"Okay, now I really need to know what the deal is with you and the new chick, bro. Is this one of those 'I like her but I'll act like I hate her' kind of thing?" Ash asks, throwing me one of his smirks.

“Shut the fuck up, asshole! I’m not high enough to talk about that shit right now,” I groan out loud. I knew one of them was going to bring her up at some point. I mean, since she’s been here, I haven’t been acting like my usual self and even I know that.

“Why not? We can all see that there’s some kind of war going on inside you when she’s in the vicinity,” Axel says.

“It’s complicated,” I grind out and then heave out a sigh.

“Then uncomplicate it,” Asher says with a smirk and a roll of his eyes.

Yeah, like it’s that freaking easy. Now it’s my turn to roll my eyes.

“Can’t. At least not yet. I’m not ready to talk about it yet either. It’s still fucking raw and a sore point,” I tell them honestly.

“Fine. But just know that we’re here for you. I’d hate to see something happen to her while you’re conflicted about your feelings,” Asher tells me.

“I don’t care. Besides, nothing is going to happen to her.”

“She is on that website, remember?” Axel asks, reminding me of that.

“All anyone ever does is play a few tricks and that’s it. They all know the rules and know not to cross them. I don’t see why she’d be any different.” I say.

“Just making sure you know what you’re doing, brother,” Asher responds.

“I do. Speaking of which, Kinsley, you’re no longer allowed to be friends with her,” I say, looking at her with all seriousness.

“What? Why the hell can’t I be her friend?” she asks incredulously. “Seriously, Knox, don’t be an asshole!”

“Because I said so! And if you want to stay in our group and continue having our protection, then you’ll do as you’re told. Remember, we were your friends before you even knew she existed. We’re the ones who have been protecting you because you know what it would be like without us,” I throw in, so she remembers what she stands to lose if she defies me. She knows what’ll happen to her if she’s on our bad side. The masses will descend on her like vultures since they’ve never seen her as one of us. One of us being rich snobby assholes.

“Ugh! I never thought I would see the day when you were such an asshole to me, Knox!” she grumbles.

“Never said I was anything but an asshole, babe. Anyway, she doesn’t deserve any friends because I fucking hate her!” I reiterate. I know that Kinsley will listen to me because the guys will have my back on this, and she’s obsessed with Asher. So that means she definitely won’t want to lose him, especially over someone she doesn’t know that well.

“I can’t believe you’re going to make me do this!” she says with tears shining in her eyes.

“I’m not making you do anything. I’m just saying that if you do remain her friend then you’ll lose us, especially Ash. Or you can follow orders. We’re a group here. If one of us hates someone then the rest of us do as well. If you’re not with us on that, then you’re out. It’s as simple as that,” I say, shrugging my shoulders.

“Fine, dickhead! You win!” she grumbles before getting to her feet. “I’ll see you guys later,” she says and we all look at her as she storms off.

“You know I’m with you to the end of whatever this is. But are you sure it’s what you want to do?” Asher asks, and I shake my head yes. This is what I want to do. I want her to be all alone here. Kinsley will follow my orders. I’m certain of it.

“We’re with you too, bro,” Axel and Ezra chimes in as well.

I nod my head, acknowledging my friends. I still hate her but I’m also still a bit conflicted in my head when it comes to her.

A thought forms in my head on what to do after practice and I smile just thinking about it. I need to see her again but not in a school setting. With my mind made up, I know what my plans are for later.

CHAPTER

Thirteen

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KNOX

TIME PASSES as we continue to chill and smoke after Kinsley leaves. We keep shooting the shit with each other, now that we're done asking personal questions.

It's been a minute since the guys and I just chilled without anyone around us, especially since my mother's death.

We're always around each other just doing what we need to, but it's been forever since we just threw back and relaxed. Plus, we've all been caught up in our own shit, so relaxing was far from anyone's mind.

I've been preoccupied with watching Raine get picked on and it's been glorious. Ash has been caught up with Kinsley and Ax and Ez have some weird shit going on between them that they're not ready to spill yet. So yeah, we've all been busy.

I guess I can't expect them to spill until they're ready because I haven't spilled much either. Most days, I can't stop thinking about my mother and how her life was cut short because of the actions of selfish people. She could've

had a long life ahead of her if she'd just left the bastard but instead, she chose to end her life. I'm still pissed at that.

I'm so angry and I've been bottling it up because I don't want anyone to see me as weak. When I visit her grave and I'm alone there, I rant and rave at her until my voice gives out. She'll never know about the pain she left me in.

I'm always a mess by the time I get home because of how unfair this whole situation is. She had to lose her life while my father gets to carry on his, like he didn't just lose his wife. That makes me madder at him too. I'm just a whole six-foot-three ball of anger and resentment and I hate it.

"So, what's going on with you and Kinsley?" I finally ask Asher to get my mind off my own thoughts. We've been a little quiet for too long. I mean, if the dickheads want to get into my business, I might as well do the same to them.

"We had sex at that stupid party and now she's acting like I'm hers or some shit. I don't do relationships, period. But the thought of her being someone else's girlfriend makes me see fucking red!" he groans out and I have to resist the urge to laugh. I knew something went down.

"Knew it was going to happen sooner rather than later. But isn't that a good thing? Come on, man, we've all known that you two have the hots for each other since you were younger. The sexual tension when you're around each other is off the charts. I've been telling you to just bang it out for ages," I tell him, finally letting out the laugh I was holding in. I'm glad he's the one being scrutinized right now because we're all ears.

"You are no help. You know that? But I don't know, man. You know that girl drives me fucking crazy," he grumbles.

"So do you want me to take her off your hands?" Axel asks with a smirk on his face.

"Touch her and I'll fucking kill you and drop your body in the middle of the lake with cement blocks tied to your feet!" he snaps at Ax and we all burst out laughing.

"You're as bad as Knox is. You're both heavily in the denial stage," Ezra says and we both turn and give him a dirty look.

"Man, fuck you, asshole! I don't want to talk about me and her. It was just a onetime thing," he says.

"Was that your idea or hers?" Ezra asks.

"Mine, obviously. We don't fit together. She's her... and I'm all this hunk of meat. I don't need a girlfriend right now," he says.

I decide to leave him alone for now but I turn my attention to the other two.

"What about you two?" I ask Axel and Ezra. They both look at me with a glare on their faces. Today is actually one of the rare days they aren't bickering like an old married couple either. The two of them are as bad as Asher and Kinsley.

"Nothing's going on with us," Axel says.

"Nothing at all," Ezra drawls and glowers at the same time.

"Please tell me you guys aren't fighting over a girl or some dumb shit like that," I say, groaning.

That would be the icing on the cake—the four of us losing our shit over some girls. Though in my case, I'm not.

I just hate the girl I'm thinking about.

"As if. None of these bitches in this school are worth it. Though if you don't get your head out of your ass, maybe I'll have a go at little miss nerdy redhead," Axel says, smirking at me.

"Don't even think about it. She's mine to play with and nobody else gets to touch her!" I snap, making the assholes laugh louder. I just declared her off-limits without realizing it.

"You two are so pussy whipped and you don't even know it yet," Ezra says. Pointing to me and Ash while laughing his goofy ass off.

"Shut up, asshole," Asher snaps in a sulky tone.

"Can we stop being pussies now? I'm tired of talking about our feelings like a bunch of girls!" I grumble at the two of them.

"Fine! You pussy-whipped motherfuckers!" Axel says and then jumps to his feet and starts running when he sees I'm after him.

"Run, dickhead! I'll catch you soon because it's time for practice," I say, smirking evilly at him.

"You wouldn't!" he gasps, groaning out loud when he sees the look on my face.

"Oh, I would and I am," I say, laughing at the expression displayed across his face. He knows I'll probably do something to fuck with him on the field.

We all make our way to the locker room quickly to get changed and then to the bleachers where Coach usually waits for us before practice. The four of us are pretty stoned. It's a good thing it never affects our playing. Coach

would literally kill us. We wait around for a few minutes as everyone on the team slowly trickles in.

"Alright, guys! We have just a little over a month to get ready for our away game. Practice from now on is going to be intense! Everyone better get their asses in gear and prepare to work hard. We're going to win this and I expect nothing less! Is that clear?" Coach yells at the entire team.

"Yes, Coach!" we all yell in unison.

"I didn't hear you!"

"Yes, Coach!" we all yell again, louder this time.

"Good! Now get your asses out onto the field and let's play ball!" he shouts, and everyone runs off onto the field.

We practice the plays Coach wants us to and in no time, hours have passed. I'm sweating and out of breath but I love the adrenaline rush I get while playing. Plus, it takes my mind off Mom since thoughts of her are never far. With one more play to run this afternoon before practice is over, I set my sights on Ax.

I smirk underneath my helmet. He has no idea what's coming to him. We're in the middle of the play when I run over in his direction instead of where I am supposed to go and tackle him down onto the ground. I make sure to hit him in the stomach and I hear the grunt he lets out.

"What the hell, dickhead?" he groans. I didn't hit him hard but it'll probably leave a bruise.

"That's for saying dumb shit earlier and for wanting what's not yours to want," I grumble. By now, we've both taken off our helmets and I see him roll his eyes at me.

"I don't want what's yours, crazy ass. You can deny not being pussy whipped all you want but we know it's a lie!"

he says, laughing.

"She's not mine either!" I snap with conviction.

"So you're just going around tackling one of your best friends for someone who doesn't belong to you?" he questions, while still laughing at me and my dilemma.

I don't want her but no one else gets to have her either, especially not anyone in this school. I already told her what would happen if she let another man touch her while I'm still playing with her and she better not disobey me.

By now, Coach has seen what's happened and is probably over our shit. But since it's me, he's not going to say anything. He just tells everyone to hit the showers because we're done for the day.

"Oh look, Coach said to go shower," I say instead, trying to change the topic.

"Oh look, master of evasion." He snickers.

"Whatever, let's go!" I tell them since Asher and Ez have already made their way over to us.

We all head to the locker room to shower and get cleaned up. After we're done, we head to the parking lot and toward our cars. Ax and Ez are still coming in separate cars and I don't know what to make of them right now.

"Do you guys want to meet up later tonight at my place?" Asher asks.

"Sure," Axel says.

"I'm down," Ezra replies.

"Can't. I actually have some shit I need to do tonight," I tell them. They all look at me like I've lost my mind. I never miss one of our hangout sessions.

"Does it involve a certain redhead?" Asher questions, giving me a smoochy face.

"No, dickhead! I just have shit to do!" I proclaim. They all just give me a *yeah right* look that has me rolling my eyes. "See you assholes tomorrow!"

"See ya!" they all say in unison.

When I get home, I make my way into the kitchen to grab a drink before heading up to my room to chill for a bit before following my plans.

The anticipation of seeing her again is killing me. I just want to fuck with her a bit so that she knows she's not safe even in her own home. I want her to know that I can get to her anywhere and anytime.

After I grab a drink from the fridge and I'm about to make my way out, my father steps into the kitchen and stops me.

"Hey, son, how was your day?" he asks.

Well this is new. He hasn't asked me how my day was in a very long time. Matter of fact, this is the first time I'm seeing him since Friday. He was M.I.A. all weekend now that I think about it.

"It was fine. What's up, Dad?" I ask, knowing that he must want something for him to be seeking me out. He's been an absent parent for a while. He thinks that just giving me money and material things will make up for him being absent, but it doesn't. I'm so mad at him but I take all

that shit anyway. I look at it as being compensated for him being a shit father.

"I need to talk to you about something very important," he says and then motions for me to take a seat by the island.

"Sure thing, Dad. What's going on?" I ask, already bored and ready to get this conversation over with.

"I'm getting married," he says, dropping the bomb on me. The silence ensues as he waits for me to respond. I just stare at him for a while because I'm sure I didn't just hear him correctly.

"What?" I snap, instantly enraged at his words.

"I'm getting married soon. You'll love her and she has a daughter as well that's about the same age as you. They'll be moving in soon too. Her name is Delaney and her daughter's name is Raine," he says in that voice of his—the cool, calm and controlled one that I've come to hate.

"Are you fucking insane? Your wife, aka my mother, just fucking died and you're already chasing after some gold-digging pussy?" I snap at him, letting all the anger I'm feeling bleed out into my words.

"Do not speak about her like that! I know your mother just died but I can't spend the rest of my life mourning her when she's already gone. It's time to move on, though I will always love her," he says, trying to defend himself.

What a fucking dick!

"You're a real fucking asshole, you know that, Dad? She didn't just die. She fucking killed herself!" I snap at him before getting up from my seat and walking away before I say or do something that I'm going to regret.

I grab my keys and slam the door behind me as I stomp out of the house. He can go fuck himself for all I care. The man is such a self-centered prick!

I get into my car and put it in drive before peeling out of the driveway. I know where I'm going and who is going to feel my wrath and anger. She deserves to be the target of my anger and pain since it was her family that ruined mine.

I've had this planned all afternoon while we were in the field smoking, so I was going to go over there anyway. My dad's words just moved it up a bit. I'm mad as hell but I also want to see her again. My dick needs to stop thinking and let my brain do it. My cock doesn't seem to get the memo that we should hate her and not want to fuck her.

Right now, all I want is to feel her lips on my cock again. When it was in her mouth earlier today, it felt like I was in heaven. She has a mouth that was made for cock sucking. Thinking about her sucking another man's cock makes me see red and makes me want to kill her. If you ask me, I have no idea who the hell this psycho Knox is. I've never been this bent over any girl before.

Just the thought of her sucking me again has me hard in my jeans. My cock feels like it's about to break out of it any second.

When I get there, I park a few houses down from hers and sit there for a few minutes. Her mom's car is in the driveway but I don't care. I'll find a way in there when I'm ready. It seems like luck is on my side because ten minutes later, I see her mom coming out the door and getting into her car before driving away.

I wait about a minute after she leaves before getting out of my car and walking over to their house. I use the key I stole from my father's office since this is one of his properties. I quietly open and then close the door behind me before making my way up the stairs. I know the layout of all these houses like the back of my hand.

Once I'm up the stairs, I walk over to the room that has the low glow of light coming out from under the door and slowly open it. I peek inside. She isn't in here, so I walk in like I own the place. I hear her shower going and decide to look around a bit. I rifle through her dresser and her closet. I come across her laundry hamper.

I open it and look inside and see a pair of sexy panties right at the top of the pile of clothes. I'm instantly annoyed. Who the hell is she wearing these for? I pick them up and feel that their wet.

I bring it up to my nose and take a sniff. It smells as good as I remember her smell. It's definitely fresh. Without thinking, I lick some of the wetness off of her panties. I barely manage to suppress the groan that wants to slip out of me.

She tastes better than I expected if I'm being honest. It's a heady and intoxicating smell and all I want right now is to get it directly from the source. I can already imagine how juicy her pussy is and it's making me hard as fuck.

Without thinking, I take the panties and put them into my pocket. I'm definitely going to use them to jack off in later tonight. I can't believe she's reduced me to stealing her panties. I've never even thought about doing that with

anyone else. Now I'm mad but not mad enough to put them back.

Once they're tucked away inside my pants pocket, I pull my phone out from the other one and then hit record. I hide it on the dresser that's directly in front of her bed. I make sure it's hidden well and in a spot where she won't be able to see it. I also make sure that it's set so I can capture the best view of what's about to happen.

After I'm done, I toe off my shoes and then get onto her bed. I prop myself up against her pillow and lie there in the middle of her bed with my arms behind my head, waiting for her to get out of the shower. She's in for one hell of a surprise.

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CHAPTER

Fourteen

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RAINE

I'M...

I actually have no idea how I'm feeling to be honest. My emotions are all jumbled up in a huge mess that I can't seem to straighten out.

After Knox left me there in that room, it took a while for me to get myself together. When I finally did, I went back into the main building and to class. I didn't know what else to do with myself at the time, and I couldn't leave. I had detention, and I'd get into more trouble if I skipped it.

Thank God he wasn't in class when I got there. I didn't think I could've faced him so soon after what happened. I was sitting in my seat, just minding my own business. when Ivy came right up to my desk along with her cronies.

"What the fuck were you doing outside with Knox?" She spits her words out at me. I aim to ignore her but she grabs my hair and twists so that I'm looking directly at her. Why the hell did I decide to come to class early today?

"I wasn't with him, you fucking idiot!" I snap. "In case you haven't noticed, I'm not fucking friends with the guy!"

"I saw you coming out of that building right after him, you fucking slut!" she snaps at me. I wasn't going to say anything but everyone here is just pissing me the fuck off. I push her away from me and get right up in her face.

"Ask your friend over there," I say, pointing to the girl who was in the room earlier with Knox. "Ask her if she liked sucking his dick because I sure as hell wasn't the one doing it!" I snap at her.

By now students have come into class and are witnessing our argument, and I hear the gasps and snickers at my words. "Instead of being so fucking concerned with me, maybe you should take a look at your so-called friends!"

With those final words to her, I stomp back over to my desk and sit down with a huff. She lets out a scream as she turns to the girl—I have no idea what her name is—and advances on her, still screaming and cursing at the girl.

I'd laugh but I'm not in the mood to feel satisfied at outing her friend to her. They're all just bitches here. The teacher finally comes in a minute later and class begins. I try to pay attention but my mind wanders the entire class.

I'm starting to lose focus and I've seen my grades in the tests start to drop. I really need to focus more if I want to get into college. But how the hell am I supposed to do that when I've been constantly stressed out?

I still hear the whispers and taunts when I walk through the halls or even when I'm sitting in my seat. I ignore as much as I can but their fucking words hurt like hell.

I just wish it would all end. My depression is also getting worse—the constant despair I keep feeling on the inside,

and the way I'm barely managing to care about the important things. No wonder my grades are starting to slip.

For the rest of the class and the afternoon, my mind constantly wanders back to the room with Knox. It's like I still can't comprehend what the hell happened but I also kind of liked it. I don't know what kind of moron he's turning me into, but I don't like it one bit.

Or maybe I do and that's why I keep letting him do things to me. Maybe I am just as fucked in the head as he seems to be. I don't know how to even dissect that. Now I'm mad at myself because like everyone here, I'm bending to the king's will. I'm such a stupid, stupid girl for letting that happen.

He said he's found a new use for me and that is to become his fucktoy. I have no idea what that means—well, I do, but I'm not sure what that entails. I mean, will he fuck me even though he hates me? He wouldn't, right? His hate is so much bigger than he is. Do I want him to? Right now, I'm not even sure what my answer is.

I can't fathom the thought of someone like him wanting me, like I've wanted him since I laid eyes on him—before I knew what an asshole he was. Feeling all those things for him was my first mistake.

He's been nothing but a menace to me ever since I started this school and I'm still clueless as to why he hates me so much. Maybe I'll never get the answer to that question. He's so tight-lipped about everything.

Along with being a jerk and an asshole, he's also confusing as fuck. When I told him I had sex with other guys, he almost threw a fucking fit. And again, I have no

clue why. Guess the asshole isn't that heartless after all and he cares more than he wants to admit.

One minute, he wants to kill me and the next, he's acting all possessive and shit. He's probably bipolar. That's the only explanation I can come up with when it comes to Knox. It's so apparent that he doesn't know what he really wants and his indecision is what's making me more of a target for him.

With that indecision, it's like he gets hot and cold as the mood strikes him when it comes to me. He's either saying some dumb shit to me or he's telling me things like I'm his fucktoy to play with. I'm getting whiplash from all his mood swings.

He also confused me when he let me know, in no uncertain terms, that he can demand to have me anytime and anywhere he wants and that scares me. Who the hell knows when he'll come calling?

I'm beginning to think that everyone in this town are all unhinged fuckers, and all I want to do is get away from them. However, that's not possible until I leave for college. Just a few more months to go before that happens. I have a feeling that might just be my only saving grace if I'm being honest with myself.

When the last class of the day ends, I head to the detention room and sit there, bored out of my mind until I remember I have homework to catch up on since I've been slipping. I'm glad nothing else happened after my run-in with Ivy. All I want to do right now is go home and take a long, hot shower and then crawl into bed where I can hide. I wish I could hide for the rest of the year. Everything

inside me feels heavy with the weight of all the stress I have to carry and I just don't want to deal with it anymore.

Plus, Trent is making life difficult for me. He won't leave me alone. I always thwart his advances but it's like the guy can't take a hint and that's when he gets nasty. That's why I try to keep my head down as much as I can, but then Knox makes doing that difficult.

As the days go by, things seem to get worse, little by little, and the fear of the unknown is really starting to set in. None of the teachers would be any help and I'm afraid that if I do say something, then it'll get worse for me. I've stayed quiet so far, and I'm just hoping for the best at this point.

But having to constantly look over your shoulder, wondering if something is going to happen, really takes its toll on you. By the time I do make it home, it's close to five in the afternoon. When I walk into the house, I see Mom is already home and dressed up.

"Hey, honey. How come you're home so late today?" she asks as I drop my bag onto the kitchen counter. I'm starving right now since I didn't get a chance to eat lunch. This is the first time Mom has been home early in a while... A second later, it all clicks in my head. She was probably home late every night because she was spending time with Knox's dad.

"Uh, I had to stay late in the library to help Kinsley with something," I tell her. It's not a lie since I'm usually in the library every day, but today it's a lie. I can't let her know that I had detention.

"Oh, that's nice," Mom says as she puts a plate of chicken Alfredo pasta in front of me. I don't waste any time digging in.

"Going somewhere?" I ask casually.

"Just out on a date with Jonathan," she says, all smiles with a dopey look in her eyes.

"Does uh, does his son know?" I ask with an air of nonchalance, so she doesn't know how tied up in knots I really am about Knox finding out.

"No. I don't think Jonathan's had a chance to tell his son yet. Why? Are you two friends?" she asks in such a happy tone, like she's wishing we were friends. But how do you tell your mom that the son of the man she's about to marry hates your guts? Simple answer, you don't.

"Come on, Mom. He's the popular guy at school, and I'm just me. No way would he be friends with someone like me,"

"Stop it right there, young lady. You're gorgeous and anyone would be lucky to be your friend," she says, before walking over to me and wrapping me up in a hug.

"You're just saying that because you're obligated to." I huff.

"Oh shush," she says, squeezing me a little tighter. "Well, I've got to run. You're on your own tonight,"

"That's fine, Mom. I'm not a kid, you know? I'm old enough to stay by myself," I tell her, rolling my eyes.

"I know, smartass." She grins at me.

"Well, have fun on your date. I'm just going to take a bath and probably spend the rest of the night in bed

reading or something,” I say, knowing she was going to ask what my plans are.

“Okay. Well you have fun too, sweetheart. I’ll probably be coming back late, so you don’t need to wait up,” she says.

“Okay,” I respond as I get up from my chair and wash my plate in the sink. She grabs her stuff and walks over to give me a kiss on the forehead before heading out the door.

Once my mess is cleaned, I walk up the stairs to my room and walk straight into the bathroom. I need to soak the filth of the day away, and nothing helps more than a hot bath. I fill the tub with some bath salts, a bath bomb, and some essential oils to help me de-stress.

As soon as I step into the hot water and sit down in the tub, it feels like heaven. I can already feel the water helping to loosen up the knots in my body. I lie back and close my eyes for a second, letting the scent wash over my senses.

Lying there, somehow, I fall asleep. When I open my eyes, the water is cold and I look like a prune. I step out of the tub and into the shower to rinse off my skin before finishing up and drying myself.

I wrap the towel around my body and then walk back into my room. The night-light I have on casts a serene glow in my room. Taking my towel off, I toss it in my hamper next to my dresser and then grab a pair of panties from the top drawer before bending down to grab pajamas from the bottom one, when suddenly a male voice comes from behind me.

"Bend down some more and let me get a better view of that fat ass," he says, and I let out a scream at the unexpectedness of Knox's voice. I know it's him. He's the only asshole that calls me fat ass. What the hell is he even doing in my room and how the hell did he get in?

I spin around, and there, lying down in the middle of my bed with both arms behind his head and legs sprawled out as if he belongs here or like he owns the place, is Knox motherfucking Riverside.

"What the hell are you doing in here? Are you trying to give me a heart attack?" I shriek at him.

"Mmm, the view from the front is better than the back. You've been hiding that nice fat pussy from me," he says instead of answering my question. He has an evil smirk across his face and I remember I'm naked. I scramble to go put on my clothes but his words halt me.

"No. Stop," he growls out.

"Wh-what?" I croak out. I feel vulnerable standing naked in front of him. I mean, the guy hates the sight of me with clothes on, so I'm not sure how he's feeling right now with me naked. From the stony look on his face, I'm leaning toward hate.

"Don't put anything on and get over here and onto the bed," he says in a sultry yet hard tone that I can't quite figure out. Or maybe I'm just imagining the sultry part. I can't do what he wants though. I know where it will lead if I get onto that bed.

Without giving it another thought, I quickly pull the panties on and keep the pajamas in my hand as I make a break for my door. I've just reached the bottom of the stairs

when his big, strong body collides with mine and we both go tumbling onto the floor. I land on my stomach with him on my back. His body engulfs mine. He's huge.

"Going somewhere?" he asks as he puts his nose to my neck and sniffs. "Mmm, smells good. Makes me want to devour you whole."

"Get off me, asshole!" I snap and try to buck him off me, but he's too heavy. I take a deep breath and I smell the weed and alcohol emanating from him. "Are you fucking high right now?"

"Shut the fuck up. I'm the one asking the questions here," he snaps. "Did you know?"

"Know what?" I ask, playing dumb like I don't know what he's talking about.

"Don't act like one of those bimbos that walk the halls of our school. It doesn't fucking suit you! Did you know that my dad and your whore of a mom are getting married?" he bites his words out. I guess he finally knows.

"Um..."

"Answer the fucking question before I tear you apart!" he snaps. I try to get him off me again but the big oaf doesn't even budge. "Fuck yeah, my little fucktoy! You're making my cock rock hard for this fat pussy," he growls in my ear, and his words cause a shiver to run down my back.

"You're sick!" I yell at him but the words don't have any bite to them. Because if he's sick, then I am too.

"Don't act like you don't fucking love it when I treat you like my little slut or when I'm face fucking you. Tell me why is that? If I'm sick, then you're just as bad as I am. Know matter how much you try to put on that good girl act,

you're always dripping for me whenever I touch you." He sneers his words at me, and I stay quiet. What the hell can I say to that?

Without warning, he places his hand over my nose and mouth and he lifts my head backward. He puts his mouth on my neck and bites. I scream but it's muffled by his hand. Shit! This is definitely going to leave a mark.

"Answer my fucking question!" he snaps and then moves his hand away.

"Yes! Yes, I fucking knew!" I scream at him.

"How long have you known?"

"Since Friday," I grumble.

"Get the fuck up. Tonight, I'm taking this pussy. For now, it's mine," he growls out.

I realize he's been pissed the whole time he's been here and now I know why. It's because he finally got the news. Shit. This won't be good for me.

"What's yours? What the hell are you even talking about? I'm not yours!" I sputter.

"Are you forgetting the part where I made you into my slave? Because I haven't, and you will do as you're told. Otherwise, that video of you sucking my cock like it was your last meal will go public. Try me bitch!" he snarls with venom in his voice. It's a wonder it isn't killing him from the inside out with how toxic he is.

He gets to his feet a second later. As soon as I'm on mine, I make a run for it again. I don't know where the hell I'm going with only panties on, but I need to get away from him. I don't want him to find out my secret. *Oh you know, the one where I'm still a freaking virgin.*

I don't want to give him the satisfaction of knowing that. He anticipates my move and grabs me by the back of the neck before slamming me against the wall, turning me in the process so that I'm facing him. He moves in closer and puts his hand around my throat. He's so close that I can feel his breath on mine and his hard cock between us.

"Don't make me have to remind you who is really running the show here tonight. If you don't do as you're told from here on out, I'll fuck you up more than I intended to," he grinds out right in my face.

"What the fuck do you want and why are you here? It's not like I can fucking change our parents' minds, asshole!" I shout at him. I'm so frustrated right now.

"Oh, you have no fucking clue, do you?" He snickers ominously.

"Clue about what?" I question, but he just laughs in my face.

"I'll leave that for you to find out on your own. But in the meantime, I think you're forgetting that you're in my town and I rule everything here," he tells me, as he starts to trail his hand down my neck. When he gets to my breasts, he squeezes one of them so hard I let out a scream from the pain.

I close my eyes, not wanting to witness what he's doing to me. I don't want to admit it to him or myself that I like it. He starts to move his hand lower but I grab it to stop his movements. He's stronger than I am and his hand keeps going lower. He stops on my stomach and I can feel his stare on me a second later. I know what he's seeing even though I can't see his expression.

"What's this?" he questions as his finger brushes the scar on my stomach. My eyes snap open at his continued touch there.

"Nothing. I don't want to talk about it, especially not with you of all people," I snap. He clenches his jaw at my refusal to give him a part of me. But truthfully, he already has parts of me. He just doesn't know it.

"You're going to tell me someday." He smirks.

"No, because you don't rule me, asshole!"

"No, but I already own your body. I'm about to own your pussy and soon I'll own your mind as well," he says with a smirk on his devilishly handsome face. "Tell me, are you already wet for me?"

"No."

"So if I touch this cunt, it won't be flowing with juice? Just primed and ready for my cock to slip inside?" he says, and his words are doing just that. Fucking hell, he has a filthy mouth on him.

"Such a little liar," he whispers as his hand finally reach into my panties. His fingers touch my clit and my body jolts with the contact. He moves his fingers until he's right between my pussy lips. He rubs along the length of my wet slit before he pushes his finger inside me. A whimper escapes me with how good it feels and I'm not fast enough to keep it in.

"Tsk, ts, just another slut, aren't you?" he whispers.

"If I am, then why the hell are you here? I didn't ask you to come over here, dickhead!" I snap at him.

"Ooo, I love it when you get feisty. It makes me hard as fucking stone and ready to get inside that cunt of yours."

He smirks.

“Don’t flatter yourself. I was just thinking about the guy I fucked last night. And that was what had me so turned on in the shower. I was heading into my room to finish myself off. That’s what you interrupted and why I’m wet in the first place,” I say smugly.

His face morphs into anger and there’s a thunderous expression there. I gulp at the force of it. I think I went a little too far with my words. But hey, the guy is always pissing me the fuck off.

Knox grabs my throat, this time with so much more anger and force than before. I claw at his hands with my own, but he’s too strong for me. He’s cutting off my air supply.

“Who the hell did you give my cunt to? I think I made it clear to you what would happen if you let anyone so much as touch you! You’re so much like the fucking whore your mother is!” he snaps as he slams me back against the wall. My head bounces off the wall and I cry out at the impact.

When it feels like I’m about to pass out, he lets go of me and I crumple to the floor. I’m coughing and gasping, trying to get air into my lungs but it’s difficult. I look up at him from my spot on the floor at his feet with tears streaming down my face. All I see is the disgust written on his face.

“Get the fuck up!” he snaps angrily.

When I don’t move, he hauls me up and onto my feet before throwing me over his shoulders and walking back up the stairs with me. He walks into my room and throws me onto my bed before moving to close and lock my bedroom door. I realize that I’m trapped in here with a predator if

the look in his eyes is anything to go by. I scramble back against my headboard and watch him track my movements.

"Please don't do this," I beg, but he doesn't utter a word in response.

"I told you that you'd pay if you let another man touch what's mine, didn't I? Now you have no one else to blame for your stupidity," he growls at me as he advances toward the bed. He begins to strip his clothes off and I gulp down the lump in my throat. This really is about to happen.

When his shirt is off, I'm terrified, but I also can't stop looking at his body. He's carved to perfection and I'm mesmerized. *I'm doing a shit job of trying to escape from him.*

A second later, he's fully naked and my mouth goes dry at the sight of his nakedness. All I want to do is lick those abs.

God really was playing favorites when he created Knox Riverside and I'm not mad at all. Holy hell, the man is fucking perfection mixed with lots of sin. And my soon-to-be stepbrother...

But boy, let me tell you, how much I want to sin right now, or rather for the rest of my life if that sin involves indulging myself in him. In case I didn't tell you already, yep, I'm freaking broken.

He might hate my guts but that doesn't mean I can't want him still. I mean, no one really loves the taste of alcohol but yet we all consume it to our fill when we want to, don't we? And right now, I feel like doing the same to him.

He grabs a hold of my legs and pulls me down the bed, back toward him, before he crawls over me. He straddles my waist and then moves up an inch, holding his cock in front of my face. I gasp when I see the ring that's on the tip of his cock. I think I see another one on the underside too. Holy hell, that's hot! He definitely didn't have them on earlier, well the other two times that I've seen his cock up close and personal.

"Suck it bitch!" he growls. When I don't move, he threatens me, "I will fucking gag you with my cock and make you choke until you can't breathe anymore if you don't follow orders. After you're dead, I'll come on your lifeless body and leave you here sprawled out naked just like this. Like the little whore that you are!"

I slowly open my mouth because again, who the hell knows what this asshole is capable of? I mean, I don't think I really want to die yet, you know?

He wastes no time pushing his cock into my mouth and deep down my throat before pulling it out again and then starting a rhythm of thrusts. He grabs my hair to move my head up and down on his cock, and he lets out a long and pleasure-filled groan.

I'm glad that someone is enjoying this. Okay, fine! Don't call me out, I am kind of enjoying this like the sick little puppy that I am. I still can't get rid of whatever the hell it is I'm feeling for this guy.

His cock is covered in my saliva and he's practically choking me with his dick, but I want to keep doing it. The rings feel weird in my mouth and it's making me want to gag. But they also feel nice in a way... gah, help.

He pulls out of my mouth and then moves down my body again and this time he positions himself at the entrance to my pussy. I stiffen and try to move away from him but he grabs both of my legs tightly and keeps them open, as he wraps a hand around my throat to keep me in place.

“Kno—” I start but I’m cut off by the soul-wrenching scream ripping out of me. My entire body goes stiff as he slams his cock deep into me in one hard and powerful thrust of his hips. Losing your virginity fucking hurts.

A tear slips out of my eye and down my cheek. He became as still as a statue after my scream. A moment later, he leans over me to turn on my bedside lamp. I’m still sniffing as he looks down at me with disbelief and something else in his expression. Something that I have no idea what it is. I don’t have the mental capacity to decipher it right now.

All I can think about right now is how my pussy feels like it’s been put through a grinder. He pulls his cock until it’s halfway out of me and looks down at it. There’s blood on his dick and it’s also smeared across my legs. It looks like a massacre. If I wasn’t feeling so many emotions run through me, I’d probably be embarrassed. But right now, I don’t care.

“Yo-you were a fucking virgin?” he asks in disbelief. He goes to pull the rest of the way out but I stop him.

“You’ve already fucking ruined me, so the least you can do is finish what you started, asshole! In case it wasn’t obvious, I fucking hate you!” I scream at him.

More tears stream down my face. I’m so fucking confused. I thought I wanted it but... I have no clue how to

explain the things I'm feeling. He pulls out of me completely and gets off the bed like his ass is on fire.

"Let me get you—" he starts, but I cut him off.

"Either fuck me and finish what you started or get the fuck out!" I shout at him. "You've done enough and I want to be left alone."

"But—"

"Please! I swore I wouldn't fall this low, but I'm fucking begging you to just go!" I sob as my emotions finally take over my body.

He stands there for a few minutes, not knowing what to do. But then he moves over to the foot of the bed and I'm not prepared for what he does next. He pulls me down the bed and spreads my legs before he starts to lick my pussy.

He gives me one long lick from my slit to my clit and then he looks up at me. His mouth is covered with my virgin blood and I'm mortified. He licks his lips before diving into my pussy again. A burst of pleasure engulfs me. It's a feeling I've never experienced. I've got to say, I could become addicted to it. Or maybe I want to become addicted to Knox's mouth on my pussy. A groan escapes me when he nibbles my pussy lips a little. This feels amazing and I definitely want to experience more of it.

When he's done, he crawls over my body again so that his face is directly in front of mine. He grabs my face, his hand holding me on the side of the neck and the other on my jaw as he turns my face so that I'm staring into his face. He whispers another one of his threats.

"Nobody else touches this cunt except me," he says gruffly. *What a fucking prick.*

"You don't own me," I say just to piss his ass off.

"Your virgin blood on my cock and tongue say differently," he growls.

"Fuck off, asshole!"

"I'm going to have to teach you how to ride my cock better because that was the worst sex of my life. Maybe it would've been good if you were a hundred pounds lighter," he says smugly. My throat closes. He just shattered the last bit of confidence left and he doesn't even know the destruction his words are causing. Then again, he said them, so I'm guessing that was the aim.

He stands up, moves to my dresser and picks up his phone. He does something on it before turning it to show me. I see that it was a video of us having sex just now. My mouth drops open in shock at the audacity of him.

I lose it and hop off the bed, jumping on him and trying to get the phone away, but he thwarts me and we both go tumbling to the ground.

"You bastard! Why the hell would you fucking video us?" I scream at him while aiming at his naked chest and scraping my nails on his chest. I want him to hurt the way he always seems to hurt me whenever he's around.

"For insurance purposes," he tells me, smirking.

I don't know how the hell he could be smirking right now when I've just experienced so many emotions in a span of a few minutes.

"I hate you!" I scream at him.

"I don't give a fuck, slut! Now, if I were you, I'd lose some weight because this was just a pity fuck. I wanted to have more dirt on you,"

"Then why the fuck are you claiming me?" I question.

"I'm not," he answers.

"Then I guess I am free to fuck anyone I damn well please! Maybe I'll start with the entire fucking football team!" I snap at him.

"Try it. I fucking dare you!" he snaps.

"Just get the fuck out, asshole!" I shriek at him, tired to the bone of always having to fight him. I'm so exhausted. I just want everyone to leave me alone so that I can live in peace.

He pushes me off him and then gets to his feet and puts his clothes on without looking at me. I'm just lying on the floor, curled up in a ball. I don't have the energy to move yet. He leaves without saying another word. Once I hear the front door slam closed behind him, I burst into gut-wrenching sobs.

I cry for all the pain and stress I've been facing since coming here, all the times I've had to fight for myself, and all the times I let his words cut me to the core, chipping away at my soul, piece by piece.

I don't know how long I lie there but eventually I get up and walk into my bathroom. I fill the tub halfway and then open the cabinet to get what I need. I move into the tub and sit there, looking at the razor I just took out of the cabinet. I open it and start cutting.

I watch as crimson lines appear on my forearm. I keep cutting as sobs shake my entire body. I move to my stomach and carve all the names that they call me onto my skin. *Cow, ugly, fat, whore, slut, pig...*

By the time I'm done, I'm sitting in a bathtub filled with bloody water. By cutting, I know my depression is back full force and there's no way to stop it. I know things will only go downhill from here.

I slowly manage to pull myself out of the tub and go into my room. I don't have the energy to dry my skin. I crawl into bed and cover myself from head to toe, praying for sleep to come quick tonight.

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CHAPTER

Fifteen

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RAINE

I WOKE up this morning feeling low. Lower than I've ever felt in my entire existence. My mind constantly wanders back to what happened last night.

I'm not a virgin anymore...

That's kind of a lot to process so I'm just going to put it at the back of my mind for now. Though between my legs is sore and I wince every time I even make the slightest movement.

I'm also trying to figure out what is wrong with me, because I feel things for someone that has psycho tendencies. I don't know why I seem to like it when he's rough with me or when he degrades me. That is a mystery to me.

But back to the whole virginity bit. I still can't believe it happened with Knox of all people. On the one hand. I kind of liked it but then, I didn't when he was back to being his usual asshole self. On the other hand, I didn't exactly want to lose my virginity yesterday. But I guess what's done is done, and I can't do anything about it.

I still can't believe that the asshole chased me through the house when I tried to get away from him. When I saw his expression, he was still definitely pissed from the news of our parents but he was also enjoying the chase. I'd love to know what kind of kinks he's into because I'm sure he's into a lot of them.

I'm beginning to think that maybe he's not right in the head. Chasing me around was definitely a turn on for the psycho if I was being honest.

I was acting like a bitch in heat for him when he touched me. Guess something is wrong with me too. It seems as though I'm just as sick as he is.

I mean it was hot—*not the point, Raine...*

The good feeling I felt disappeared when he said all those mean things to me right after.

Cow, ugly, fat, whore, slut, pig...

I went from feeling good to feeling dirty all over. The words everyone usually utters fill my head yet again. It seems as though they're always at the forefront of my mind and it hurts. The words have a life of their own. They keep screaming inside my head all day. I don't know how to keep them at bay anymore. I'm starting to fall apart and coping is getting harder and harder the longer I'm in this town.

I know you shouldn't let other people's words bother you but when you keep hearing the same thing over and over again, it starts to leave scars. Some of them might be invisible scars, but they're scars, nonetheless.

I wish I didn't exist anymore because my existence fucking sucks. Why can't people just be kind and nice? Why do they have to tear someone down just to feel better about

themselves or to make themselves feel more important around the people doing the same shit? It's like a race to see who can humiliate the new girl the worst.

The world would be such an amazing place if we didn't have to constantly deal with hate from other people toward us when we're just trying to exist and not bother anyone.

Even if it isn't affecting us directly, it still hurts. No one deserves to be treated like they don't matter. I wish the hateful people realized that. Just because you're different, it doesn't mean anyone should look down on you.

I wish the world I lived in right now was a better place to be. I know it's wishful thinking but a girl can dream, can't she?

I roll over in my bed and once I'm lying on my tummy, I instantly feel the twinge of pain from the cuts I made on my stomach last night after Knox left. I hate that I did that, but it felt cathartic somehow. It made me think about something other than the pain and confusion embedded in my heart and soul.

I keep wondering why everyone hates me when I've done nothing to them. Even when I try to keep to myself, it never works out. Someone is always doing something to me to make themselves look important to the rest of the masses.

A knock sounds on my door and a moment later, my mom pokes her head into my room. I didn't know what time she came home last night since I was dealing with my own shit.

"Honey, are you okay? You're not up yet. Are you not going to school today?" she asks as she walks into my room

to check on me.

"I don't feel too good, Mom. My tummy and head hurt. Can I stay home today?" I ask, hoping she'll say yes, no questions asked. It's not often I ask to stay home so I'm guessing she's worried if the expression on her face is anything to go by. She sits on the side of my bed and checks my forehead with a frown on her face.

"Do you want me to take you to the doctor? I can call out of work today," she tells me.

"No, Mom. It's okay. It's just one of those days, you know?"

"Okay, fine. You can stay home today. But call me if whatever you're feeling gets worse," she demands and I roll my eyes playfully.

"I'll be okay, Mom. I'm not a five-year-old, you know," I tell her, laughing.

"Well, I don't care how old you are, I'll always be worried and you'll always be my baby," she tells me matter-of-factly.

"Yeah, yeah. Really, Mom, I'm fine. I'll just spend the day relaxing in bed. Maybe the stress of moving and the new school has gotten to me a little bit. But you'll see, by tomorrow, I'll be as fit as a horse," I tell her, giving her the biggest and fakest smile I can muster. Now it's her turn to roll her eyes at me.

"I'll make you some breakfast and leave it on your bed. Go take a shower and maybe you'll feel a little better. Then you can sleep it off," she tells me as she gets up from my bed.

“You don’t have to, Mom. You’ll be late—” I start to say but then cut myself off.

“Relax, besides, I’m still early,” she says, giving me a smile.

I forgot. She’s boning the boss so I don’t think she’d get into trouble for being late. I’m still trying to wrap my head around the fact that she’s dating Knox’s dad. As if the douche needs another reason to hate me.

I sigh and then send Kinsley a text, asking her what her plans for the day are. I’m wondering if she’ll go to school or if she’ll ditch and come hang out with me. After texting her, I slowly make my way out of my bed and walk into my bathroom. I take my clothes off and throw them into the hamper. I stand in front of the mirror for a few minutes and look at the cuts I made last night and my body in general.

I hate how it looks. I was just starting to feel comfortable in the body I have but the constant voices tearing me down has made me hate it again. I’ll never be a skinny girl no matter what I do or how hard I try. I hate the old scar and now the new ones with all the slurs I’ve been called written on my skin with the razor blade I used last night. I look at the red outlines and whisper them out at myself in the mirror.

When the last word leaves my lips, I feel myself get choked up and tears stream down my face.

Trying not to make a sound, in case my mom comes back into my room while I’m in here, I choke back the tears and will myself to stop crying. Once I do, I brush my teeth and then step into the shower to take a quick one.

I really don't feel too hot today. My body is dragging and I'm moving so slow, almost as though I'm in some sort of fog I can't get out of.

Okay, maybe I'm being a chicken. I don't want to face Knox or anyone else today. What if I go to school today and they all know what happened? I mean, he's blackmailing me. He has video evidence of what happened between us not once but twice, and I can't deal with any of that today. I want to hide and act like things are fine. It's fine, everything is totally fine.

I turn the water on and as soon as the hot water touches my skin, I let out a hiss at the pain caused by the hot water touching my skin. Fucking hell, that shit hurts.

I quickly wash myself and hop out of the shower. No need to torture myself more than I already have. I dry my skin and wrap my towel around my body before walking back into my room.

I head for my closet and take out one of my oversized hoodies and a pair of shorts to wear. I can't let my mom see any of the cuts I made on my skin or she'd kill me herself. Plus, there's the bite mark that Knox left on my neck.

In all honesty, I don't want her to lecture me or anything like that. Right now, I wouldn't even be able to explain what the hell is happening with me, which is too much at once. I'm barely hanging on by a thread here.

When I come back out of my closet, I see that she's left my food on a tray on my bed. I walk over and sit down on my bed before digging in. She made toast and eggs along with a glass of apple juice.

I take about two bites of my food and then stop when I hear the voices in my head telling me that I shouldn't eat because I'm already overweight.

They all reverberate in my head on a constant loop and I push the food away, having lost my appetite. I let out a groan as I move to put the tray on the nightstand next to my bed.

I hate that it feels like I'm letting the bullies win, but my confidence has already taken a hit. I don't know how to get my old self back—the one who didn't care what others thought of her.

I'm so fucking exhausted right now, I think I'm just going to sleep the rest of the day away. Mom probably left already, so I walk out of my room and into hers. I walk straight into her bathroom and search in her medicine cabinet for her sleeping pills.

I grab two. I think that should be enough and walk back into my room. I took valium from her which is way better than Advil PM since this is prescribed to her. This is the good stuff and will make me sleep for the rest of the day since I'm tired anyway.

I grab a bottle of water from my nightstand and down it along with the two pills and then crawl into bed. I lie, staring up at the ceiling, and a few minutes later, I feel the pills beginning to work. In no time, I'm passed out.

CHAPTER

Sixteen

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KNOX

I LIE in bed as my mind goes through everything that happened yesterday—from finding out that my dad and Raine’s mom are getting married, to letting my anger take over me and going over there because I wanted to make her hurt.

But that backfired because I finally gave in to the lust I’ve been feeling for weeks. She can act like she doesn’t want me, but her body’s reaction to me can’t deny it. I was really fucking surprised that she was a virgin.

Even though she’s nerdy and isn’t a social butterfly, I’d thought she’d at least had sex before. I wouldn’t change a thing about fucking her. Now that I know I’m the only man who’s ever been inside her pussy, I’m going to make sure it stays that way.

I don’t know why I feel this way about her, knowing what I know, but I can’t fucking help myself. That’s why she’s now my toy to play with as I wish. She knows what’s at stake here so she better do as she’s told. I’m going to use her pussy until I get tired of it and then I’ll discard her

like the nothing that she is. I'll make sure she feels the brunt of all my anger.

I was so pissed and fucking gutted when I heard the news from my father. It hasn't even been a full month yet since my mother was buried, and he's getting married again? What a fucking inconsiderate asshole. I had a feeling this was coming.

Sometimes I get so consumed with anger that all I want to do is strangle her and watch the life bleed out of her and that thought scares me. I've never wanted to hurt someone the way I want to hurt her.

I'm an asshole, yes, but I've never contemplated outright killing someone before. Lately, that's all I want to do when I think about her. Maybe if I did what I wanted to do, then the pain inside me will lessen or just go away all together.

Don't worry, I know it doesn't fucking work like that even if I wish it did. The hate for my father consumes me on days when I'm vulnerable. I know he didn't put a gun to her head, but the things he did were what sent her over the edge and made her do what she did. I'm still pissed at her too.

In all honesty, yesterday did not turn out how I expected it to. In a way, you can say it backfired on me. When I got to her house, all I wanted to do was make her bleed—well, technically, I did make her bleed... on my cock.

When I left and came home last night, as soon as I was in my room, I shut the door and took the panties I stole from her out of my pocket and jacked off in them many times. I rubbed my cock in them until it was raw. Messing up her panties with my cum was such a turn on.

Her virgin status really surprised me because she was mouthing off and telling me about the many men she's fucked just to get under my skin. That shit worked because I've never been more pissed in my entire life.

The idea of someone else touching what was mine made me almost go feral on her ass. She's lucky I didn't go full force on her last night or she really would have hated me then. Or she wouldn't because she's apparently a slut for my rough treatments.

In order to get over this little inconvenient infatuation I'm feeling for her, I guess I'll just have to fuck all my hate out on her body. She has no idea what she got herself into yesterday after I took that tight virgin pussy and she bled all over my cock. Even the taste of her virgin blood on my tongue was like an aphrodisiac that made me want more and more of it.

Now, just thinking about her taste and her blood on my tongue has my cock so hard, it wouldn't mind riding that pussy for all it was worth again and making sure it got its fill this time.

I look at the clock and see that it's still early. I'll just have to go with the old hand treatment. I grab the lube that's in my nightstand drawer and then squeeze some out of the bottle and into my hand before rubbing it on my cock.

I wrap her clean panties that I washed after I was finished last night around my cock and begin stroking into it again. The fabric against the skin of my dick feels so good and I begin to move my hand faster, building up the momentum, so that I can come quickly.

I stroke it harder and faster as I think about how it felt when my cock entered her tight and fat pussy for the first time. A groan slips out of me because it felt like fucking heaven when I first slid inside her hole.

This girl must be a fucking witch or something. That's the only way I can describe her. No other pussy has ever made me feel this way. I still don't know what to make of it. I mean, I still hate her with a passion unlike anything I've ever felt before but lately, I don't know how to explain it except that she's my property.

I don't want her, but I also want her.

Fucking hell, I need therapy for this shit. Even if I did want her, want her... I don't know if I'd ever be able to get rid of the hate I feel for her. Or if I'd be able to look at her without wanting to taint her like I've been doing.

I've been keeping an eye on her and seeing everything my minions have been doing. It's fun to watch her crawl into her shell when she's the center of attention, and it's never any good attention. Oh well. I don't have it in me to let go of the hate I feel for her. I need to make her suffer because I know it will make my father suffer. That's the only thing I want right now. It's the only way I'll feel like I'm avenging my mother's death.

I'm still stroking my cock and now I squeeze it tightly and watch as precum leaks from the tip and onto the fabric of her panties, wishing it was her tight cunt wrapped around me again. I smile at the fact that I took something she wouldn't have given me, but then again she probably would have. The girl is obsessed with me even though she pretends to hate me.

She always has eyes on me when she thinks I'm not looking, but I know and see everything that happens. I hope she catches on to that fact soon. My devious plan to use her as my own personal fucktoy is the best I've ever had, and I'll do all that I can to use her body against her.

I'll make her want and crave me so bad, and when she's so obsessed and needs me like the air she breathes, that's when I'll drop her ass and crush her. With that thought in my head, I start to cum and a grunt leaves me as I spill my seed all over her panties again. That felt so fucking good. I feel better now.

I get up and walk into my bathroom to shower since I have early morning practice. I'll have to wait until sometime later today to get what I want, which is her cunt on my cock again. Yep, the fucking witch definitely cast a spell on me.

If just thinking about her has me coming this hard, I can't wait to see how it'll be when I take her pussy again and fuck her to completion this time.

I was amazed at how well she took the whole length of my cock, even though it was her first time. Not many of the sluts here can do that. If I didn't hate her so much, I'd probably snatch her up and lock her away somewhere. But I'll just have to settle for her being nothing more than my dirty little secret.

I don't care what people think of me but I can't be hating her in public, and then letting everyone know I'm fucking her. What would be the point? So yeah, she's my dirty secret for now.

Once I'm ready, I head out the door and into my car. I head for school before Coach sends out a search party for me.

Coach is making us practice early since our semifinal game is coming up soon, and we need to be in tip-top shape. I mean, we already are but Coach likes to bust our balls sometimes.

I park in the parking lot and then get out of my Jeep and grab my bag before making my way to the field. The guys are already here, so I walk up to where they're sitting on the sideline.

"What's up, fuckers?" I say in greeting.

"You missed an epic party last night, dude!" Asher says in greeting.

"Well, I had an epic night away from you idiots, so I win!" I say, smirking at them.

"He's smirking too hard right now. Ohhh, homeboy got laid!" Axel ribs and I give him a devilish smile without answering.

"Well, don't keep us in suspense, dickhead! Who was it? And it better not be fucking Ivy again cause I'll chop your dick off myself! That girl is fucking deranged! She gives me the chills every time she comes around," Ez rants and visibly shivers at his own words. I just roll my eyes at him. Maybe he's not wrong because she has been a little cuckoo lately. Girl can't take a fucking hint or the word no.

"No it wasn't. That shit is dead," I snap. I can't believe I even fucked that psycho in the first place. She was there and willing and I needed to get laid, so I figured what the hell. Didn't know she'd turn into a clinger.

"Does she know that?" Ash asks, smirking as he tilts his head in the direction of the bleachers. I turn to see Ivy sitting a few benches away from Kinsley, watching us, well, me specifically. Ugh, what the hell is she even doing here this early?

"Apparently word got around about our early morning practice," Ax grumbles. There are more girls on the bleachers, all looking at the guys on the team.

"Damn, that girl is like a fucking roach that won't go away. By the way, Kinsley looks pissed as fuck for being here so early," I observe, laughing when Ash makes a face.

"Well, she'll just have to deal with that shit. We have some shit going on and I need to keep an eye on her," he grumbles.

"Care to share?" I ask, for asking sake. I don't really want to get into his business unless he's ready to share, but as his best friend, I have to ask, don't I?

"Care to share who you banged?" he asks in response.

"Touché, asshole, and no one important," I tell him.

"Then it was definitely someone important." Ax snickers.

"When are you assholes going to stop being pussies?" I ask in exasperation.

"When you tell us which pussy you stuck your dick into. Usually you're always one to brag. Unless it was a certain redhead." Ez snickers.

"No. Nobody wants to fuck that ugly cow!" I snap.

"I don't see why cause she's hot as fuck!" Ez says while grabbing his junk. I'm this close to punching him in the nuts.

“Shut the fuck up, asshole! And don’t go anywhere near her!” I snap just so he knows how serious I am.

“Man the fuck up and just say you like her, asshole. She’s not going to stay on the market forever. You might be a prissy prick when it comes to her but other people are interested in her. You better snatch her up before someone else does,” Ash tells me while snickering. The asshole is loving this. I think I need new friends. Clearly the ones I have don’t leave much to be desired.

“What are you dickheads talking about?” I ask, exasperated.

“Oh just that Trent has been sniffing around your girl and by sniffing, I mean he’s a persistent prick,” Ax says, grinning evilly at me. The expression on his face tells me he’s enjoying every moment of me close to losing my shit.

“What the fuck is that asshole’s problem?” I grumble irritated with this turn of events. I’m going to give this asshole a chance to fix his shit before I fix it for him. That prick doesn’t seem to understand the rules.

“Huddle up, guys!” Coach bellows to get everyone’s attention, and we all move closer to him. The guys and I will definitely have to come back to this conversation later. I want to know when this asshole has had the time to corner Raine and speak to her. All I know is that she better not be entertaining him, or I’m going to tan her ass for disobeying me.

We get started with practice and for the next two hours I think of nothing else but the ball on the field and my plays. Every time I’m on the field, nothing but the game is on my

mind. I absolutely love this game and nothing will ever change that for me.

We have a home game this Friday and we're playing Fairview, one of our rival schools. It's two towns over. I can't wait to kick their asses.

When we're finally done with practice, we all head to the locker room to shower and get changed for class.

"My ass is tired already. All I want to do is sleep," Ax groans as we all step into a stall.

"Not happening anytime soon until we win that semifinal game and then the finals. Coach is going to keep on our asses," I tell them, laughing because it's true. I think Coach wants to win this more than we do.

"Well I quit," Asher groans out.

"You can't because then Kinsley won't like you anymore," Ez goads him.

"Who cares? I don't even like her like that," he mumbles.

"Then you won't mind if I take her out on a date, right? That girl has made my cock hard from the first moment I ever laid eyes on her. The only reason I haven't made a move yet is because I thought you liked her back," Ez taunts him again.

"Ow, you fucker!" Ezra yells after I hear a scuffle outside my shower stall. I pop my head out of the curtain to see that Ash has Ez in a headlock.

"She. Is. Off. Limits. Dickhead!" Asher rumbles as they playfully rib one another. A second later, Asher lets go of him and Ezra bursts out laughing.

“Man, it’s so fucking easy to wind you and Knox up. I’m kidding but you dickheads are stupid! You both say you hate the girls and then when someone else wants them, you’re all like ‘touch her and you die.’ What type of dumbass shit is that anyway?” he questions.

“Just stay out of it!” Ash and I both yell at the same time, which causes Ezra to laugh even harder like the goofy idiot he is.

Most of the guys are already done and have left, and the few that are left just ignore us. They’re used to our shenanigans by now.

Ash and Ezra are standing outside their stalls, still naked, and I look up and see that Ax was also watching the show. For once though, he was quiet. When I look at his face, I can see why. He’s looking at Ez and there’s an expression I’ve never seen before on his face. It’s one of lust.

I have a feeling I know where this is going but I’m just gonna have to leave the two of them to figure it out. Clearly, they’re against it right now. Guess we’ll just have to see where this goes.

By the time we’re actually done in the locker room and head to class, we’re already fifteen minutes late. Though when we walk into class, Mr. Smith doesn’t say a word. He knows who really rules this school so he won’t chance saying a thing to us.

We all make our way to the back of the class and take our seats next to Kinsley. She ignores us but I don’t pay any mind to her. I look to the front of the class and see Raine’s chair is empty. I wonder if she’s running late.

As class goes on, she still doesn't show up. When my curiosity gets the better of me, I turn to ask Kinsley where she is.

"Have you seen Raine?" I ask but she continues to ignore me. I poke her in the side and she turns to me with a glare. I roll my eyes at her. She can be mad at me all she wants, but she knows what's at stake for her.

"How the hell would I know? I'm not supposed to be friends with her anymore, isn't that right?" she snaps before looking straight ahead again.

"Quit with the attitude, babe," Asher tells her sternly.

"Oh, bite me, asshole!" she snaps at him.

"Looks like someone is on their period," I grumble. If I wasn't looking at her when I said it, I would have missed the way she stiffened and the way she went pale.

"Oh, I know you want me to do that again because it led to you getting your pussy sucked real hard," Asher continues, not noticing her earlier expression. She turns beat red now and the guys and I snicker at Ash's words.

"You know, Kins, if you're tired of this asshole, we could always run away together," Ez tells her, giving Ash an evil smirk.

"Give me like a day or so and I'll be ready for you, big boy," Kinsley says, turning to look at Ez and giving him a wink.

"You! Shut the fuck up. And you! You better sit your little ass there and behave before I smack it until you can't fucking walk for a week!" Asher snaps at Ez and Kinsley, respectively. "It's like they want me to kill them," he grumbles and I just laugh at them.

This is why Kinsley had to make her choice on who she wanted to remain friends with. She's been a close part of us ever since she became my friend. We've had her back and we've never had anyone else who fit in with us like she does. This easy banter we have between us is everything. We all know that the ribbing is just for fun because when things get real, we have each other's back. That's all that matters.

I do feel bad that Kinsley has to give up her friend but on the other hand, I need Raine to suffer. Me hating her doesn't stop her from consuming my mind. I keep wondering where she is. How is it even possible to hate someone, yet still want them?

As soon as class is over, I get out of my seat, walk out of class, and make my way to the front doors.

"Oh, and where are we going right now?" Ez asks as he falls into step with me. I want to punch him in the face for his smug tone.

"Out," I say, feigning nonchalance.

"A certain redhead was absent from class today and suddenly lover boy is leaving school early? Me thinks it's not a coincidence," Ash drawls.

"Me thinks you should shut up and mind your own business," I grumble. "Besides, I forgot I had a doctor appointment."

They stop following me when we get to the doors and I'm glad. If they actually decided to come with, then they'd obviously know I don't actually have a doctor appointment.

"Tell her we said hi," they all say in unison.

"Who?"

“Raine, obviously,” Ez answers, rolling his eyes.

“I’m not—” I start and then Ash cuts me off.

“We’ve known your ass for how long now?” he questions. I smirk at him without answering and then turn back to make my way to my car.

“Yeah, that’s what I thought!” Ax yells after me. I flip them the bird over my shoulder without even looking back at them. They know me too well, which in some cases isn’t such a good thing. They can always tell when I’m bullshitting.

I get into my ride, pull out of the parking lot, and make my way to her house. I know she skipped school today because she didn’t want to face me, knowing that she loved every moment of what I did to her yesterday.

She can fight it all she wants but I can see behind the façade she puts up. That in itself is so unlike me. I never took the time to notice what someone was hiding behind, what they show to everyone else, but with her, it’s like I can’t help myself. It already feels like I know her on a more visceral level and I don’t like that. I don’t care about her or what she feels.

I park in the garage of the house opposite hers before making my way over to hers. My father’s a real estate tycoon and the area he gave them the house to stay in is a newly built residential area. Not all the homes have sold yet.

Which makes it easy for me to stalk my prey. I walk across to her house and let myself in like I own the place. Well, technically I do. What belongs to my father belongs to me—in more ways than one, apparently.

When I step inside the house, it's quiet. I know her mom left for work already because well, I like to keep an eye on everything these days. I don't want to be blindsided again like how my mother blindsided me when she did what she did.

I slowly make my way up the stairs and then toward her room, opening the door quietly and stepping inside. Once I'm inside, I look over at her bed and see she's covered from head to toe, sleeping soundly.

I look over at the nightstand and see her phone there along with her barely touched breakfast. I move closer and grab her phone, opening it with her sleeping face and then I go through it.

I put a bug in her phone that will let me track her whereabouts. I want to know her every move. Don't ask me why because I have no clue. Once I'm done, I place her phone back where it was and then I strip down to my boxers before slipping into bed beside her.

She's dressed in a hoodie and a barely there pair of shorts that are showing her ass cheeks. It instantly makes me hard. She's lying on her side so I pull her shorts along with her panties down slowly before spreading her legs.

I look down at her fat and juicy pussy. I let out a low groan at the sight. I bend down and maneuver my head between her legs and an instant later, I'm sucking those pussy lips.

She tastes so good and it doesn't take long for her pussy to get wet. She mumbles something in her sleep before a cute little groan slips out of her lips but she doesn't wake up. I keep sucking her wet pussy like my life depends on it.

I've never tasted pussy this good. Go figure, it would belong to the one person I hated. I pull my head back a little and use my fingers to pull her pussy lips apart before I stick my tongue inside to gather up more of her juices so I can drink it down.

When I'm satisfied, I move from between her legs and get off the bed to pull my boxers off and then slip back inside next to her. She hasn't moved and is still on her side where I left her. I position myself behind her, pushing one of my arms under her neck so it's in front of her body.

I use my other hand to push two fingers inside her pussy and pump a few times to gather up more of her juices. Then I spread it around on my cock head before putting the tip to the entrance of her fuck hole.

With one push, I slam right into her pussy, all the way to the hilt. A scream rips out of her as she wakes up with the force of my thrust. I move my hand to cover her mouth so she won't scream again. She tries to wiggle away from me, but I hold her close and start thrusting inside her.

"That's it, baby. Wiggle on my cock like a good little slut," I groan as I continue pumping my hips. Her walls clamp down on my cock and squeeze me which causes me to let out a moan.

"Knox?" she questions in her still-sleepy tone but I don't answer her. I just keep giving her the dick.

She stops wiggling since she heard my voice and now she's just lying there and taking my assault on her fat pussy. A second later, she starts to move her hips to get more of my cock inside her and I chuckle.

“Why weren’t you at school today? Were you trying to avoid me?” I question, all the while pumping into her slick cunt.

“N-n-no,” she stammers.

“Good, because there isn’t anywhere that you can hide where I won’t find you,” I tell her matter-of-factly.

“What are you doing here?” she asks.

“I’m just here to break in my three-hole slut. That’s what you are to me now. By the time I’m done with you, your pussy will be molded to take only my dick,” I say, smirking at her as she watches me from over her shoulder.

“This is wrong! We shouldn’t be doing this! We hate each other. Plus, you’re going to be my stepbrother soon,” she says, and that shit pisses me off right away.

“Shut the fuck up! I don’t want to hear about any of that shit right now!” I snap at her. I pull out of her and then flip her over so that she’s now on her hands and knees.

I grab both of her ass cheeks and squeeze hard. She yelps but I continue squeezing. This will probably leave a mark but I don’t care. I spread her cheeks open and look down at her gaping pussy hole that’s open to me right now.

Her ass is up in the air, exposing both her holes to me. I must say, it looks good enough to eat.

“Mmm, look at how your hole is gaping for me,” I groan out. The sight before me is a beautiful one. I bend down until my face is eye level with her holes and then I lick from her pussy to her ass, licking some of her juices away.

Her pussy hole is still obscenely open and I gather some spit before spitting right into her open cunt. She screams just as I slam into her cunt again and start fucking her hard

and fast. Now that she's awake, I don't have to go slow. I intend to give her pussy a good pounding.

"Stop!" she screams. "What are you doing?"

"I'm about to pump this pussy full of cum until there's so much inside you, it'll seep out through your pores because your womb and pussy walls can't hold it in," I growl as I slap her ass. "Now fucking stop talking so I can fuck my fat cunt!"

"Asshole!" she screams after I give her a particularly hard thrust, all the way to the mouth of her cervix and she lets out a scream as though I'm fucking killing her. But I don't stop. I continue to fuck the hell out of her, all the while she's screaming, moaning, and cursing me out.

But it feels good as hell because of her tight-as-fuck pussy. I wonder how tight her ass is. I moan at the thought of sinking inside her ass but I'll leave that for the next time I fuck her. She is after all, my three-hole slut.

I'm not a selfish man, so I push my finger down to her pussy and start strumming her clit, while I'm still pumping her pussy full of cock. In no time, she's screaming as her orgasm washes over her.

Her legs and her entire body are shaking. I grab onto her hips and pin her to the bed while I fuck her into the mattress. A few minutes later, I'm pumping her pussy full of my cum, letting out a grunt as my seed spills into her pussy. I feel some of it start to leak out and coat my cock inside her.

I look down as cum spills out her pussy. She's in a starfish position now with her arms and legs splayed out on the bed. I drop down so that my body covers hers.

“That was such a good fuck. You took my cock and cum like the good cum-hungry slut that you are,” I whisper in her ear, and she stiffens.

“You weren’t even that good, asshole!” she snaps and I laugh.

I bend down to whisper in her ear again. “Should I post the video online then and take a poll to see who would agree that you loved coming on my cock just now?” I ask, and she immediately stiffens before trying to buck me off her body. I make things easier for her and get off her in one swift movement.

“What did I ever do to you to make you hate me so much?” she asks, sniffing, but I pay no mind to it.

I pull on my boxers and then my pants. Once my pants are on, I push my hand into my pocket and grab my wallet. I take two dollar bills out and in a loud voice say, “Here are the two dollars we agreed upon for your services,”

She looks at me with a look of disbelief on her face as I throw the bills onto her bed next to her. A flash of hurt and pain flashes in her eyes but I don’t care. This is war and there can only be one winner.

I grab my phone and stop the recording before pushing my phone into my pocket and putting my shirt back on.

“Get out” she says in a low, hollow voice.

I smirk at her before turning on my heel and walking out of her room. All in all, today turned out to be a great day. I have more blackmail material on her and I got my dick wet. Nothing makes you feel better than fucking someone out of your system and then making them feel like the nothing

that they are. As I step outside her house, I see a car drive past but I don't think anything of it.

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CHAPTER

Seventeen

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RAINE

"HERE ARE the two dollars we agreed upon for your services," Knox says, a little loud into the room.

I look up at him with disbelief etched across my face as he throws the two dollar bills onto the bed next to me.

A slice of pain passes through me and I know it's probably showing on my face. I was never good at hiding my emotions. My face could always tell you what I'm thinking. But how dare this asshole come here and act like a fucking tool?

What the hell did you expect, Raine? You know the guy has hated you since you stepped foot in this hellhole town.

A second later, I see him pull his phone out from where he had it hidden. Great. He recorded us again. I'm sure it's more blackmail material for him to use against me. I can't believe I didn't think of the possibility that he'd record me again, even though he's done it before.

I'm so fucking stupid and now I feel dirty. Everything that just happened is now tainted by the cruel man standing before me. I feel myself getting choked up at how stupid I was, yet again.

He'll never not hate me. I don't know why I keep hoping that it'll change. *I'm the biggest fool if there ever was one.*

"Get out," I say in a voice that sounds dead and hollow even to my own ears, as I watch him get dressed like he didn't just literally fuck my world up again. The saddest thing is that I keep letting him.

He smirks at me as he turns on his heels and walks out of my room, whistling like he doesn't have a care in the world, or rather, he doesn't care about the destruction he causes. I'm left, feeling like I'm breaking from the inside out. How can someone so beautiful be so heartless?

As soon as I hear the front door close behind him, I burst into tears. Sobs rack my body as I sit on my bed, arms wrapped around my knees. I rock back and forth, willing the pain and tears to go away. But the more I try to stop, the harder I cry.

I'm still in just my hoodie with no panties on and I can feel his cum dripping out of my pussy. I hate myself a little more. I let him take me when he wants because I want his attention even if it's just a scrap of it. I'm definitely as fucked in the head as he is. I'm sure someone like him doesn't even have self-hate related issues.

I curl up into a ball and sob until I'm too tired to cry anymore. I feel like shit by the time I'm done crying. The only thing that can be heard in my room is the sniffing. Eventually, I get up and strip the sheets off my bed. I can't bear to lay on it anymore, knowing what happened on it earlier. Once I'm done, I put some new sheets on my bed before heading into the bathroom to take a bath and wash all his cum off me.

Without thinking too much about it, I grab my razor and step into the tub with it. I sit in the hot water and then place the blade against my skin. I make a slice and watch as crimson drops bleed out of the cut and drip down my arm and into the water.

I'm mesmerized at the sight of the blood falling into the water and turning it pink. Tears stream down my face at the sight. I don't want to hurt myself but I can't seem to stop doing it either.

I don't know what else to do to cope with the stress and anxiety along with the depression that each day brings. I'm slipping further down into the abyss and I don't know how to make it stop.

I don't want to bother my mom with my teenage drama either. She's been working hard and has a lot on her plate with her upcoming wedding and all that. I don't want to add to that.

I don't even know if she'd believe that the son of the man she's marrying was tormenting me every chance he got. I mean, no one would probably believe me. Everywhere I go in this town, someone is always talking about the Riversides and how Knox is such a good boy.

His good-guy act has everyone fooled, thinking that he's perfect and not the devil in disguise. I wish people would see him for what he really is—a fucking psycho! Or maybe I'm just the only unlucky soul he can't seem to stop fucking with.

When I'm done making the cuts on my arms, I move on to the part on my stomach where the word "whore" is already written. I trace over it with the blade until blood

starts to flow from the new cuts over the old ones. It hurts so fucking much, but it doesn't hurt nearly as much as my heart does.

By the time I finally decide to leave the tub, the water has gone cold. I make my way into the shower and turn it on to rinse my skin.

The hot water in the shower stings as it touches the new cuts on my body and a hiss from the pain escapes me. When I'm done from the shower, I dry myself and then stand in front of the sink and pour some saline solution onto the cuts on my arm so that they won't get infected.

A scream rips out of me when it touches my skin. It's fine though. I want to feel the pain. It makes me feel something beside the emptiness. It hurts less compared to being mistreated and bullied all the time. I wish it would all end.

Curiosity got the better of me the other day and I went onto the school's stupid website. They have even more stupid pictures of me now, along with tons of comments about my body and so much more.

The wedding has now become public knowledge and the web page is filled with comments about how my mother is a gold digger and how everyone is so sorry that Knox has to go through this by having an ugly and fat stepsister.

I had to slam my laptop closed after that because every single one of their words was hurtful. It's so easy to judge people you don't know.

I let out a sigh as I put some bandages on my arm and then make my way into my room to put some clothes on. I grab a pair of leggings, a tank top, and a sweater. It's hot

as fuck here but I need to wear the sweater. I don't want anyone seeing my scars.

I guess I'm ashamed of what I've done. It's a reminder of how weak I am and I don't want anyone else to see that.

I grab my bag and head out the door. I get into my car, deciding to head to the mall to chill a bit. I don't feel like staying in the house anymore, especially not in my room after what happened.

I need to clear my mind and shopping always helps with that. If I don't leave the house, I'll probably cave and do more harm to myself, and I'm really trying not to do that. I'm falling further down the abyss and it's only a matter of time before I do irreparable damage to myself.

As I'm driving toward the mall, I can swear I see a car following me. But when I look back, it's gone. I swear I'm losing my mind.

I haven't been to the mall in a while and it would've been nice to go with someone, but Kinsley never replied to my text earlier. I'm wondering if she's okay.

I guess she got caught up and was busy and didn't get a chance to reply. When I get to the mall, I'll just shoot her another text to see if she wants to meet me there so we can hang out.

I pull into the parking lot and get out before making my way inside. I go into some of my favorite stores and just browse around for a while to see if I'll find anything I like.

But this depression is weighing on my mood because I can't seem to like or even be excited about anything right now, which means that coming here was just a waste of time.

I decide to head to the movie theater and watch a movie by myself. The new *Thor* movie just came out, and even though I've never really watched the movies, no one can resist watching Chris Hemsworth.

When the movie is over, I make my way out and head to the food court. I only half paid attention to the movie because my mind was bouncing from one thing to the next.

I grab some Korean toast and a soda and then find a table to sit and eat. The toast had steak in the middle. The first time I ever tried it, it was freaking delicious, and I've been eating it since.

I take a bite and then mindlessly start to scroll through my phone. I don't want to watch everyone else who is here with someone while I'm here by myself.

I look at the time and see that it's five p.m. I'm not sure what time Mom will be home, but I know she'll definitely check in on me since I wasn't feeling well this morning.

I take another bite of my toast and I hear the voices in my head telling me that I shouldn't be eating because I'm already fat. I suddenly feel like I want to throw it up. Fucking hell, I wish my brain would stop being like this, bringing up all the nasty shit from school.

Just as I push my food away, someone sits down at my table. I look up from the toast I was just having an angry staring contest with, just in time to see Trent sitting down and giving me one of his slimy smiles.

God, I hate this guy! He always gives me the creeps whenever he's around me. He gives off entitled douchebag idiot to a T. After the day I've already had, I don't have the time or energy to deal with him too.

“Hey, babe, what’s up?” he asks.

“What do you want, Trent? For the millionth time, I’m not interested so can you just go away?” I ask in a calm voice so as not to rile him up. The guy is another big asshole in this town. It seems as though Riverside is full of them.

I know what he wants and that’s to only get inside my panties. Too bad he’s late and someone else got there first. I sigh at the reminder that I’m no longer a virgin.

“Why do you have to be such a bitch? Everyone else hates you and here I am, being nice to you. You’re acting like a stuck-up fat bitch who is too good for me when you’re nothing!” he snaps at me with venom in his voice. Yeah, he definitely doesn’t want me for me. My life is just one big game to all of them.

“I didn’t ask you to come over here, asshole!” I snap right back at him.

“You think because Knox said you’re off-limits until he’s done playing games with you that no one else can touch you? Think again, bitch. You’ll get what’s coming to you soon enough,” he says, smirking evilly at me.

A shiver runs down my spine. I don’t like the tone of his voice or the way he’s speaking to me right now. It’s like a promise of bad things to come and I instantly feel scared.

I don’t have the time to decipher everything he just said. I need to get out of here. I move to stand but he grips my wrist tightly. I try not to wince because he just grabbed a spot where the fresh cuts are.

“Let go of me, asshole!” I snap.

"You think your pussy is made of gold or something? Newsflash, it's not. You're just another whore here!" he snaps.

This guy really is delusional.

Before I know what he's doing, he grabs my cup of drink and dumps it on my head. I let out a scream and he laughs. I lift my head up to look at him and my eyes just with Ivy's. She's standing at the edge of the food court and she has her phone out, probably taking a video. I stand to my feet but he's still holding onto my wrist tightly.

"Let go of me!" I snap through clenched teeth. A fist sails past me and lands right into Trent's face. He lets go of me instantly.

"I believe the young lady said to leave her alone, asshole!" the guy who punched Trent growls at him.

Trent hops up from his seat and throws a punch at the guy but misses. The new guy clocks him another one and Trent goes sprawling to the ground, knocked out cold.

I turn to look at the guy who helped me with wide eyes. I notice his knuckles are bleeding and I quickly grab some paper towels and give them to him, Trent already forgotten on the floor.

"Tha-thanks," I stammer out. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. Thanks. I thought I'd step in because a beautiful girl like yourself should not be talked down to like that," he says. My cheeks turn red at the compliment and at the fact that he heard that.

"Um, thanks, I think," I mumble.

"What's your name, beautiful? Mine is Aiden," he tells me.

"Mine is Raine," I say.

"Let's get out of here before security shows up," he tells me and I nod in agreement. "Want to have a seat and just talk for a while? You look like you need company and we can chat while I wait for my girlfriend," he says, giving me a smile.

I go to turn him down but then figure why the hell not. It's not like I have that many friends to begin with. A new one won't hurt.

"Sure," I answer him and we walk over to one of the cafés that's on the other side of the mall. We both take a seat. "So, do you live around here?"

"I actually live in Fairview, which is two towns over. I'm guessing you live in Riverside?" he asks and I shake my head. He gives me a boyish smile and I can't help but smile too. I haven't had someone be this nice to me for weeks and it feels good. It makes me realize what a cruel bitch life is. We get some drinks and talk for half an hour before his girlfriend shows up.

"Hi, baby," she says as she walks over to our table. He gets up and gives her a hug before pulling her chair out for her. Aww, that's so sweet. He's such a gentleman.

"Hey, babe. Meet my new friend, Raine," he tells her with a smile. "I saved her from that asshole Trent."

"Ugh, that guy is such a creep!" she mutters.

"Right! I say, smiling at her.

"Oh I know who you are. I'm Saylor," she says with a smile. Mine drops from my face.

"Oh," I say.

"Don't worry. I just meant I go to Riverside as well. I'm the year below you," she says politely.

"Do you hate me too then?" I ask, wanting to know. It would suck to have made a friend and then couldn't be friends anymore because his girlfriend hated me.

"God no. I'm actually sorry for everything you've been going through. No one deserves that shit," she says sympathetically.

We talk with each other for another hour before we have to leave. We all exchange numbers. I like both Saylor and Aiden from the hour we've been chatting and I hope I get to see them some more. Just before we leave, Saylor stops me.

"Hey, I just have a quick request," she tells me, looking shy.

"Sure thing," I tell her with a smile.

"I'd appreciate it if you didn't tell anyone about Aiden and me. Right now, our relationship is a secret. I really do love Aiden but my brother hates him, so we've had to you know, hide it," she tells me.

"Oh no, that sucks! Of course, I won't! I'd never expose your secret like that. Who is your brother, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Axel West," she says and my jaw drops. She's a member of one of the prominent families here.

"Okay. Wow. Yeah, I see why you'd want to hide that," I tell her. "But again, don't worry. Your secret is safe with me.

"Thank you!" she says, visibly relaxing.

"No. Thank you guys for an amazing few hours. You don't know how much I really needed that," I tell them.

“We both got a friend out of this, so win!” Aiden jokes and I smile at him.

We hug and then say goodbye. I walk back to the parking lot and get into my car before heading home. This trip to the mall ended up turning out better than I expected. Saylor’s so pretty and so nice that I can definitely see us being friends.

When I pull into the driveway, I see that the lights in the house are off which means that Mom still isn’t home yet. I open the door and I’m barely inside when I’m grabbed by the throat and the door is slammed shut. I’m pinned against the back of it.

Before I can scream an angry voice interrupts me. “Who the fuck gave you permission to leave the house and why the fuck were you so cozy with that guy?” Knox growls in my face. His body is pressed up against mine and I can feel the entire length of his hard muscles against my body. It feels so good being close to him, even though I shouldn’t feel anything. I don’t answer him because I’m too busy analyzing the way his body feels against me. That gets him mad because he thinks I’m ignoring him.

“I asked you a fucking question!” he snaps as he squeezes my neck harder to get my attention.

“Th-the mall,” I gasp out.

“And why were you there?” he growls in my face. I want to say to get away from the memory of him but that might give away how much he affects me.

Instead, I opt for violence as I lift my knee right into his balls. He lets go of me as he lets out a grunt. I run into the kitchen and away from him.

"None of your fucking business, asshole!" I yell at him. I grab one of the knives from the block and hold it in front of me. Why the hell isn't my mom home right now? It would've saved me from this dickhead.

"You're going to pay for that little stunt in a minute," he says as he walks into the kitchen. He looks at me with a raised eyebrow as though he's daring me to use the knife on him.

"I'm always fucking paying for something or the other, aren't I? What the fuck are you doing here?" I yell at him.

"I don't need to give you an answer. Like I said before, you're my whore now, to do with as I please. Which means I can come and go as I please and use that cunt whenever I want to." He smirks and I see red.

I grab the vase that's next to me and fling it at his head. He ducks, of course, and it misses, smashing into the wall behind him.

"You're a fucking asshole and I despise you! Haven't you done enough?" I scream at him, throwing a glass at him this time.

"Do it again. I fucking dare you," he says in a deadly tone that I don't heed. I go to grab another glass. In a flash, he's rushing me and we both go crashing onto the floor. He knocks the hand holding the knife on the floor and I cry out as I feel the pain in my hand. I let go of the knife.

He straddles my hips as I struggle to get him off me but he's so heavy, he doesn't budge. He grabs the knife that fell to the floor and brings it up to my neck. He presses it into my skin and I feel it break a second later.

"You want to play, my little slut? Then let's play," he hisses at me. He lets go of the knife for a second and uses one of his hands to hold both of mine above my head while he takes the other one and starts to pull down my leggings.

I try to kick him away but he slaps my thigh so hard I yelp at the sudden sting on my skin. When my leggings and panties are both off, he grabs the knife again and then lets go of my hands and moves down my body.

"Move a muscle and I will slit your fucking throat and bury you in the walls of this house," he threatens.

He spreads my legs and moves between them, still holding the knife. I'm getting nervous now because I have no idea what he's going to do with the knife.

"Wha-what are you doing?" I question in a shaky voice.

"Shut the fuck up! Now tell me why the fuck you were with that asshole today!" he snaps.

"Wh-who?" I stutter.

Instead of answering, he pulls his phone out and shows me the video of Trent dumping the soda over my head and then a second later Aiden is on the screen. We look close because I was helping him with his hand, but the video doesn't catch that. It just looks like we're cozy.

"Why the fuck were you with him?" he seethes and his voice is so angry that I'm literally scared for my life right now.

"He was helping me," I mutter.

"Now you wouldn't be that close to someone else if you had stayed your ass home, now would you?"

"I wasn't aware I needed fucking permission, asshole! Who the fuck are you anyway? It's not like we're together. I

don't need to ask or tell you where the fuck I'm going or when I'm going somewhere!" I snap at him.

"Did you fucking forget the part where I said that you answer to me now?" he snaps.

"No, I don't fucking remember since I'm not your property! I'm just the fucking whore that you keep calling me. By fucking definition, I should be able to go out and fuck whoever the hell I want!" I scream. I don't want him thinking that he can tell me what to do while treating me like I'm trash.

Instead of answering, he brings the knife down to my pussy. He uses the other hand to open my lips and then he slices just inside the lips on each side. I scream bloody murder at the pain he's inflicting.

"Ahhhh!!! What the fuck are you doing?" I scream as tears fall down my cheeks. I try to kick my legs and get away from him but he holds me down.

"Oh, I'm just making sure that your pussy is wet for my cock," he says, smirking at me.

"Are you a fucking sadist or something?" I cry out as the pain of his cut consumes me. What the fuck is this asshole on?

"Ahhh, look at this pussy dripping blood and getting all nice and wet for me," he says. He takes the hilt of the knife and pushes it into me. He thrusts it in and out a few times while I try to wiggle away from him.

"Stop it!" I scream, but he doesn't listen to me. He keeps thrusting the handle of the knife in and out.

"Mmm, your blood definitely works as good as lube," he tells me while smirking. I can't believe this asshole is

fucking me with a knife. I guess I should be glad that he isn't deranged and is fucking me with the blade instead. He pulls the hilt out of my pussy and then brings it up to his mouth. He licks my juices and blood off the handle. I'm ashamed to say that watching him lick my blood is a fucking turn on. "Tastes good for a whore."

I instantly want to smack him in the head. I don't get a chance to say anything. He scoops up some of my bloody juices straight from my pussy and spreads it around the head of his cock and then along the length of it before he crawls between my legs and slams his cock into me with full force.

A guttural and pain-filled scream rips out of me. I try to get away from him but he clamps his hand down on my waist, keeping me in place as he hammers in and out of my sore and bruised pussy.

"You're a fucking rapist!" I scream at him.

"Don't care. Besides, I know you fucking want this. Your pussy is fucking creaming on my cock," he growls as he keeps thrusting inside me.

"No, it's not, dickhead! You're fucking delusional," I snap.

"If you don't like it, then why is your pussy strangling my cock so hard, bitch?" he asks.

I realize that my pussy is clenching around him and now I'm mortified and embarrassed at my own unconscious actions.

"That doesn't mean anything," I snap at him.

"It means you fucking love everything I do to this slutty pussy of yours. You act like you don't, but deep down,

you're a depraved pain slut," he says, smirking at me. "You haven't really been fighting me off. You've just been making a half-assed attempt so in your mind you can say that you tried. But we both know better, don't we?"

Huh? Are his words true? I don't think so, but then again, I've never thought about that before. I mean, I do cut myself because I like the feel of the pain, so what does that say about me?

"Th-that's not true!" I cry out just as my orgasm hits and I scream from the pleasure of it. It was a totally unexpected orgasm and now I'm ashamed. Obviously he felt it too.

"Tell me again it isn't true when you just flooded my cock." He smirks. He starts to move his hips faster, pumping into me in a steady rhythm. A few thrusts later and he's unloading his seed into me. He fills my pussy up with so much cum that I can feel it dripping out of me already.

He pulls out and sits back on his knees. I see his cock is covered in my blood and our combined juices. He bends down between my legs that are still spread wide open and then his mouth is on my pussy.

I groan as he sucks and licks my pussy until I come again. When he lifts his head up, his face is covered in our combined juices along with the red tinges of my blood.

"Come clean my cock slut," he rasps a second later. Without thinking, I obey him and get to my knees. The movement hurts my sore pussy and I know the two cuts he gave me on the inside of my pussy lips will hurt for days.

I lick the head of his cock and the rest of it until it's clean. When it's all clean like he didn't just fuck me, he

pushes me away from him and moves to pull his pants back on. I'm still on my knees, wondering what the actual fuck just happened.

"Go clean yourself up. And don't fucking forget that you're mine to own. You need my permission before going anywhere," he says.

"You're delusional," I tell him.

"We'll see about that." He smirks at me like he knows something I don't and then he storms out of the kitchen and out of the house.

My mind is still reeling but I don't have the energy to analyze what just happened. I slowly get up and wince as I do. I clean up the broken glass and then make my way upstairs to shower.

I check my phone before getting into the shower and see that Aiden has texted me. Mom texted saying that she's spending the night with Jonathan and there still is no text back from Kinsley which is making me worried. Asher better not have done anything to her or I'll kill him.

CHAPTER

Eighteen

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RAINE

I FEEL WORSE today than I did yesterday and it fucking sucks. By the time I made it to my bed after Knox left, I cried myself to sleep. Mom wasn't home so my sobs definitely weren't quiet. It was for the best though since after the night I had with Knox, it wouldn't have been easy to keep my emotions under control.

When I got up this morning, my entire body felt sore as hell, especially my vagina. If I thought when I showered last night that it hurt, well, let's just say that pain was nothing compared to the pain of showering this morning. I almost screamed the house down when the water touched the cut inside my pussy lips.

Fucking dickhead knows how to cause pain, that's for sure. I still can't believe he cut me and then had the audacity to fuck me with a freaking knife! *Did somebody say psycho?*

Now as I'm walking into school, I know that I'm walking kind of funny, but that can't be helped. I had to put some gauze on the cuts so it wouldn't bleed and cause a mess.

The last thing I need is for my uniform to have blood on it. Lord knows what kind of insults I'd get for that.

I make my way down the hall toward my locker and as usual, I notice people whispering. I feel the stares on me. I have no doubt they're probably gossiping about the video Knox showed me last night. The one he was so pissed about.

I keep my head down and continue walking. I don't want to have any issues with anyone, especially not today when I'm already feeling like shit and trying my best not to show it. I have a feeling that the tiniest thing might set me off and cause me to crumble. So yeah, I'm trying to avoid that.

They might be staring because I'm wearing a long-sleeve sweater today. I had to wear something to cover the scars on my arms since I didn't want anyone seeing that. I took the bandages off this morning so it wouldn't be too obvious. I didn't cut too deep, so no one will really notice it unless they were paying extra close attention to my arm. Not that anyone here pays too much attention to me, so I should be good. But then again, you just have to be prepared for anything when it comes to this place.

When I make it to my locker the words *cow*, *pig*, as well as some others are spray painted onto the front of it. I let out a sigh. What else is new? I usually clean it off but today, I don't react. I open my locker and grab the books I need for class before slamming it shut and heading to class. What's the point of cleaning it when they'll just do it again?

The classroom is already full of students when I step into class. I head to my seat at the front, trying to act like they don't exist. Just as I'm about to sit, Trent pulls my

chair back and I fall flat on my ass. The whole class erupts in laughter and my cheeks heat at the embarrassment I'm currently feeling. I'm guessing he's still pissed about getting knocked out yesterday.

"Bitch," he mutters. "That's for yesterday. Don't think that's the end of it," he sneers at me.

"Real funny, asshole!" I snap, way beyond pissed at him. Why can't "I'm not interested" be enough for some guys?

Everyone is still laughing when I stand up and storm out of class to go to the bathroom to calm down for a few minutes. I barely make it into one of the empty stalls before bursting into tears. I fucking hate this place and wish I didn't have to come here anymore.

When I finally manage to get myself together and under control, I know that I'm late for class. I let out another sigh because I know Mr. Smith will chew me out in front of everyone again. I can't seem to win or catch a break. I make my way to the sink to wash my face and once I'm done, I look at my face in the mirror. My eyes are red and puffy and you can definitely tell I was crying. That will probably be used as more ammunition against me for the taunts they will most likely come up with once I get back to class.

When I walk back into class, I see that the books I left behind are torn and they're in a pile on my table.

"Miss Carrington, this is the last time I will tolerate you being late!" Mr. Smith snaps before I can even make it to my seat. The whole class snickers. When I look around, of course, Knox is here to witness my further humiliation.

I see Kinsley sitting in her seat between the guys. She has her head down and she isn't looking at anyone, specifically me. I wonder what the hell is going on with her. I'll definitely have to talk to her sometime today.

"I'm sorry, sir. I had to use the restroom," I say, hoping that'll help plead my case.

"That's no excuse. You should have given yourself ample time this morning before class to use the facilities. Everyone else is here on time but you can't seem to do the same!" he snaps at me. "Head to the principal's office."

Without answering him, I grab my stuff and head out to the principal's office. I sit there and wait for an hour before I get to see the principal. He ushers me into his office. He takes a seat behind his desk and then motions for me to take the one in front of it.

"Miss Carrington, Mr. Smith has made me aware of the fact that you're always late to class which is becoming a disruption to the other students," he starts off.

I don't answer. I shrug my shoulders because no matter what I say, it won't matter. It's best I keep my mouth shut and deal with whatever punishment he's going to give me.

"Do you have anything to say for yourself, Miss Carrington?" he asks.

"Nope." I shrug again.

"Well, then, I'm going to give you detention for two weeks," he informs me.

"Gee, thanks. I don't know what I'd do without this school," I say in the most sarcastic tone I can muster.

"Your detention starts this afternoon," he tells me in a stoic tone.

"Sure," I tell him. "Are we done here? I'd like to at least eat lunch before my next class."

"Yes. You may go. We're done here. I'd like to not see you back in my office," he tells me in a stern tone.

"Aye, aye captain," I say and even salute him before walking out of his office.

I make my way to the cafeteria and grab some food before finding an empty table to sit at. I try to eat as much as I can. It's been days since I've eaten a proper meal. But just the thought of eating is already making me queasy.

I look over at Knox's table and see Kinsley there with the guys. She doesn't even look over at me, and I'm wondering again what the hell is going on with her. We almost always eat lunch together. I know she couldn't have missed me walking into the cafeteria since everyone always notices me.

My eyes swing to Knox, and I see he's already looking at me. He shoots me a smirk, not paying attention to the girl currently sitting on his lap—typical asshole behavior. It shouldn't hurt that he's with someone else when he was just with me but fuck, it fucking hurts.

I tear my eyes away from him and look around the room to see Ivy giving him, or rather the girl on his lap, the death glare. I'd laugh if I wasn't in the same boat. *Wanting someone who doesn't want you.*

While I'm still looking at Ivy, I feel something land on my face with a plop. A squeak escapes me and I use some of the tissues I brought with me to wipe away what I now see is mashed potatoes from my face. I look up as everyone starts laughing.

"You looked like you were hungry, fat ass!" the guy who just threw his food at me yells and there's more laughter. I don't react even though it feels like I'm dying on the inside.

More food is being thrown at me and I suddenly feel sick to my stomach. I stumble out of my chair and run for the bathroom. As soon as I make it there, I beeline for one of the empty stalls and throw up everything that I just ate, which wasn't much to begin with.

Once I'm done, I stumble out of the stall and stand in front of the sink. I wash my mouth out and then try to clean the food from my clothes as best as I can. I'm still in the middle of cleaning the mess when the bathroom door opens and Kinsley steps inside. She looks up and we make eye contact. I can tell from her expression that she wants to leave right away but I speak before she can.

"Are you okay? I've been worried about you since yesterday. You didn't reply to any of my messages," I tell her. She closes her eyes for a second before opening them again, almost as though she's bracing herself for something.

"I don't want to be friends anymore. Your reputation is just pulling me down with you and I can't be seen with you anymore," she says, dropping that bomb.

I suck in a shocked breath at her words. I wasn't expecting that at all or the pain I feel shoot through me because of what she just said.

"Are you being serious right now?" I ask her as I feel tears start to sting my eyes.

"Yes. It's just too much and I have to focus if I want to get into college. Being your friend is just a big distraction

for me," she answers.

"I don't understand. I thought we were getting along well. You're the only person here who wasn't buying into the bullshit of the others," I snap as the tears I've been holding in begin to stream down my face.

"Yeah, well your drama is too much for me to deal with. I can't be friends with someone like you!" she snaps, but she's crying as well.

"What do you mean someone like me? Stop acting like I want to be bullied every freaking day of my life! You think I want any of what's happening to me? I still don't even fucking know why I'm a target!" I burst out.

"Look, just forget we were ever friends, okay? It'll be better that way."

"Did Knox put you up to this? Why are you letting that asshole ruin our friendship? I thought our friendship meant something to you like it did for me!" I yell at her.

"I was friends with him first! Look, I'm fucking poor, okay? Without their protection, I'm free game. I don't want the masses to come after me!" she snaps.

"But you're fine with them coming after your friend? You're just like everyone around here. Every man for themselves, huh?" I question in a hollow voice. She's fucking crushing my heart right now.

"You know I hate this! I—" I don't even wait to hear what else she was going to say, I storm out of the bathroom and stomp my way back to the cafeteria. I've never been so pissed in my entire life. I'm so mad and hurt. I feel so betrayed that I see nothing but red.

I storm up to Knox's table and before anyone, even myself, is aware of what's happening, I lunge for him. I begin clawing and punching him, trying to get my hands wherever they can get on his body. All I want to do right now is hurt him so he can know what pain feels like.

"You unimaginable bastard! Who the hell do you think you are?" I scream at him as I keep flailing my arms around. My nails dig into his neck and I see a scratch mark there a second later. I'm delighted at the sight when I see small droplets of blood appear on his skin. It's about time I left some of my marks on him like he's been doing with me. Although his are more along the lines of soul-deep marks that I can't seem to shake or get rid of.

We've ended up on the floor and I get one more punch in before he grips both of my wrists and pins them above my head. I'm lying on my back, looking up at him as he stares down at me with venom in his eyes. I'm breathing hard and I realize that the cafeteria is filled with nothing but silence.

I look around and see that everyone is staring at us—some with their mouths wide open in disbelief and others with horror on their faces. I'm guessing it's because no one has ever attacked their king like this.

My eyes stray to the entrance of the cafeteria and see Kinsley standing there, looking shocked. I look away from her. I'm as stunned as everyone else with my actions. I've never attacked anyone before and this is a new low for me. But this is all Knox's fault and I hate him.

He still has my hands in a tight-as-fuck grip when he stands to his feet and pulls me up to mine. He's now towering over me with his large frame and I gulp. It's now

that I realize that this situation could get really bad for me. He looks pissed and deadly, like he wants to do nothing but burn me alive. I disrespected the king in front of all his subjects and I know I'll have to pay for that.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" he questions in a low but deadly tone.

"Just giving you a taste of your own medicine, you unimaginable prick!" I snap at him. "You don't get to fucking decide who is my friend or not!"

"Oh, but that's where you're wrong, slut," he says before he starts moving, dragging me behind him.

I dig my heels into the ground. I don't want him taking me anywhere. He turns around, lifts me up and throws me over his shoulders before walking out of the cafeteria. No one dares to follow and no one helps me either. *But I expected that...*

I'm kicking and screaming the entire way down the hall to wherever he's taking us. He walks into an empty classroom and locks the door behind him. He walks further into the room and puts me down before slamming me back up against the wall and wrapping his hand around my neck. He squeezes hard until I can't breathe and I try to claw at his hand so he'll let go of me. It's no use because he has a tight-as-fuck grip on me.

"What the fuck is wrong with you? Don't you ever fucking pull some shit like that ever again! Do you understand me?" he snaps at me. My face is turning red from the lack of oxygen so he loosens his grip on me a little. I gulp in a breath of air into my starving lungs, wincing at the pain I can feel in my throat already.

“What? You’re the only one who gets to fuck with me, but you can’t take what you dish out. You’re nothing but a pussy ass bitch?” I snap at him angrily. All the anger from before comes back in waves.

“Tsk, tsk. You just don’t know when to shut that fucking mouth of yours, do you?” He sneers at me before spinning me around so that my entire front is against the wall. He lifts my skirt and pulls down my panties.

“You’re going to pay for that little stunt you just pulled. Don’t move an inch or I’m going to make it hurt worse. You don’t want to test me right now,” he snaps before moving away. He walks to the front of the class and I watch him pick up a ruler from the teacher’s desk.

Ah fuck! I know where this is going. I try to run but my panties around my ankles almost trip me. I barely manage to stay up right instead of falling face-first onto the ground.

“You just never listen, do you? For not doing as you’re told, that’s an extra ten lashes,” he tells me while smirking.

“Are you deranged? I’m not letting you hit me!” I squeak.

“You either take your fucking punishment or I’ll still punish you but I’ll make it worse for you,” he tells me in no uncertain terms.

I don’t move. I just stand there and wait. I know if I attempt to run again, he won’t hesitate to hurt me worse. I mean, the guy’s a sadist so he doesn’t even need an excuse.

“Turn around and lift your skirt up. Under no circumstance are you to let go of your skirt. Is that clear?” he asks.

When I don't answer, he grabs me by the jaw and turns my face so that I'm looking at him. I wince but he holds firm.

"Is that clear?" he asks again.

"Crystal," I hiss in response.

He spins me back around so that I'm facing the wall again and then lifts my skirt up for me to hold. My bare ass is on display and I'm sure he can see the small gauze covering my pussy lips.

"Aww, is your pussy sore?" he asks, laughing while my face turns red. I don't answer. I just stare at the wall in front of me. Maybe if I ignore him, this will go by faster. "Count for me," he says and a second later, I feel the sting of the first lash with the ruler on my ass.

"One!" I scream as the pain of the lash registers in my system. Fucking hell this hurts! By the time we get to eight, my butt is stinging and I feel nothing but the pain of it all. Tears stream down my face.

When we get to fifteen, the pain in my ass becomes unbearable and I'm full on sobbing. My ass is on fire and I have no doubt that I won't be able to sit properly for a while.

When we get to twenty, the ache is still there but for some reason I'm wet. Not just wet, but my pussy is leaking. Of course the asshole notices.

"Tell me again how much you're not a pain slut." He snickers.

I don't answer because too many emotions are going through my system right now and I don't know how to feel or what to do anymore. Everything inside my head is just a

mess. What just happened has added to the chaos I'm feeling.

"I suggest you remember your fucking place from now on," he sneers and then he leaves me there with tears streaming down my face and my bare ass still displayed in the empty classroom.

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CHAPTER

Nineteen

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RAINE

I'M NOT sure how long I stand in that empty room but when I finally come to my senses, I pull my skirt down to cover myself and then wipe my eyes. I'm sure I look horrible right now with tear-stained cheeks.

My ass is on fire and I'm not sure what will take the pain away or how long this is going to hurt. It looks like today is another day where I'm going to skip class. I wouldn't be able to concentrate with this constant sting on my skin anyway.

At this rate I probably won't even graduate because the grade on my last pop quiz was horrible. I got a C, which is something that has never happened before. I'm even more anxious about stuff concerning school.

I need to pull myself together, otherwise my mom will kill me for letting my grades get so bad. But I can't focus with all the shit happening to me. It's becoming more than I can handle. Is it too much to wish that I could just be left alone?

When I manage to step out of the classroom, I'm barely aware of my surroundings. I stop by my locker to get the

lotion I always keep in there. I'll have to use that and rub it on my sore flesh and hope that it will help a little. When I get home, I'll have to get some actual ointment for it but for now, I guess, the lotion will just have to do.

I grab my bag from my locker and put the lotion inside before I start moving in the direction of the bathroom. I've barely made it a step when I hear an ugly sounding laugh coming from behind me. I spin around to see Trent braced up against his locker which is a few spaces across the hall from mine.

"You won't give me the time of day but you'll let that asshole touch you when he doesn't even like you?" he sneers at me. I resist the urge to roll my eyes at him. It's not like he likes me either. I'm just a conquest to him and nothing else.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," I say, feigning ignorance. It's best to play dumb with him. He seems unstable and I'm starting to get the picture that he hates Knox. He just snorts a laugh and it's not a nice one either. It's the type of laugh that gives you chills. It causes your fight-or-flight responses to kick in.

"Don't play dumb, bitch. I saw everything!" he snaps at me and an ugly expression twists his face into a scowl.

I gulp. This is all that asshole Knox's fault! I thought the dickhead made us go far enough into the room so that no one would be able to see us from the outside, but clearly, I was wrong. He probably doesn't even care if anyone saw him. Great! That's another thing I have to worry about. The fucking stress of this place is never ending.

I move to walk away from Trent. I don't want to deal with him anymore. Instead of letting me go, he suddenly grabs my arm, squeezing it so hard that I wince. He sees my wince and just smirks at me. He's definitely going to leave a bruise.

"I wasn't done speaking to you, you filthy fucking whore!" he snaps.

"Well I am. I don't have anything to say to you!" I snap right back at him.

"You really are a dumb bitch! You do know he's the reason everyone hates you right? He hated you from the moment you got here and everyone followed his lead. Everyone always follows the oh-so-great Knox and yet you're giving it up to him?" he asks, his voice coated in outrage. I rip my arm away and hastily retreat away from him.

"Stay the fuck away from me, asshole! What I do with my time is none of your business!" I snap before speed walking away from him. I'm nearing the bathroom when the bell rings, signaling the end of class. The hallway fills with students a second later.

Thank God. I have a feeling that he wouldn't have had any qualms following me in here. The guy is definitely one of those that can't take no for an answer. I'll just have to find a way to ignore and avoid him as well.

Once I'm in the bathroom, I lift my skirt up and bunch it up and under my chin to hold it in place. I take the lotion out of my bag and squeeze a good amount out into the palm of my hand.

I rub my palms together and then rub it on each of my butt cheeks. The coldness of the lotion brings a little relief instantly to my overheated skin. I rub it in and once it's dry, I try to twist my body around to see if I can see the marks I know are there, but I can't see anything. Guess I'll just have to wait until I get home to see the damage that Knox has done.

I still can't believe that the spanking made me wet.

My masochist loves his sadist...

That definitely sounds like it would be a tragic love story.

When I step out of the stall, I see Ivy standing at the sink and she looks like a fire-breathing dragon right now. I mean if she was one, I'd probably be on fire right now if the stink eye she's giving me is anything to go by.

"Slut!" she hisses at me.

"Excuse me?" I question.

"He's just using you because you're nothing but a fat whore who just gives it up to the first guy that shows her any attention even if it's from the person that hates her." She cackles like the crazy bitch that she is. Great, apparently everyone is throwing that in my face today.

"Are you mad that he left you? Cause I heard he dumped your ass for fucking around on him. If anyone was a whore here, it'd be you," I snap at her. Who the hell does she think she is?

Like the saying goes, don't throw stones when your house is made of glass. Knox is the only asshole I've been with and the one who took my virginity, and this bitch is calling me names? Fucking hypocrite if I ever saw one.

I might be the outcast in this school but that doesn't mean I haven't heard the other gossip around here.

"Count your days, bitch! You're gonna get what's coming to you. As for Knox, he always comes back to me no matter how long we're separated. We're meant to be together!" she snaps. Like I haven't heard that bullshit enough times.

"Are you delusional or something? If you are, I could probably get you some help," I say, giving her a smile.

"I'm not the one who's going to need help soon," she sneers before walking out of the bathroom. She shoulder checks me. I rub my shoulder and let out a long sigh. Just as I turn around to leave, Kinsley steps into the bathroom.

When we make eye contact, she looks away quickly before rushing into the closest empty stall. She doesn't even say a word to me and that stings. I feel the pain slice through my chest at how much it hurts to lose someone you thought was your friend.

I know it hasn't been that long, but the time we spent together in school and the times we went out, especially when we were ditching the guys, was the most fun I've ever had. I thought we'd end up having one of those everlasting friendships. Clearly, I was wrong.

I get choked up at my thoughts and before I make an even bigger spectacle of myself, I rush out of the bathroom. I was about to go back to my locker to put some of my things in there but I see Knox is braced against his locker along with his friends. I spin around on my heels and go in the other direction.

I have no doubt if I went to my locker that he'd do something else to humiliate me in front of everyone else.

That seems to be his specialty.

Thankfully, neither he nor his friends spot me. I make my way to the library instead of class. I need some time to catch up on my papers since I've neglected most of them. Plus, some solitude might do me good.

I make my way to the back of the library where it's the quietest. There are some computers here so I log onto one. I left my laptop at home today so I'll just have to use one of the school's.

I log in with my id but instead of doing what I'm supposed to be doing, I end up logging onto that stupid website again.

There are now rumors that I'm bulimic, no doubt because someone probably heard me throwing up after they threw food at me in the cafeteria earlier today. No wonder people were making stupid comments about a throw-up bag earlier.

This website is filled with even more hate now than it was before. At least there aren't any posts about what happened in the classroom with Knox or I'd probably get more hate. I mean, with the way they all hate me now, there's no doubt they would despise me if they heard that I was hooking up with their king.

The stress of it all is getting to me and I do something I never thought I'd do before. The last time I was on this website because I couldn't keep away, I found a way to contact the Venom Brothers.

The Venom Brothers were the local bad boys in this school. They're as rich as they are deviant. I've heard all

the rumors about them. It's three of them and they're supposedly part of the Mafia or a gang or something.

Who the hell knows? Rich kids like to make shit up. What I do know is that they're the ones you go to when you need drugs and they can get you literally anything you want. That's what I need right now, something to help me focus and be better.

I hesitate over the contact button, but then I say fuck it and click it and send them a message. Five minutes later, I'm still reading some of the comments about me and feeling super depressed when I get a reply. I don't know why I keep doing this to myself. I mean, none of what they say should matter to me, right?

I'm surprised that they replied so fast. They give me a place and time to meet them and I save the address into my phone.

I stay in the library... okay, I hide out in the library because I don't want to run into anyone for the rest of the day. I've already suffered through enough humiliation for one day.

I decide to do some work since I'll be here for a while. I get started on some research and then start writing my English paper that's due next week.

An hour later, I'm deep into my work when I hear male voices a few shelves away from where I'm sitting. I move to hide behind the shelf that's behind me because the voices I hear belong to Knox and Asher. I've heard them both enough times to know what they sound like by now.

"So, Kinsley told her she doesn't want to be friends anymore?" Asher asks.

"I think so. I'm guessing that's what her meltdown was about today," Knox says.

"What did you do to her?" Asher questions.

"Just taught her a lesson on who runs this school and that she shouldn't cross me," Knox says with no emotion in his voice.

"There's a certain rumor going around that you fucked her," Asher tells him.

"Please, like that would ever happen. Let everyone know to cut that shit out and that it's not true. Tell them I don't fuck girls that look like cows and I'd never stick my dick into that slut," Knox grumbles. I suck in a sharp breath at the hurt his words cause.

"That's harsh, man. Does she really deserve this?" Asher asks him. Though I'm crumbling, I can't help but continue listening to hear what he'll say.

"Yes, and so much more. I wish that I could just kill her with my bare hands. She deserves to be dead instead of my mother," Knox growls with so much hate in his voice.

I stumble back at his words. The force in which he said those words and the hatred in his voice is crushing my soul. I mean, I knew he hated me but I didn't know his hate for me ran so deep that he wishes me dead.

They eventually leave. I didn't hear what else they said after Knox said what he said because I was still stunned. I grab my bag and move farther to the back of the library where there's an alcove that gives privacy.

Not that I need it much since the library is mostly empty now. There's barely anyone in here and the few who are, they're all the way at the front.

I take the razor blade I started keeping in my bag and pull up the sleeves of my blazer and start cutting again.

"Ahhh!" I cry out as I slice my flesh over and over again as tears stream down my face. I don't know how else to expel all the demons consuming me.

After about ten new cuts, I wrap the razor blade up and put it back into my bag. Then I grab a tissue and wipe the blood away. I leave it there for a few minutes to soak up the blood as I use another tissue to wipe my face and nose since I'm still in tears.

I leave the tissue on my skin and pull the sleeve of my blazer down and grab my things to go. I look at my phone and see it's almost time to meet the Venom Brothers. Thankfully, I don't run into anyone as I leave. There's still about fifteen minutes left until the bell rings.

I head out to the parking lot and get into my car before driving away. The address the brothers gave me is to an abandoned warehouse not far from Kinsley's place and the abandoned train track we went to together.

Once I get there, I walk right in through the door like I owned the place. Which, when I think about it, I shouldn't have done. It seems like I have no sense of self-preservation. These guys are drug dealers. The place is just an empty space when I walk in but as soon as I make it past the door, I'm surrounded by three tall and tattooed, muscular guys. These guys are intimidating as hell.

"Well, well, well... if it isn't the lamb of Riverside Academy," one of them says.

"Did you get what I asked for?" I ask, putting on a brave face. I don't want them to think they intimidate me, even

though they do. What is the protocol for buying drugs anyway?

The one who called me lamb nods his head and then the other two each grab one of my arms. He moves closer and begins to pat me down. He makes sure to rub my legs slowly, making a show of it before he moves a step back and smirks at me.

"Got to be careful, you know? I'm Ransom and these are my brothers, Wolf and Cyrus, but you already know that, don't you?" he asks and I shake my head. The rumor mill in that school is crazy. Everyone knows their names and who they are.

"Yes. I do. That's why I contacted you," I tell him.

He pulls out a bag with the pills and hands it to me. I take it and then hand him the money.

"Nice doing business with you, sweet thing," Ransom says. He hands me a card and I see it has a number on it.

"Call that number when you want more from us," Wolf says before they all turn around and leave me standing there.

Who the hell knew getting drugs was so easy?

I walk out of the building and head toward the abandoned train track. I can see it from here. It takes less than five minutes to walk there and I walk all the way to the middle and take a seat.

Thankfully, it's not too hot today. As I sit on the track, I look up at the sky. It's cloudy and getting darker by the second. It looks like a storm is coming and it's coming in fast too. I take one of the pills out and wash it down with some of the water I have in my bag.

Half an hour later, I feel a little buzz from the pill, but it's not enough. I take out the two bottles of travel-size tequila I have in my bag and gulp it down one after the other. I feel the burn as it goes down my throat but I like it.

In no time, I'm high and drunk. Right now it feels like nothing in the world can touch me. I feel like I'm floating and I don't feel the weight crushing me anymore. I don't want this feeling to ever go away.

Now I know what the Venom Brother meant when they said to call them when I wanted more. I'm definitely going to keep this feeling for as long as I can, which means those pills won't last long if I take them every day. I'll definitely need more from them.

No wonder the guys are in high demand. I wonder where the hell they get the drugs from. Not that I'll be investigating that. The rain finally starts pouring but I don't move. I sit there in the pouring rain and watch the river beneath me.

I've always loved storms. I'd find any excuse to sit outside in one. For some reason, they always make me feel at peace, as though the rain will cleanse my soul and wash away all the pain and hurt in my heart.

I stand up with the intention to finally go home but instead, I move to stand by the edge of the rails. I look down into the river and wonder what would happen if I jumped. Would I sink down to the very bottom right away? Would I be able to swim, or would the current pull me away?

I climb on top of the rail. It's a flat surface that's a couple inches in width. The wind blows as I stand there and

a second later, the thunder rumbles so loudly it scares me. I startle and then let out a laugh. I have no idea what's going on with me. I start to laugh even harder until tears are streaming down my face and I begin to sob.

My knees wobble and I almost fall right over but suddenly, I'm back on the track. Sobs still rack my body and a second later, my teeth are chattering from being in the rain for so long. Whew! I almost had firsthand experience of what it would've felt like to fall from a bridge. In my blissed-out fogged-up mind it took a few seconds for me to realize that someone pulled me back. That's why I didn't fall to my death.

I spin around and come face-to-face, well face-to-chest—I have to arch my head back and then I come face-to-face with furious electric blue eyes. The ones that haunt my every waking moment and the bane of my existence.

How the hell did he find me? He wasn't around when I left school. For someone who hates me, he sure does have a knack for finding me when I don't want to be found.

"Go away," I tell him.

"What the hell are you doing?" Knox snaps at me. "Do you have a death wish or something?"

"What the hell are you doing? So what if I did? Are you going to save me?" I snicker. Well I mean, he just did, but I wasn't really trying to die so there's that. He doesn't answer. He keeps staring at me.

"Yeah, that's what I thought. But don't worry, if I did have a death wish, I'd make sure you didn't find me in time," I say, smiling at him.

"You didn't answer my question. What are you doing here?"

"I wanted to be alone. Why else would I be here, dummy? Not that it's any of your business because you don't stick your dick inside girls who look like cows, right?" I say and slur my words. It doesn't seem like my tongue wants to work. I blow out a raspberry just to make sure it is working and see that it is.

I go to move away from him but my foot lands on one of the tequila bottles I left lying on the grass. I almost slip but he catches me. His eyes focus on the bottles.

"Are you fucking drunk right now?" he snaps at me. It's a good thing I had the foresight to hide the pills in my bag or he would have been extra mad now. That thought causes a giggle to escape me. "You think this is funny?"

"You know, you could do it right here and right now and no one would ever have to know. Plus, you'd never have to see me again. You'd get your wish," I say, slurring my words.

"Do what?" he asks, puzzled.

"Murder me with your bare hands and then toss me over the rails. I'm sorry I can't bring back your mother but I can be dead along with her..." I say in a tone filled with all the heartache I feel. It's now that I realize that his words are what really made me spiral today. I'm sobbing again.

I never wanted to be weak or vulnerable in front of him but right now, my chest aches so bad it's hard to breathe. I push away from him and fall to my knees, grasping and rubbing my chest, willing the pain to go away. My breaths come in faster and faster as the seconds tick by.

“Fuck!” he curses just as I let out a scream. Whatever the fuck I’m feeling in this moment, it’s consuming me. The pain and self-loathing I’ve been feeling is finally catching up to me. I knew it was only a matter of time before I blew.

“Just fucking do it and get it over with! I just want to finally be at peace.” I gasp the words out. “Why won’t you just let me be at peace?”

“I’m not going to kill you,” he tells me.

“But I know you fucking want to!” I scream at him. “Just do it and get it over with!”

“I want to! So fucking bad! But I won’t do it!”

“Why? Because I’m begging for it and it’s not on your terms?” I ask, and then begin laughing hysterically. I wish he would. It would end all my fucking misery.

I lunge for him and we both go crashing onto the grass because he wasn’t expecting the move. I move to straddle his hips and then pound on his chest while telling him how much I hate him over and over again.

In the next instant, before I even know what’s happening, he flips us over so that he’s on top of me. We’re staring at each other. I have no idea who moves first but in a second, his lips are on mine.

This kiss is filled with the passion we both pretend doesn’t exist between us. I kiss him back just as hard as he’s kissing me. One of his arms moves to grab my hip as he pulls me closer to him. We’re already close so I don’t know how much closer he wants us to be.

The front of our bodies touch as he deepens the kiss. It’s hard and fast, brutal and cruel, just like the man on top of me. We’re both lying here in the pouring rain, kissing like

our lives depend on it. Neither one of us seems to mind or even care that we're out in the open like this. Then again, I don't think many people even come here. When he finally pulls away, both our chests are heaving with the intensity of that kiss.

"That's the first time you've ever kissed me," I whisper, touching my lips with my cold fingers as more tears slip down my face. I don't know if he can tell or not since the tears are mixed with the rain.

A second later, he sits up and then pulls me onto his lap. I straddle him with my legs on either side of his and he pulls my face to his again and kisses me some more. There's more fire in this kiss and even though it's cold, his kiss seems to be burning me from the inside out.

When he pulls back from the kiss, he lifts me up a little and unbuckles his pants. He takes his cock out, then he lifts my skirt up.

He growls at me. "Where the hell are your panties?"

"You took them earlier, remember?" I ask. He makes a sound deep in his throat that has me wet in no time. He then grabs a hold of his cock and places the head at the entrance to my pussy. Gripping my waist, he slams me down onto his cock in one quick move.

In an instant, I'm impaled on his cock and I let out a scream at the pain of him inside me. I'm so full but his cock is rubbing against the gauze and medical tape I have around my pussy lips, plus the pain from the cut is making itself known.

He lets out a grunt as he starts to move inside me. His cock is stretching my walls, and it hurts but I'm also liking

it. I guess he was right when he called me a pain slut. Right now, I'm trying to focus on the little pleasure. He grabs a hold of my hips and moves me in a back-and-forth motion.

I rest my head on his shoulders as he keeps moving my hips back and forth and begins to thrust up into me. I let out a moan. The feeling of pleasure is so good right now. He keeps filling me up to the hilt with each of his thrusts.

Who knew having sex on an abandoned bridge, in the pouring rain, would be so good if you ignored the pain? I definitely didn't. He flips us over so that I'm lying on my back and he's on top of me. The rain is drizzling over us now and somehow that just enhances everything I'm feeling.

He starts to piston his cock in and out of me while kissing me again to stifle my screams. His hard thrusts are rubbing against my lips and it hurts like fuck. He pumps his cock into me a few more times before he lets out a grunt as he comes inside me. His orgasm triggers my own and a second later, I'm coming right along with him. I feel myself squirt on his cock and he just groans at the feel of it.

Once we catch our breaths, he slowly pulls out of me and I instantly hate how it feels at the loss of him. My legs are still kind of spread and he looks down at my pussy.

"Your pussy is bleeding for me again." He smirks and I want to slap him. I don't say a word, just close my legs and get to my feet as he gets to his.

"Let's go," he tells me and I bend down to pick my bag up from the ground.

As we start walking back to the end of the bridge, I feel the chill in my bones. I shiver at the coldness but keep

walking.

“Well, uh, thanks for that...” I say awkwardly as I move to keep walking when we get to where his car is parked. It’s funny how I didn’t even hear his car pull up earlier. I still feel a little high, so maybe that’s why I’m not freaking out right now.

“Get in the car, Raine!” he says in an authoritative voice.

“No, it’s fine. I drove my own car here so I’ll drive myself home, thank you very much,” I mumble as I start walking again. I almost trip over my own two feet and giggle at that. I hear him curse and then I’m upside down as he throws me over his shoulder.

He makes his way to his car again and to the passenger side. He puts me inside before he buckles me in. I somehow fall asleep on the short ride to my house. The next thing I feel is myself being lifted in his arms as he carries me into my house.

He takes me up to my room and places me on the chair that’s at the foot of my bed. He moves to take off my wet clothes and I’m instantly awake.

“No!” I practically scream. “I-I got it.”

He shrugs. I stumble into my closet and grab a set of pajamas before making my way to my bathroom. I close and lock the door behind me. Shit, I’m on the verge of a freakout. I didn’t want him to undress me. I didn’t want him to see all the scars on my arms or the words carved into my stomach.

I quickly shower and change. When I go back into my room, he’s still here and sitting on the chair.

“Um, thanks for the ride but what about my car?” I ask him, not knowing what else to say.

“I’ll have Asher or one of the guys bring it here. Give me the keys,” he says, and I walk over to where my bag is. I dig into it for the keys and then hand them to him.

“Don’t drink any more alcohol,” he growls before he gets up and walks out of my room.

Today was one of the most taxing days I’ve ever had and I’m not sure if I’ll ever recover from what happened.

Knox motherfucking Riverside kissed me!

Sure he’s fucked me before, but he’s never kissed me no matter how many times he’s used my body. There were even rumors around school that he never kisses anyone. He’s never kissed any of the girls he’s hooked up with. He’s never even kissed Ivy and she claims that he’ll always be hers. What a psycho.

Now that he’s gone and I’m alone, I suddenly feel exhausted. All the energy I had and the euphoria I was feeling from kissing Knox is gone now and all I want to do is sleep. I open my bag again and this time I take out the baggie with the pills to check it.

Thankfully, none of them are wet because it was wrapped up in plastic. None of them are ruined. I mean, if they were, I would’ve been mad cause they cost a pretty penny. I check my phone since I haven’t done so in hours.

I see that Mom sent me a text about an hour ago, telling me that she’ll be late because she has to work late tonight. I don’t know if she actually has to work or if that’s code for she’s spending time with Jonathan before coming home.

Either way, I'm too tired to care. I text her an okay before crawling into bed and pulling the covers over me. In no time, the exhaustion pulls me under and I'm fast asleep.

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CHAPTER

Twenty

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RAINE

A KNOCK SOUNDS on my door the next morning but I feel like shit to even move or answer it. Instead, I burrow myself deeper under the covers. The warmth under here feels so good, and I don't want to leave it for anything.

A second later, the door to my room opens anyway, and my mom walks in. I peek my head out from under the blanket to look at her as she sits on the bed next to me and places a hand on my forehead to feel if I have a temperature.

"Still not feeling well?" she questions, her voice filled with concern.

"I'm still feeling a bit under the weather today. I think I might have caught a cold or something," I tell her. My voice does sound a little funny and my nose is definitely stuffy. "I think it's 'cause I got caught in the rain a little yesterday."

"Why were you in the rain, Raine? See what I did there?" she asks, laughing.

"Yeah, you're quite the comedian today," I tell her with a roll of my eyes, but a smile forms on my face. She's goofy at times but I love it.

"You know you get sick fast when you're in the rain," she scolds, but there isn't any heat in her words. They're true though because I've been known to get sick over the littlest of things.

"I know, Mom. I was hanging out with Kinsley outside and the rain just came down out of nowhere," I lie. I hate lying to her, but there is no way I can tell her the truth, for obvious reasons. Those reasons being one—she'll kill me and two—she'll fucking murder me.

What am I going to say anyway? Oh, you know, I was in the rain because I was high as hell and drunk and almost fell off a bridge but then the guy who hates me surprisingly saved me and then boned me in the rain? Yeah, I can imagine how well that conversation would go down.

"Do you want to stay home today or do you still want to go to school?" she questions. Given the chance, I'm taking it because I hate school now. I used to be the one who went no matter how I was feeling but now, it's just an added stressor. It hasn't been good for me or my mental health.

"I'll just stay home today," I tell her.

"Okay. I'll call the school and let them know, and then I'll make breakfast before I leave. Come down and eat and then you can come back to bed," she says, her tone letting me know there's no room for argument. She knows how I get when I'm sick and that's barely having the energy to eat anything. Now that people have been constantly making nasty comments about my weight, I want to eat even less.

I'm surprised that the school hasn't called her already with the number of times I've already skipped. I guess even the school officials don't care about the outcast. I'm glad

they haven't because Lord knows my mother would ground me until the end of time if she ever found out.

"Thanks, Mom," I tell her, and she kisses my forehead before she gets up and walks out of my room again.

I get up and out of my bed and head to the bathroom to brush my teeth and shower. I'm hoping that'll at least make me feel a little better. After I'm done eating, I have plans to get right back into my bed where I'm going to spend the rest of the day.

The hot water from my shower stings my skin, especially where I made the new cuts yesterday. At this rate, my life is just in a never-ending loop of the same things happening over and over again, and I hate all of it.

Once I dry off, I put on a hoodie and some shorts to hide the scars before heading down to the kitchen. Mom is already finished cooking, and I see two plates on the island. She's in her chair sitting and waiting for me. She thinks she can pull one over on me but I know exactly what she's doing right now. She's just going to sit there to make sure I eat all my food. I guess she thinks eating with me will hide the fact that she's spying.

"You don't have to babysit me you know," I tell her, giving her a smirk to let her know I know what she's up to.

"I have no idea what you're talking about. I'm just hungry and I need all my energy today since it's going to be a super long day," she tells me, feigning nonchalance.

"I love you, Mom," I tell her.

"I love you too, sweetheart," she replies.

A second later, I have a coughing fit. Yep, I definitely have a cold. We both finish our food and she gives me some

medicine to drink for my cough and cold before she hurries out the door.

I haven't taken it yet because I have something else to do first. I make my way back up to my room and head straight into the bathroom. I kneel in front of the toilet and push a finger down my throat so that I can make myself throw up.

I throw up all the contents of my stomach as tears slip down my cheeks. I know I shouldn't be doing this but I can't seem to help myself. I keep thinking that if I lose some weight, I'll be able to fit in more and maybe they won't bully me anymore.

That's the only thing going through my mind when I don't eat or when I make myself throw up after eating. Every time I walk through the halls of that school, it feels like they're all watching and judging me because I don't have a supermodel body.

I just want to exist and not have people make comments about my weight. I tried to stop making myself throw up after eating but when I do, I feel sick. The feeling of needing to throw up bombards me and then I have to do it. It's sick I know, but I can't seem to help it.

After I'm done purging my stomach, I brush my teeth again and head back into my room. I take off my pants and just leave the hoodie on. I take the medicine my mom left for me and then I take another one of the pills I got from the guys.

I got two different ones. One to help me focus when I'm studying and one to just get me high when I need it. Plus I read up that one of them will probably help me lose weight

and I need that now more than ever. I hope that in no time, I'll be able to lose all this extra weight.

I lie in bed as the feeling of being in the cloud washes over me again. This feeling is getting addicting and I want more and more of it every day. It's nice to have something that lets you not think about your problems for a while.

I must have eventually fallen asleep because when I come to again, my mind is foggy and I'm tired as hell. I look at the time and see that it's five p.m. I can't believe it. I slept most of the day away.

I look at my texts and see that Mom texted me to see how I was doing. I reply, telling her I just woke up and that I'm feeling a bit better.

Aiden also texted me. I sent him a text, telling him that I was sorry for the late text but I was a bit under the weather. I inhale and realize that I can breathe a little better. I also smell something weird and my lips are dry as hell. I hope I wasn't drooling in my sleep.

When I stand up, I feel the wetness between my legs and wonder what the hell I was dreaming about. I hope it wasn't some stupid dream about Knox. I must have been sleeping really deep to not remember a thing.

Knowing that I can't work like this, I take a quick shower and pull on a pair of shorts and a shirt before I grab my laptop to get started on this paper I have to write.

Since it's just after five and the school's game is at seven, I have an hour to get some work done. I have no

idea why I'm even going to the game but since I have nothing else to do and I'm feeling a bit lonely, why not?

I work on my paper for an hour and then put my laptop on my desk before getting dressed in a pair of denim shorts and a T-shirt and some sneakers. I get into my car and head for school.

Riverside is playing against Fairview High and even though I'm not really interested in sports, I figure I'd just get out of the house. Maybe my night will go better than all my days here. I find a parking spot. As soon as I step out of my car, I hear the deafening roar of cheers coming from the bleachers.

I intentionally left a little late so I'd get here after the game already started. From the looks of things, I think the whole town might be here. I'm a little intimidated by that if I am being honest. But I put on a brave face with one foot in front of the other and walk until I get to the school's football field. I make my way down the front of the first bleacher where I see some space.

The girl I sat next to gives out a huff and slides down away from me like I have the plague or something, but I try not to let that ruin my mood. I keep my head forward and watch the game. I have no idea what the hell is going on but the excitement from the crowd is kind of contagious.

My eyes zero in on Knox. I mean, how could they not? He's not hard to miss. He's practically dominating the field and everyone is cheering for him constantly. *I wonder what it would feel like to be loved by people like that...*

From here, I can see how focused he is and how he's playing the game with everything in him. Football looks like

one of the things he loves.

I wish I knew what else he loved but I'll never know. All I am, is his dirty little secret—the thing he keeps hidden from everyone else because he's ashamed to be associated with me. I have no idea how things will go when he officially becomes my stepbrother.

Will he finally just let go of his hate or will things get worse for me? I guess I'll just have to see when the time comes. I push all those thoughts away. I don't want them to ruin my night.

I'm having a good time by myself, just being out of the house. I look around as more cheers fill the air and a second later, they're all chanting Knox's name with screams of happiness and wonder.

I have no idea what just happened because I missed it all. Apparently, Knox did something good to earn the name chant. I look at the other team's players and they aren't so bad either.

They seem to be holding their own against our school. Well not *our* school because I'm not a part of any of this.

As I'm still looking around at everyone, my eyes connect with Kinsley's. I was smiling, having been caught up with the excitement of the crowd, but it instantly vanishes. She looks at me for a few seconds before looking away again like she didn't see me.

I know our friendship has been dead since she said she didn't want to be friends anymore. It shouldn't hurt or bother me anymore because I can't force anyone to be my friend, but, man, it still does. I'm not sure if I'll ever be able

to get over the betrayal of losing a friend because she chose a guy over me.

I turn my face back to the field and watch as a guy tries to tackle Knox to the ground, but his teammates block the move and he runs. He scores a touchdown, and the crowd erupts into deafening screams. He just won our school the game.

As much as I hate the guy, I have to admit that he's very talented on the field. The guys on the team pounce on him and slap him on the back. A few moments later, the crowd starts to leave but I stay where I am. If I try to move now with this crowd, it's going to be impossible and I might get trampled on.

When the majority of the crowd is gone, I stand up and start making my way out and back into the parking lot. I just make it to the parking lot and I'm about to head to my car when someone walks up next to me and throws an arm around my shoulder, pulling me closer to them. I'm about to give them a piece of my mind when the person speaks.

"What's cooking good looking?" the familiar voice asks and I look up right into Aiden's face.

"Aiden!" I scream with excitement as I pull him in for a hug.

"Hey, babe! Well you've certainly made my night better after just getting our asses kicked," he says laughing. I look at him and realize that he's wearing a football uniform.

"Of course you're a jock. I didn't know you played football!" I say, hitting him in the arm.

"It's because I've come to love you, I won't take any offense to that. But not just play, sweetheart. I'm the QB,"

he says, winking at me.

"Don't you let it go to your head," I say with a roll of my eyes and we both laugh. He pinches me on the side and I squeak because I'm ticklish.

"So where are you off to now?" he questions.

"Home."

"Boring! Let's go out for ice cream," he tells me.

"Where's S?" I ask. I didn't notice Saylor being here but then again, a lot of people were here.

"Well, since her brother was on the opposing team, we figured it was best for her not to come. Don't want him finding out about us, now do we?" he says drily.

"Right. I keep forgetting. I still can't figure out how he ended up with such a sweet and amazing sister," I joke.

"Hey, hey! She's mine, so don't get any funny ideas," he says laughing, and I punch him in the side. "So ice cream?"

"Okay, you've convinced me. Let me just text my mom first and let her know," I tell him and he nods. I forgot to text her to let her know I left the house earlier but I do now and tell her I'm going for ice cream with Aiden.

Me: *Hey, Mom, I went to the football game. Felt a little better when I woke up and wanted to get out of the house for a while. Now I'm going out to get ice cream with Aiden.*

Mom: *Glad you're feeling better. Be safe and have fun! I'll be home late. I love you!*

Me: *I will and I love you too!*

I had a feeling that she wasn't going to be home early anyway since she and Jonathan have been planning their wedding. I haven't even touched that minefield yet because I'm still not sure how to feel about it, only because of Knox.

"We're all set," I tell Aiden and then we walk in the direction of my car.

"I'm glad I ran into you tonight. You've been giving us excuses not to hang out," he grumbles and I roll my eyes at him.

"Those were not excuses! I really did have a lot going on these past few days. You know I love you and S. I always love to hang with you both since you guys know I don't have any friends," I tell him and he pulls me in for a hug.

I've resorted to calling Saylor "S" because I don't want to say her name. Anyone could accidentally overhear, and who the hell knows what would happen between Axel and Aiden if Ax was to find out that he's dating his sister.

"I hate this for you guys," I say into his chest. I always feel sad when I think about how they have to hide their relationship. No one deserves that. No one should have to hide who they're in love with either.

"It is what it is," he says with a sigh. "You love who you love and sometimes you just have to roll with the punches until things get better."

"It still sucks!" I tell him.

"You're telling me. But it won't be like this forever, right? Someday, we'll be able to love each other in the open and that's what keeps me going," he says. I can always hear the love he has for her in his voice when he speaks about her.

His words always create an ache in my chest. I'm not jealous of their love because I'm happy for them, but they make me wish I had someone who was there for me like that and who loved me as much as they love each other. *I guess a girl can wish...*

"Yeah, I hope the storm doesn't last forever," I tell him. "Meet you there."

We both get into our cars and I follow him. A few minutes later, we pull up to the local ice cream shop and get out of our cars and walk inside. I tell him my order and he orders for the both of us while I find a table for us to sit at.

I find one toward the back and away from all eyes. The place is already filled with people tonight, no doubt having a good time after the game. He comes back over with chocolate ice cream for him and a strawberry sundae for me. We dive into our snacks, completely fine with being quiet for a while.

"I'm sorry she couldn't come see you play tonight. If I knew you played and she wasn't here, I would've videoed it for her," I tell him.

"They always play the games on the local channels," he tells me with a laugh.

"Oh," I say as my cheeks heat. "I guess that should've been obvious since this town is so football crazy, right?"

"Relax." He laughs again. "Come on, I know you barely ever watch TV and you don't like football that much."

"Try, don't at all," I grumble. "I literally had no idea what was even happening at the game tonight."

"My team was getting their asses kicked," he grumbles and now it's my turn to laugh.

"Don't beat yourself up. From what I saw, it looked like you guys were doing amazing as well."

"You're just saying that because you're my friend and you're being a suck-up!" he teases.

"I am not!" I laugh.

I go back to eating my ice cream sundae when some of it gets on the side of my mouth. It's starting to melt since I've been talking way too much instead of eating. Aiden leans over and wipes it away with his thumb and I give him a smile.

"Thanks," I say, smiling at him. He smiles back at me but then his face changes from a smile to a scowl.

"Do you really think you should be eating ice cream right now? Aren't you already fat enough?" Knox's voice comes from behind me and I instantly stiffen. Why was I foolish enough to think that I'd have a night out where I didn't have to deal with Knox and his insults?

"What the fuck, dude? That was uncalled for!" Aiden snaps at Knox.

"I wasn't speaking to you. I was talking to the witch!" he growls back.

I push my ice cream bowl away because I can't stomach anymore of it, knowing that he's here and he'll most likely say more mean shit to me.

"I'm so sorry," I whisper to Aiden.

"You have nothing to be sorry about. This asshole should be the one apologizing!" he says loud enough for Knox to hear.

"I don't have to apologize for shit. She knows her place. Besides, I'm just giving her some friendly advice." He snickers.

"I-I need to go," I say to Aiden and then stumble out of my seat to walk away. Knox sticks his foot out and I trip, falling onto the floor face-first. I cry out as pain engulfs my face.

"See, you really shouldn't be eating ice cream if you can't hold up your weight," he says. Everyone who was close by and heard start to laugh.

Before I know what's happening, Aiden rushes out of his seat and punches Knox in the jaw. Knox retaliates and swings at him a second later. The two of them go crashing onto the floor, throwing punches and rolling around on the floor.

"Stop it!" I scream at them. I go to push them apart but someone pulls me back. I look back to see that it's Asher. I try to struggle out of his grip but it's no use. He's strong as fuck.

"Don't! You'll only get yourself hurt," he tells me.

"Break them up before they kill each other!" I yell at him.

I look back over to the guys and see that Axel and Ezra have managed to separate them. The manager rushes over and tells both of them to leave the premises before he calls the cops.

I rush over to Aiden and grab some paper towels to clean his face. "Oh my God! Are you okay?" I ask in a panicked tone. My heart is beating out of my chest with the adrenaline surge going through my body. My hands are

shaking as I try to clean the cut on his lips. He grabs a hold of my hand to stop me.

"I'm fine. Come on, let's just get out of here," he tells me, and I nod my head without saying anything. He begins walking and pulls me behind him out of the ice cream shop and back to our cars.

"Are you okay to drive?" he asks me.

"Ye-yeah I'm fine," I tell him. I burst into tears a moment later because my emotions are finally getting the better of me. I can't believe Knox would go as far as humiliating me in public like that. Doing it in school or when we're alone is one thing, but doing it in front of people is another.

"I'm so sorry you had to witness that," I sob as Aiden pulls me in for a hug.

"Hey, you don't have to apologize. That guy has always been an asshole," he tells me. I sniffle as a laugh comes out of me because it's true.

"I guess I better go before he comes out here and picks another fight. I'll text you later," I tell Aiden and we both get into our cars and drive away.

When I get home, I let myself into the house and walk straight up to my room. Mom isn't home yet, which is a good thing. I don't want her to see me like this ever. When I step into my room, there's a faint smell of something sweet that I can't place. I shrug it off, thinking that it was probably Mom doing some of her weird cleaning shit again when she was home.

I quickly shower and get dressed. I decide to do some more work since I don't think I'll be able to sleep right now.

When I open my computer, all I see is an empty document staring back at me. I scramble and look at my files to see if I saved it but nothing is there.

“Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!!!” I yell into my room. This was the one assignment I started a while ago in the library and it’s due in two days. Everything is gone somehow. As if my life couldn’t get any worse, it just did.

Right now, I can’t do anything about it because I’m too emotional from what happened earlier. I’ll have to restart everything in the morning and hope that I can finish it in time. I need a goodnight’s rest, so without thinking, I go into my bathroom and grab one of the sleeping pills I got from the guys yesterday. I needed to get my own before Mom noticed hers was missing.

I down both in one go along with some water and then I slip into bed. I lie there, staring up at the ceiling for a few minutes until the pills start to work their magic. I want to sleep away the disaster that is my life right now. Otherwise, I’d just lose my mind and that won’t do me any good.

I hope that when I wake up tomorrow, I have a solution. With that last thought in mind, I eventually get drowsy from the valium and fall fast asleep.

CHAPTER

Twenty-One

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KNOX

I PULL up to the parking lot and see the guys are already there waiting for me. I get out of my car and walk up to them. I hop onto the hood of Asher's car and take the blunt he's already handing me and take a long pull from it. I let the smoke from the weed fill my lungs before I exhale the smoke. Ah. That felt better and I'm instantly calm.

"So where did you disappear to, asshole?" Asher interrogates, smirking at me. I roll my eyes at the tone he used. The fucker always thinks he knows everything about me. *Then again, if anyone did, it was him.*

"Had some things to take care of," I say in response to his question.

"And did that something have anything to do with a certain redhead?" he asks, giving me his mischievous smile.

"No," I say nonchalantly.

"Oh really now? Because I've got the tea," he tells us all with a smug expression on his face. I want to wipe it off. These assholes are always all up in my shit like a bunch of dickheads.

"Oh, do tell," Ax says, all ears now as he takes a pull from the blunt I just handed him.

"Now this I've got to hear. Don't keep us in suspense," Ez says, grinning from ear to ear like my life is that exciting for him.

"There's nothing to tell," I grumble, but Asher just smiles deviously at me.

"So do you guys want story time?" he asks, rubbing both his hands together like he's some villain, ready for world domination.

"Yes!" both Ax and Ez snap at the same time, clearly impatient. I have to say I am too because I want to know what this asshole is up to.

"So guys, Knox the dickhead here had to drop me off at Kinsley's yesterday because—well, not the point. So there I was in her kitchen, grabbing some paper towels because the girl is a klutz and I happen to look out her kitchen window. You wouldn't believe who was fucking lip locked for a few minutes with a certain redhead," Asher says. I had just taken a pull from the blunt and his words cause me to choke on the smoke.

"No fucking way!!!" Ez literally yells, causing some of the students walking by to look over at us. They don't stop though because they know the rules.

"You're fucking with us, right?" Axel questions with his eyes wide.

"Nope," Asher says, making sure to pop the "p."

"Are you sure it was him and her? Maybe she was locking lips with someone else," Ez states, and I can't help the growl that escapes me.

"Can't miss that red hair and you can't miss this big oaf either," Asher says, laughing now.

"Can you fuckers shut the fuck up? There's nothing to talk about!" I snap, getting irritated. I wasn't even thinking that someone could have seen us yesterday when I was kissing and then fucking Raine in the rain on that stupid bridge.

I was surprised to see her there after what happened between us the first time. You know, that time I told her I wanted to bury her in the woods. Yeah, good times.

I have to admit though, that kiss was hot as fuck. It was something that I've never experienced. Just thinking about yesterday has my cock wanting to get hard.

"It is a big deal! Someone tell him it's a big deal!" Ez squeals like a fucking girl.

"It's a big deal," Ax says, smirking at me next.

"You assholes need a life so you can stop worrying about mine," I grunt out while taking another pull from the blunt. At this rate, I might just smoke the whole damn thing and not pass it to them anymore.

"Come on! You've never kissed any of the girls you've fucked around with and now you're kissing the new girl?" Ax asks.

"It was a lapse in judgment," I grumble. "It didn't mean shit so you assholes can drop it!" I tell them, looking at them pointedly.

"You're no fun!" Ez pouts and I laugh at his antics.

"But... but I need this last question answered," Ax says to Asher. "Did he fuck her?"

"I left and went back to Kinsley. I didn't want to be rude and watch them fuck even though that's what should've happened since they were giving a free show," Asher tells them while laughing.

"Ugh, somebody tell me again why I'm friends with you assholes?" I grumble at them. I feel like I ask them this question at least once every day because they're always annoying me.

"Because you love us," Ez says, giving me the most innocent expression he can muster.

"Dickhead!" I say, laughing.

The bell rings and we finish the blunt before walking in and heading for class. I take my usual seat at the back with the guys and Kinsley.

"You okay?" I ask Kinsley.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just not feeling too good," she says as she turns to look at me.

"Do you need a doctor or something?" I ask, genuinely concerned about her.

"No. I've just been stressed with my college applications and not having my friend anymore," she throws in with a bite to her words, and I just roll my eyes at her.

"Well, I'm glad you're fine," I say, avoiding the last part of her statement.

"Great, well, I'm glad you're glad then I guess," she grumbles before turning to the front again.

I turn to look at Asher in a silent question, asking him if he knows what's going on with her but he just shrugs. I guess she's still mad.

Mr. Smith comes into class and starts his lesson right away. I don't listen to a word he's saying. All my attention is on the chair that's currently empty at the front of the class. I wonder where the hell she is.

Now that I think about it, I've noticed her skipping class more and more in the last week or so. At this rate, she'll fail. But then again, that's what I want, isn't it? Like I said earlier, yesterday was a fluke.

I don't know why the fuck I kissed her. Maybe it was because those few seconds it took to get to her had my adrenaline pumping. She was a second away from tipping over the fucking edge.

She's so fucking stupid! Who the hell goes drinking by themselves and then almost falls off a bridge? Then I remember the words she said to me. I recall the pain in her voice when she told me to just get it over with and throw her off the rails...

I didn't mean for her to hear that shit. I was just saying it to get Asher off my back. I didn't know she was in the fucking library and overheard my words.

When she said that she could be dead along with my mother... I don't know what happened. It felt like someone else took over my body and without thinking, I slammed my mouth down on hers to shut her up. I got carried away. I kept kissing her when I should have pulled away.

Obviously I've kissed girls before, but I haven't in a long time. I discovered that many of them just wanted the money and not the man behind it. Oh, they wanted me alright, but they just cared about the money more.

So after a few of those lessons, I decided I no longer wanted any kind of intimacy with any of them. Hooking up was the way to go and they didn't mind that. I'd give them my cock and buy them gifts, but there was no way I was falling for any of them. Every one of them thought they'd be the one to change me, but it never happened.

Until her that is.

Maybe that's why I hate her so much. I shouldn't be having any sort of feelings for her. Every time I find myself having those feelings, what happened to my mother comes back to haunt me and remind me of why I hate her in the first place.

Somehow, she's the one girl who has the power to make me feel when I don't want to feel anything but the anger and pain still consuming me every day. When I remember what I'm supposed to be doing, I get extra mean and say all that horrible shit to her.

I want her to hate me, so that there will be no way I'd fall for her. There can't be any feelings if we both hate each other, right?

Plus, there's still the matter of the secret that's being kept from her. Only she doesn't know that there are things being kept from her. But I do and even though I know what I do, it still doesn't stop me from wanting her. Maybe I'm just as fucked up as my father is. I guess the apple doesn't fall far from the tree after all.

By the time class is over and I move to the next class, she still isn't here. Now I know that she's not in school I wonder where the hell she is. I take my phone out and check the GPS tracking app I installed onto her phone.

It shows that she's home. For some fucked-up reason, I need to see her. She better not be home with some other guy or I really will strangle her. As soon as that thought hits me, I'm out of my chair and walking out of class, ignoring the guys calling after me. I head to my car.

I peel out of the parking lot and head for her house. I pull into the garage of the house across from hers like I did last time and then walk over to her house, letting myself in. This feels like *déjà vu*, but I don't care. I keep going.

I step into her room and see that it's dark. She still has the blinds pulled down. I pull one of them up because I notice the lump in her bed. Now that there's enough light in her room, I see that she's sound asleep under the covers.

I walk over to her nightstand and pick up the bottle. It's medicine for a cough and cold. So she's sick... I don't know why I suddenly feel a weird tingle in my chest but it happens. I don't know what kind of weird shit keeps happening to me whenever I'm around her, especially these last few days.

Now that I can see that she's sleeping and not with anyone else, I should leave. But I don't. Instead, I move to sit on the chair by her window for a while and watch her. She hasn't moved once in all the time I've been sitting here. Am I a creeper for watching her as she sleeps? Maybe, but I don't particularly care.

When I get bored, I spend some time going through her stuff while she's still sound asleep. I go to the drawer that has her panties in them and take two more and put them in my pocket. I mean, I can never have enough of her panties,

right? Besides, my favorite thing to do is jack off into them and mess them up with my cum.

Now that I'm thinking about it, I get horny and I need to come right now. I grab another pair of her panties and take my pants off before getting into the chair again.

I start stroking my cock into her panties and the silky material feels so good on my skin. I look at her while I jack off. My movements become faster as I continue pumping. After a few minutes of stroking my cock hard and fast, I come right into her panties. A grunt escapes me at how hard I came and how fucking good it felt.

I scoop some of my cum from the panties and spread it across her lips. I hope she tastes my cum when she wakes up. I pull off the panties she's currently wearing and put the cum-soaked panties on her and then pull them up, before throwing the blanket over her again. I like the fact that her pussy will be soaked with my cum.

I take the pair she was just wearing and add them to my collection. I look at the time and see that I need to get back for the game tonight. I leave her alone and walk away. I feel much better.

I'm in the zone as our team kicks some ass. We're playing against Fairview tonight and I can't wait for them to lose. We hate their quarterback.

The guy is a tool and Axel hates the guy with a passion. Not sure what the hell happened with the two of them but they've had a rivalry between them for the past two years or so. Because I have to support my best friend, I hate the tool as well.

As I run across the field, I forget about all that extra shit. The only thing that matters to me at this moment is the ball that's in my hands. I run across the field, intent on making the winning touchdown.

The quarterback has other intentions. He has his guys running in my direction and I know their intent is to tackle me to the ground but I don't pay attention to them. I keep running. I know my guys will have my back.

The guys from my team block their advances and it gives me the opening I need. Screams and chants erupt from the crowd as I score the winning touchdown.

I throw the ball onto the ground and let out a roar of happiness. We're now one step closer to the semifinals and I am pumped and proud of my team. One second, I'm standing there and then the next, I'm flat on the ground as the guys tackle me as they hoot and holler, celebrating our win tonight.

When I finally manage to get them off of me, I'm not sure what makes me look toward the bleachers. I see Raine at the very front of one of them. I notice her right away because whenever she's near, my eyes always find her and she always stands out, well, to me at least.

As I keep looking at her, I get pissed. She's wearing a pair of short denim shorts along with a T-shirt and one of those zip-front hoodies.

I have no clue why she started wearing hoodies and sweaters when this place is hot as fuck, but whatever floats her boat I guess. I thought she was fucking sick earlier so what the hell is she doing here right now?

The crowd is starting to clear so I start to walk off the field as well. I don't answer anyone who tries to talk to me. I make my way to the locker room to shower so I can get to her faster. I want to know what the hell she's doing here. She's sitting there, not moving, so I'm hoping to catch her before she leaves. Then again, I can always go back to her house and find her if she isn't here when I'm done.

I need to have a word with her to remind her who the hell she's here to serve. I'm pissed at seeing her here, especially in shorts. All these fuckers are getting an eye full of her legs.

I take the quickest shower ever and pull on my clothes even faster. I walk out to the parking lot, knowing that she probably left the bleachers already. I'm just in time to see Aiden, Fairview's quarterback, throw his fucking arm around her shoulders like they fucking know each other.

I see red and want to murder both of them. I told her no other man is supposed to touch her and what does she do? She lets another man fucking touch her.

This girl is a fucking witch. I have no clue what the fuck is happening to me when it comes to her. I'm wanting things I shouldn't want.

"You good, bro?" Asher asks as he and the guys walk up next to me. I didn't even realize they were following me, which goes to show how caught up I was in her.

"Let's follow her!" I snap. She's following him, so I definitely want to see where they're going. We all get into our rides and follow, making sure to keep our distance. We know this town like the back of our hands so I can already tell where they're heading.

They stop at the ice cream shop. They're talking and smiling as they head inside. The smile she's giving him right now makes me want to rip them both apart. She's not fucking allowed to smile at anyone like that. *And yes, I'm aware that sounds psychotic. Do I care? Fuck no!*

We wait a few minutes before going in after them. If I went in there right away, there's no telling what I'd do. I give myself some time to calm down. I see fucking red as I walk inside the shop and see him leaning over her and touching her lips while she has another smile on her face for him.

The anger inside me is uncontrollable. All I want right now is to hurt her and destroy her, which is why I say the first dumb thing to come to my mind.

"Do you really think you should be eating ice cream right now? Aren't you already fat enough?" I snap at her with so much venom in my voice I know she hears it. She instantly stiffens.

"What the fuck, dude? That was uncalled for!" the asshole snaps at me.

"I wasn't speaking to you. I was talking to the witch!" I growl at him, not in the mood for his shit. I'm already fucking pissed at her.

"I'm so sorry," I hear her say to him and that enrages me further.

"You have nothing to be sorry about. This asshole should be the one apologizing!" the asshole snaps, looking right at me.

"I don't have to apologize for shit. She knows her place. Besides, I'm just giving her some friendly advice." I snicker.

She says something to him that I don't quite hear, but she stumbles out of her seat. Because I'm an asshole, I stick my foot out and she falls onto the floor face-first and she cries out.

"See, you really shouldn't be eating ice cream if you can't hold up your weight," I tell her, and everyone laughs at her expense.

One minute, everyone is laughing and the next, things erupt into chaos as Aiden throws a punch at me. I was distracted, looking at her so he managed to catch me in the jaw. I retaliate by throwing a punch at him, tackling him. We go crashing onto the floor.

I hear her screaming at us to stop but I'm too far gone to listen to a word. I want to fuck this asshole up. But a minute later, I feel hands on me, pulling us apart.

I'm breathing heavily as I look up and see that it's Ax and Ez pulling us apart. The manager rushes over and tells us both to leave. I shrug Axel off of me and watch as she rushes over to the tool and starts to clean his face up.

I storm out of the shop. If I stayed inside, I'd probably do something I'd regret later. I mean, I can't kill anyone with so many witnesses, but she'll pay for it later. The guys follow me out the door as we make our way back to our cars.

"You good, brother?" Asher asks.

"I think you should go cool off at home," Ezra says in a serious tone. I must have really been off the rails. He's rarely ever serious when he's around us.

"I'm fine. But today fucking sucks." I sigh.

"I'm sorry, man," they all say. Today was supposed to be my mom's birthday. That's why I've been so moody and angry today.

"I'll see you guys tomorrow," I tell them before I start to walk away.

"Are you sure you don't want us to come and hang with you?" Axel asks, and I shake my head.

I get into my car and peel out. I drive all the way to the cemetery. Once I park, I take the bottle of whiskey I have in the backseat with me as I make my way to my mom's grave. I take a seat on the grass and crack open the seal on the bottle. I take a swig and sit there as the burn of the alcohol goes down my throat. I take a few more swigs and when I have a nice buzz going, I finally decide to speak.

"Hey, Mom, guess what? Dad's getting married. I hate her daughter so much but I also can't help but feel other things even though I know it's wrong," I tell her. There's nothing but silence. I'm alone here, like I always am. My fuckup of a father can't be bothered to come visit her grave.

"I fucking hate you for what you did, you know? You messed me up, Mom! I'm walking around with a chip on my shoulder and nothing but hate in my heart. It fucking sucks that my family is the one who did that shit to me!" I scream as the tears I've been holding in for so long spill out. I keep drinking as more and more emotion pours out of me.

"I want to hurt her so much, Mom, but I also don't want to hurt her... which of those would make you hate me more?" I question into the darkness. As usual, the answer I wish for never comes...

I sit there for a while longer. When I'm too tired of sitting there, I get up to leave. "Bye, Mom. I'll come back some other day. Happy birthday," I whisper before leaving.

I get into my car and pull away from the cemetery. Before I realize where I'm going, I'm driving over to her house because the need to see her is overwhelming. I know her mom is with my dad right now so I enter her house like I usually do and make my way up to her room and let myself in.

Her room is dark. When I turn her night-light on, I see that she's fast asleep in bed. Instantly, the anger from earlier comes back in full force but I try to temper it down. I don't feel like fighting right now especially since I just visited my mom's grave. If I follow my anger from earlier and with my current mood, I really might lose control and kill her.

I crawl into her bed and check her. She's sound asleep which tells me that she probably took something to help her sleep. I know enough about sleeping pills after watching my mother take them religiously that I know how it looks when you're on them.

I don't care if it makes me sick that I love her this way, but the thought of her asleep like this makes my cock hard as stone. I get up from her bed and lock her room door just in case her mother decides to come home tonight and then cut off her night-light.

I take off my clothes before I slip back into bed with her. I get under the covers with her and just lay there for a while. I hear her whimper in her sleep a few times. I'm not

sure if she knows I'm here or not, but her body moves in closer to mine.

Her ass is touching my dick and I don't even fight the urge. I pull her sleep shorts and panties down and then spread her leg over mine. I wet my fingers before putting them to her clit and start rubbing.

I can feel her getting wet already so I use two of my fingers and slip them both into her hole. She's tight and getting wetter by the second. Once she's wet enough, I pull my fingers out and suck them clean.

The witch's taste has me addicted to it and always wanting more. I grab my cock and stroke it a few times before I place the tip at her entrance. I push into her all the way to the hilt.

Her tightness and the heat enveloping my cock feels so good that a groan escapes me as I start to pump my hips from behind. Having her in this almost unconscious state has me harder than I've ever been before.

I'm not sure if she feels me inside her but a few small whimpers leave her. I continue thrusting my cock slowly in and out of her tight pussy. I grab her breast through her hoodie and squeeze as I speed up my thrusts. All I want to do right now is come.

I didn't even bother taking all her clothes off since I just wanted to get my dick wet. A low growl escapes me as I finally start to come, blasting her pussy walls. I come so much it fills her pussy until my cum starts to leak out of her.

Being drunk and then coming so much has me tired and I close my eyes for a second. I plan to lie here until I can

move again and then leave. Eventually, I fall asleep with my cock still buried inside her cum-filled pussy.

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CHAPTER

Twenty-Two

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RAINE

I FEEL SO hot and groggy, dying of thirst when I start to wake up. Those sleeping pills really knocked me out when I took them and I haven't slept that deeply in a long time.

My body feels weird and I'm not sure if it's because of the pills or not. As I become fully awake, I feel a weird sensation in my groin area. It feels like something is poking me and it hurts a little, but it also kind of feels good.

Why the hell would I be feeling anything resembling pleasure right now? Maybe I'm still asleep and dreaming. At this point, I'm no longer sure what's real or what isn't anymore. My mind has been all over the place lately.

Plus, my system is probably filled with all the drugs I've been taking ever since I got them from the Venom Brothers. I've had to refill them twice already. Even though somewhere inside my head I know they're not good for me, I can't break the habit I started.

After the disaster that was last night, I had to take some of Mom's sleeping pills. I needed something to help me sleep faster. I didn't want to stay awake for long to find out what Knox would do in retaliation. I know he'll do

something since he probably thinks me hanging out with Aiden is a slight against him.

I was so lost in my head that I didn't pay much attention to my surroundings or the weird sensation in my pussy. I somehow missed an entire body next to me. But I become aware of it when a hand slides up to my breast and squeezes.

I'm just about to scream and rush off the bed when a hand covers my mouth to keep me quiet and hold me in place. I'm breathing heavily through my nose. I'm scared and I can feel the adrenaline rush through my system. I have no idea what the hell is going on but what I do know, is that there shouldn't be anyone else in my bed right now when I went to sleep alone.

"Don't make a sound," his husky voice says into the quiet room and I shake my head. My body deflates with a little sigh of relief as my mind registers the familiar voice. I'd know that voice anywhere since it's the one that torments me every chance he gets. I'm not sure what the hell he's doing here but I'm glad it's him and not some serial killer, you know?

When I don't make a sound, he moves his hand from my mouth and moves it down to my neck, gripping it in a firm hold. He moves his other hand to grab a hold of my hip as he starts to thrust his hips into me, making his cock go deeper into my pussy. The intensity of his grip, along with his movement, cause me to let out a groan. I have no idea how long he's been here. I was dead to the world earlier.

None of that matters anyway since I know why he's here. It's because of the fiasco with Aiden after the game

last night. Since I haven't paid for what happened yet, I guess I'm about to. His brand of punishment always ends with him doing filthy things to my body and this time seems no different.

"What are you doing here?" I finally ask him, trying to sound brave, but I know there's a slight quiver in my voice. I'm not sure what state he's in. I can smell the alcohol surrounding him but I'm not sure if he's sober right now or if he's drunk. I'm also not sure if he wants to kill me or not.

"You're not the one who gets to ask the questions here, I am. But first, I need to empty my balls again. So if you could just shut the fuck up, that would be great," he grunts, while he keeps thrusting inside me.

"What do you mean again?" I shriek and then shut my mouth quickly. I'm not sure if my mom came home or not last night.

"Oh, I fucked you earlier while you were asleep," he says casually, like that's something normal people do. I know he's smirking from the tone of his voice.

"Th-that's fucking sick!" I grunt because he just gave me a particularly deep thrust.

"Maybe, but you're just as sick as I am. Your body can't lie. It's already conditioned to want everything I do to it. Why else would your pussy get wet as fuck for me even while you were in such a deep sleep?" he questions. I'm sure my face is red as hell right now.

If what he's saying is true, then that's fucked up. How the hell would my body even recognize him in my sleep? I'm so fucking confused by him and everything right now.

"So you spent the night?" I question with a little smirk on my face. I feel him stiffen for a second at my question. Ah, gotcha! Knowing the asshole, he probably didn't even intend to stay here.

"Don't read anything into it. I still fucking hate you and you need to get punished for last night," he snaps against my neck. His breath there sends tingles down my spine, making goosebumps form on my skin.

"Yeah, you keep saying that, but you know what I think?"

"I don't care what you think," he growls.

"I think you're a fucking liar and a hypocrite. You say you hate me yet you're always in my fucking space and after me. You're always in my bed. You keep telling me that I'm your plaything, your whore, your slut or whatever and I have to wonder why that is," I snap at him. "Maybe you don't really hate *me*. You just hate yourself because of how much you want me and you can't fucking admit it like a man. Do I scare you, Knox? Do I make you feel things your cold fucking heart doesn't want to feel? Is that why you keep saying how much you hate me?"

"Don't read too much into it, slut! No one will ever love someone like you. You're only here to please me and be my fucktoy. That's all you'll ever be to anyone, and you've yet to pay your dues," he snaps.

"You're a real fucking prick! You know that? How and why the fuck am I supposed to pay for something I don't know about? I just fucking moved here. What could I have possibly done to you, asshole?" I snap and then cry out

when he pulls out of me and flips us over so that I'm on my back.

He slams into me again with so much force, another cry slips out of me. He wraps a hand around my throat again and squeezes as he continues to thrust into me, pounding away his frustrations and anger on my poor battered pussy. I can hear the squelching sounds, letting me know just how wet I am right now. I'm at war with myself. How am I this wet for him when he's punishing me?

I shouldn't like this. I really shouldn't, but there's just something about the pain he causes when he fucks me that just makes me want him even more. I want it to hurt, just like it hurts when he's being mean to me with his words. It's toxic, I know. But I can't seem to not want him anymore even though I know that somewhere along the line, I'll end up getting burned. With the way we're going, it's inevitable. *Hate like ours is meant to only end with death.*

I know that's morbid but sometimes you can just feel things, almost like a premonition and us... we're like fire and ice. We clash and hurt each other. It's only a matter of time before it truly gets out of hand.

My eyes have adjusted to the darkness in my room and I take a moment to stare up into his face as he's hovering over my body, continuing to pound his cock in and out of me. The sounds of our skin slapping can be heard throughout the room and that kind of turns me on a little more. *Yep! I'm definitely as fucked in the head as he is.*

When he notices me looking at him, he increases the pressure on my neck as he starts to move his hips in overdrive, slamming into me harder and faster with every

second. I groan at how good it feels to be railed by him right now. *Obviously, yes, I've lost my sanity.*

There's an angry expression on his face but there's also a sort of vulnerability there that I've never seen before. Without thinking, I lift my hand to touch his face. Before my fingers can make contact with his skin, he grabs my hand along with the other and places them both over my head, making sure to hold them in place.

"Don't!" he growls.

"Are you afraid you'll catch even more feelings if I touch you?" I manage to croak out through gasps. His hand is still around my neck.

"Never," he grunts.

"Why are you really here? Is something wrong?" I ask in a timid voice. I know I shouldn't feel sorry for him because of how he treats me, but something about him tonight is just filled with vulnerability. I mean, if he wasn't, he wouldn't have spent the night.

He would have made sure that he left before I even woke up so I wouldn't know he was here. Now that I think about it, I wonder how many times, if at all, he's been here and I just never knew. Most of the time I know because he uses it to taunt me, to let me know he can get to me anytime he wants to.

"Don't act like you know me because you don't!" he grunts. "And don't try to worm your way into knowing my business!"

I can never seem to figure him out, but I desperately want to. Maybe if I do, I'll be able to predict his moves. He's like this being that always seems so out of reach to

me. I want nothing more than to peel away his layers and see what's there at the core of him.

"Why were you at the game last night?" he growls.

"Because I wanted to go. Everyone was there, so I didn't see why I couldn't go either. I wanted to see the oh-so-great Knox play," I drawl in a sarcastic tone. All the weird and fuzzy feelings I felt earlier, are now gone.

"Didn't I tell you that you're my possession and you don't do shit without my permission?" he questions in a hard tone.

"Well, forgive me, asshole, but how am I supposed to contact you when I'm too low in the hierarchy to even have your number? Besides, you don't own me! I can go wherever the hell I damn well please!" I snap at him.

"Keep telling yourself that, slut! Now what I really want to know is why you were hanging out with that tool?" He growls his question at me.

"None of your business," I snap.

You know, I think this is the most fucked-up thing I've ever experienced. We're having a full-on fucking conversation and he hasn't stopped fucking me yet.

"Don't make me hurt you! Answer the fucking question!"

"Geez! He's my fucking friend, dickhead!"

"You aren't allowed to have any friends!" he mutters through clenched teeth.

"Oh that's fucking rich! You don't get to decide that. You already took away the one friend I had. Isn't that fucking enough for you?" I scream at him.

"No it fucking isn't! I want you to hurt. God! I want you to fucking hurt so bad!" he yells at me. "You shouldn't

fucking exist, yet here you are!”

His words send an arrow straight to my heart as pain sears me from the inside out. I use all the strength I have to push him off of me. I manage to get him off because he wasn’t expecting the move. The anger in me makes me lunge for him and I scratch and claw at him, putting all my effort into it.

We’re tangled up in the sheets as I try to get away from him after I’m done trying to claw at him. He’s too strong so I only manage to get a few scratches in. He grabs my hands and pins me down onto the bed with him looming over me again.

“What the fuck is wrong with you?” I scream at him as the pain courses through my body. “Why do you keep wishing me dead or wishing that I didn’t exist? If you want it so bad then fucking do it already and get it over with! Otherwise, just leave me the fuck alone!”

I do the one thing I swore I’d never do in front of him which is cry. Right after the last word leaves my mouth, I break down into sobs. I can feel his stare on me but I don’t care. I can’t control the tears.

“I—” he starts, but I cut him off.

“Just fucking leave, please! You already got what you came here for. You fucked me literally and in the head. If that was what you came to do then you succeeded. I don’t have anything else in me to give you right now, so please just fucking leave! Murder me if you want to and just fucking get it over with. I can’t keep doing this. I can’t keep living like this, trying to survive you. I’m barely managing to fucking do it,” I cry through the gut-wrenching sobs.

In an instant, he's off me. He backs away from me like I just burned him or maybe it's in disgust. Who the hell knows? I can't bring myself to care. He quickly gets dressed and slips out my door. I curl up in a ball and sob until my eyes are sore from crying.

I need my pills to take the pain away and make me feel good. I get up and walk into my bathroom and grab two Percocet from the drawer and then walk back into my room. I grab the bottle of water from my nightstand and gulp it down along with the pills.

I move to the side of my bed and sit on the floor, still half-naked. I can't seem to care right now. I can feel his cum leaking out of my pussy but again, I don't care. All I care about is the buzz I'm starting to feel.

I pull out my notebook that I usually draw in and begin drawing. I continue even when I start to feel blissed out of my mind and high. The only thing I'm aware of is my hand moving along the page and nothing else.

The sun has been up for an hour by the time I'm done. I'm exhausted and all I want to do is crawl into bed again and never wake up.

I look down at the page in front of me and all I see is him. It's a drawing of him from when he was hovering over me earlier. He's pretty, but in my drawing, right behind his beautiful face, is the outline of a monster.

Because that's what he is—the monster in my story, and my drawing represents that clearly. It shows how the pretty face can hide the ugliness. Too tired to do anything else, I push all my stuff under my bed again and then crawl into it, where I let the darkness pull me in.

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CHAPTER

Twenty-Three

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RAINE

IT'S ALREADY NOON when I finally wake up after the mindfuck Knox put me through. One minute, I think he might have feelings for me and then the next, he's acting like an asshole. I keep getting whiplash and I'm not sure what to do about him anymore. This shit is exhausting.

I drag myself out of bed and take a shower before throwing on a T-shirt and some shorts. I make my way downstairs. I walk into the kitchen to grab some juice when my mom walks in. She looks so happy and I'm a little jealous. I wish I had the same happiness she does.

Riverside has brought nothing but happiness for her while it's brought nothing but pain and unhappiness for me. Nevertheless, I push those thoughts away because I can never be envious of her. I want her to have all the happiness in the world like I've always wanted for her, especially after her and my dad started to fight constantly and things became a shitshow.

"Honey, are you alright? I called and texted you a few times but you didn't respond. You had me a little worried,"

she says as she walks over to me and gives me a kiss on the forehead.

"Shoot, I'm sorry, Mom! I just woke up. This past week was a jammed packed one and I guess I was super tired," I say apologetically.

"Oh, I'm sorry school is kicking your butt," she says, giggling since she knows that this is a first for me.

"I'm sure you are," I say with an eye roll but there's a smile on my face too.

"Hey, I've always said that you don't need to be miss perfect, you know. It's okay that's school is tough sometimes. I don't expect you to kill yourself every day, trying to get the perfect grades. I just want you to succeed while also taking care of yourself and having fun while doing it," she tells me in a gentle voice.

That's one thing I can always depend on my mom for. She always knows how to make me feel better and not like the complete failure that I am. Yes, I was doing well in school but I'm a complete failure at life because I'm letting these assholes get inside my head.

Well. I used to be good at school. I'm not anymore and my grades can attest to that. I'm going to need to fix that shit and fast, before it messes up my chance at a college and getting the fuck out of here. I don't think I'd survive being here for the rest of my life.

"Hey, were you in the backyard last night or anytime yesterday?" she asks.

"No. Why?"

"Oh, it's nothing. Just some of my plants got knocked over. Must have been an animal or something," she tells

me.

"Must have been," I agree with her, since I wasn't the one to break her pots.

"Well, let me know when you're ready to go," she tells me a few minutes later. My spoon is halfway to my mouth when I stop it midair.

"Ready to go where?" I ask with furrowed brows. I mean, lately everything is blurring together and I don't know where my head is most of the time.

"We're supposed to go dress shopping today, silly," she says, and I inwardly groan.

I completely forgot about that. The wedding is a few weeks away and I grimace at the thought of my soon-to-be stepbrother. Even though I hate him, he also elicits other feelings in me as well.

I'm not sure how Knox is going to react when we become official stepsiblings. I mean, we already know it's coming but I'm not sure how he'll react when it actually happens. That's another thing to worry about. He'll either calm down or he'll go all out with the tormenting. This situation could literally go either way. Trying to read him is impossible.

"Shit! Is that today?" I ask, just to be sure.

"Yes. I've only been telling you about it every day this week," she says, rolling her eyes again. "Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yes, Mom, I'm fine. I've just been a little preoccupied this week. I completely forgot that it was today," I tell her. "Just stay right here and I'll go get changed. I showered already so it won't take me long,"

“Okay, sweetheart,” she says as I hop up from my seat and rush upstairs to my room. I grab a simple yellow floral sundress and then put a sweater over it and pair it with some white sneakers.

I put my red hair up in a bun and check my appearance in the mirror. I hate how I look. I can see the pudge of my stomach and my thick thighs. I hate everything about me. Before I get too carried away and hate everything else as well, I move away from the mirror.

I grab another Percocet. I want it to start working so that I can lose some of this weight. I think once that happens, I’ll finally start to feel a little better. I wash the pill down with some water and then I head back downstairs. This pill will help me lose weight while also giving me the high I’m craving.

Mom is still in the kitchen where I left her. I walk in and tell her that I’m ready to go. She gets up from her chair and we both walk outside. I get into the passenger seat and she gets into the driver’s seat and we’re off.

I hope we have a good day because it feels like I haven’t had a good day in ages. I forgot what it’s like to just laugh and have fun like a regular teenager. I forgot what it’s like to just exist without anyone constantly picking on me.

We pull up to the dress shop and I can instantly tell that it’s expensive as hell. As soon as we enter the door, we’re greeted by the staff like royalty. I snicker at that thought of being royalty. Then again, Mom will be married to royalty soon. The man is like a gazillionaire.

Maybe that’s why Knox walks around like a giant prick most of the time. His head is too filled with all the money

he has and the rest that he will no doubt inherit.

I take in the inside of the shop as we walk in. It's gorgeous. It's an open floor space with carpets on the floor and there are tons of beautiful dresses hanging along the wall around the room. The middle of the room has a comfy-looking couch and accent chairs surrounding it. The color scheme consists of browns and creams and gold lights, and a chandelier hanging from the ceiling.

This place screams money and the dresses look like they carry a hefty price tag as well. We're the only ones in here. I guess they must have booked the entire place out for Mom to try on her dress.

One of the staff members brings out two glasses of champagne and hands one to Mom and then turns to me. I take mine and the lady leaves us alone.

"You're not twenty-one yet," Mom says, giving me a look.

"Come on, Mom! It's just one glass. Besides, what's the point in getting married to a rich guy if I can't enjoy the perks?" I ask her, giving her my best puppy dog eyes.

Truth is, I'm already high and trying to act normal in front of my mother so she won't suspect I'm on drugs. I'm thirsty and this champagne feels cold and nice in my hands. I bet it'll feel much better going down my throat. Isn't it funny that I'm not old enough to drink yet, but I can buy drugs? But then again that's illegal, so that thought doesn't even matter.

"Fine! But only one," she says and I give her a big smile.

"You're so awesome!" I tell her, giggling.

“Stop trying to butter me up and go sit! I’m going to go try on my dress,” she tells me.

I dutifully take a seat and grab my phone. I scroll through it as my mother goes into the dressing room to try on her dress. A second later, I get a text and pull out my phone from my bag to read it.

Aiden: *How are you feeling today?*

Me: *Better. I’m dress shopping with my mom. She’s getting married soon :(*

Aiden: *LOL. Why the sad face? Isn’t that a good thing?*

Me: *In normal circumstances it would be... but it’s because of who she’s getting married to that makes me sad :(*

Aiden: *Oh this I’ve got to hear ;)*

Me: *Knox’s dad...*

Aiden: *Please tell me you’re pulling my leg!*

Me: *I wish I was!*

Aiden: *Is that why the dude was so possessive over you last night?*

Me: *Oh please! He is NOT possessive over me! The guy hates me for some reason and would rather see me die than ever be possessive over me.*

Me: *And again, I’m so sorry for last night!*

Aiden: *It’s fine, babe ;)*

Me: *How’s your face though?*

Aiden: *It’s fine. A kiss might make me feel better ;)*

Me: *LOL. I’m telling your girlfriend that you’re being a perv!*

Aiden: *Damn you wound me, babe! But you forget that she already knows you're the annoying kid sister I never had ;)*

Me: *Gee, thanks, asshole!*

I hear my mom's voice as she comes out of the dressing room so I tell Aiden that I'll text him later, and he tells me to have fun with my mom.

"So what do you think?" she asks as she comes out into the open space. My mouth literally drops open because she looks stunning.

She's wearing a body con lace strapless dress that fits her body to perfection. It's filled with crystals and rhinestones in the breast area that comes all the way down the middle to her stomach. It's a floor-length dress. I have no doubt that this dress has an outrageous price.

"Wow, Mom, you look absolutely gorgeous and stunning!" I gush as I look at her.

"So do you think this is the one?"

"No doubt about it!"

"Well I'm glad you like it," she says, smiling at me. "Now it's time for your maid of honor dress fitting," she tells me and I groan.

"Do I have to?"

"Yes!"

"Fiiinnne," I grumble as I get out of the chair I was sitting in.

I walk into the dressing room and look at the selection they have for me. I try on a few before I settle for a dusty

rose floor-length dress that's simple and has a deep-V at the front. I made sure to get one with long sleeves because of the scars.

"Are you sure you want to get long sleeves? It's going to be hot," Mom asks me when I walk out of the dressing room to show her my dress.

"It'll be fine. The sleeves are made with lace so it's light and won't be hot," I tell her. When she inspects it, she sees that I'm right.

"Okay. You look absolutely gorgeous too," she tells me while giving me a warm smile.

"Thanks, Mom," I say, returning her smile before I walk away to go and change back into my clothes. We also get shoes to match the dresses and I'm happy. It means we don't have to go to another store for shoes. I like shopping just like the next girl but I'm just not in the mood today.

Once we're done, the staff tells Mom that they'll have the dresses sent to us. She agrees and then we walk out of there.

"Let's go get an early dinner now," she tells me as we get into her car. I look at the time and see that it's already five thirty p.m. Wow, time really flies. Then again, we did leave the house pretty late.

"Okay," I tell her but the thought of food has me feeling nauseated. I'll just have to find a way to eat and not want to throw up in front of her. If I don't eat, she'll be on me fast, asking what's the matter with me. I don't need that right now.

Ten minutes later, we pull up to the most expensive restaurant in this town, and then we both get out of the car

and head inside.

"Hello, ma'am. Your dinner party is already here," the hostess greets my mother as we walk in.

"What? We're having dinner with someone else?" I ask. This is news to me.

"Yes. We're having dinner with Jonathan," she tells me, like it's no big deal.

"A heads-up would've been nice!" I grumble at her.

"I'm sorry, baby. It just slipped my mind," she says apologetically.

I don't believe her for one second. She was the one who said let's come out for dinner, so obviously she knew she was meeting him here. Plus, she had ample time to let me know in the car.

I mean, I'm not opposed to meeting the guy because I'll have to at some point, but a little heads-up before that happened would've been nice.

It feels like I've just been left out of the loop and she's been living her own life since we got here. Like I'm not that important for her to make any of her decisions with and I hate it. I'm beginning to feel like an outsider in my own family, the way I feel everywhere I go in this town.

The hostess tells us to follow her and we do. When we get to the table, Jonathan Riverside is already there sitting. I have to admit that the man is good looking for his age. Well, he's not that old. He looks to be about forty and he's in shape.

I can see where Knox gets his god-like features from. He and his dad both look like they were carved like the Greek gods.

"Hello, sweetheart," he says to my mom as he gets up from his seat when we approach. He pulls out her chair for her and then does the same for me.

"Thank you," I say to him as he moves back to his seat.

"And you must be Raine," he says, giving me a smile that looks genuine. There's something else in his expression that I can't quite place. It's weird because he just keeps looking at me.

"Are you ready to order, dear?" my mom asks him and it's like he comes back to his senses then. He laughs and clears his throat. I shrug it off because well, what else am I going to do?

Everyone orders. As we sit and wait, I can't help but look around. The restaurant is elegant and spacious, and it screams that only people with money come here.

Mom and Jonathan are deep in conversation and from the looks of it, I can tell that they really are in love. They keep touching each other as they speak. As I look at them, I can't help but wish that I would have something like that as well someday.

He's polite, and he even involves me in the conversation a few times. I wish his son took after him. Clearly Knox has a lot to learn from his father, which is mainly how to be a gentleman and how to be nice. The two of them are polar opposites of each other.

Our food comes and both Mom and Jonathan dig in. I just push my food around on my plate and barely take any bites. I'm not feeling hungry. Hopefully they don't notice.

"So, Raine, are you ready for the move tomorrow?" Jonathan asks after we've finished eating. I'm left staring at

him like I'm stupid.

"I'm sorry, what?" I ask dumbly.

"Shit! I didn't get a chance to tell her yet," Mom says.

"Well, no time like the present," he says.

"Mom, seriously?" I almost shriek but rein it in when I remember where we are.

"I'm sorry, honey. I forgot to tell you since I've been so busy with work and all the planning," she tells me.

"With the wedding happening soon, now's as good a time as any," Jonathan cuts in.

"Again, a little heads-up would've been nice," I grumble.

"Can I take your car home? I'm not feeling so well."

She nods and hands me her keys.

She knows me enough to know I need a little time to myself to process what just happened. I especially need the time alone because of how I was feeling earlier when we got here. *I'm back to feeling like nothing but an outsider.*

"Feel better, sweetheart. We'll talk when I get home. I have some things to take care of so I'll be home in the morning," she says, and I just nod before telling Jonathan bye and walking out of there.

It feels like my head is about to explode with all the shit that's changing so rapidly. Now I'll be living with my tormentor and I don't know how to feel about that. I mean, I know about the upcoming wedding but somehow I didn't think about what it would entail.

I didn't think about the fact that there was a possibility that we'd be moving into their house. I thought they'd live separate or something. Clearly I'm dumb and was just blindsided by that fact. My life is just great!

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CHAPTER

Twenty-Four

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RAINE

WHEN I GOT HOME from dinner last night, I was still pissed as hell at my mom for the way she was acting. She's making me feel like I'm not a part of her family anymore and acting like Jonathan is her entire world. I'm just on the sidelines.

I stormed into my room and stopped at the door. There was something different about my room but I couldn't quite place what it was. I was too angry still to investigate, so I took another one of my sleeping pills and went straight to bed.

The racket coming from downstairs the next day wakes me up from my sleep. As soon as I'm up, all I can think about is how it's too early to be disturbed like this, especially on a Sunday. I throw an arm over my eyes and then let out a groan. It sounds like the noise just keeps getting louder and louder by the second.

I can make out the different voices and I wonder who the hell is here. I feel horrible, like a freight train ran me over. I don't want to get up. But knowing that I have to, I sit

up and stretch before getting up and then trudging down the stairs.

I know I have a grumpy expression on my face as I walk into the kitchen to see my mom standing there and directing people to pack up our stuff. When I look around, I notice there are people in the other rooms as well.

“Good afternoon, sweetheart,” Mom says when she spots me standing there at the entrance to the kitchen. I guess it isn’t as early as I thought it was since she’s saying it’s afternoon.

“Hey, Mom,” I say to her. I guess this move really is happening and I feel my emotions start to get the better of me.

It’s not that I don’t like Jonathan Riverside. I mean, he was nice enough when I met him last night. I just wish they would have let me know what was happening instead of just blindsiding me at the very last minute.

Who the hell does that? Maybe it’s rich people because they don’t have to care about others, just themselves and what they want, without thinking about the effects their actions have on others. Though if that’s true, what’s my mother’s excuse?

I digress. He’s not the problem. It’s his stupid son that’s going to be a problem. Somehow I know moving to their house won’t be easy on me. I’m hoping for the best but knowing Knox, something tells me that everything will go wrong for me in that house. I let out a sigh at the injustice of it all.

I can’t even tell anyone what he’s doing to me because who the hell would believe me? The guy acts like a fucking

saint in front of everyone. If I say anything bad about him, I know they'll turn on me. I'll be hated even more in this place and it'll probably be like a witch hunt.

I'm hated for something I don't even know about. The asshole won't even tell me what he's so mad about either. His words *I shouldn't exist* are ones that still cut to the core when I think about it, and I can't stop thinking about it no matter how hard I try.

Why do we find ourselves liking the people who aren't good for us? I know I can't be the only one it's happened to. From the moment I saw him, it was like being hit with a lightning bolt. I was instantly aware of him. The feeling was one I haven't experienced, and it was confusing as hell. Maybe that's why his words always cut more than anyone else's lame-ass insults.

"We'll be leaving in an hour or two so make sure you're ready. Someone is going to start packing up your room in a few," she tells me and I nod my head. I would argue that I wanted to pack my stuff myself like last time, but I just don't have the energy. I think I just need another energy boost to feel better.

"What are you going to do with our stuff? I'm sure Jonathan won't want our stuff in his house since it's probably already stuffed with pretentious furniture," I tell her, and she just rolls her eyes at me.

"Don't judge. For now, I'm going to put it into storage because we won't need the other stuff. We'll just need our personal belongings since Jonathan will have everything else for us," she tells me.

I just nod at her. I guess that makes sense. The Riversides probably won't want anything of ours in their house since we don't exactly have super expensive shit. Mom made a good living working for Jonathan's company but it's nowhere near what they're worth.

"Are you hungry?" she questions.

"No, not yet. I just got up. But I'll take a glass of juice," I answer.

She pours some out into a glass and hands it to me. I sit there and sip on it for a while. The thought of food makes me queasy and if I eat, I'll gain back the few pounds that I've lost. I don't want that to happen. I just need to lose as much as I can so they'll stop harassing me about my weight.

Plus, lately, I haven't been able to eat without throwing up. I have to wait until I'm super hungry, like on the verge of starving before I'm able to keep anything down. I hate it but I can't stop myself either, no matter how hard I try to break the cycle.

Once I'm done, I make my way out of the kitchen and back up the stairs. I walk straight into my walk-in closet and grab the suitcase. I roll it out into my room and put it on the bed before opening it. I start to pack it with stuff that I'll need for a few days. After that's done, I rush into my bathroom and grab my pills from their hiding spot. Since the moving people are going to pack up my stuff soon, I don't want anyone finding them.

I need to get more since I'm almost out. I've just stuck them between the clothes in my suitcase when my door opens and Mom, along with two other guys, walk into my

room. I close the suitcase and then zip it up before putting it on the floor by the window.

"You know you didn't need to pack anything. All our stuff will be delivered this afternoon. It's not like we're going far," she tells me, laughing.

"Well, it's just in case I'm too lazy to unpack later," I tell her.

"The guys will be unpacking our things as well," she tells me, rolling her eyes but she's smiling at me.

"Oh. Well, I'm still taking my suitcase with me." I shrug. I'm not used to getting things done this fast or even getting things done for me.

"I know you hated moving here to begin with and that I sort of just sprang this on you last minute, but I promise things will be different for us now," she tells me.

I mean, duh. It will get better for her since she's getting married to a super-rich dude. For me, not so much. I'll be living with my tormentor now instead of just seeing him around school where he's determined to make my life a living hell. Now that'll happen whenever and wherever he pleases since we'll be close.

"I can't wait!" I say, trying to sound enthusiastic. But it comes out sounding hoarse instead. Thankfully, she doesn't seem to catch it.

Two hours later, we both get into her car since one of the movers will be bringing mine and we start driving to Knox's house. This is going to be the start of something...

This is the moment my life changes for the third time in such a short period and I'm not cut out for this much change. The first being our move here and the second

being getting bullied once I started school. Practically everyone here hates me. Finally, the third for now, because I have a feeling this won't be the last change, is us moving in with Knox and his dad.

When we pull up to their place, my mouth drops open. Of course he'd be living in a freaking mansion. Why the hell do two people need this much space? Well, now it'll be four, but still, it's huge as fuck.

We drive around the circular driveway which has a huge fountain in the middle of it. The front of the mansion is made of brick. The design from the outside makes it look like there are four different houses combined into one, but I know it was probably just made to look that way.

It's almost in the shape of a U. The first two in the front are square and the two that make up the rest of them are round and filled with windows in the front. The other one is square as well but that one has a balcony at the front. It looks like there are three stories in this place. We both step out of the car. As soon as we do, we see Jonathan at the front door, waiting for us.

"Hello, darling," he says to my mom and then pulls her in for a kiss. I inwardly gag but I don't want to be rude. No one wants to see their mom and her new fiancé kissing, am I right? "And hello again, Raine. Welcome to your new home,"

"Thank you," I tell him.

"I'm sorry my son isn't here to greet you both. I'm afraid he's a bit occupied at the moment," he says with a polite smile but I know he's lying. If I didn't know better, then I would've probably believed him. I'll just bet his son was

busy. Instead of saying anything, I just nod my head at his apology.

As soon as we enter through the doors, I'm blown away with how gorgeous it is. They obviously spent tons of money on this place and it shows. The foyer is the first thing to see when you enter and just ahead of us is a wall with a winding staircase that leads to one side of the corridors. There are two on the second floor—one on the left and one on the right.

To the right and left of the stairs on the first floor are hallways on each side that lead somewhere. Jonathan gives us a tour of the place and I'm impressed. I mean, anyone who came into this house would be impressed as well.

The hallway to the right on the first floor leads to the kitchen. It's huge with marble countertops and stainless-steel appliances. The door at the back of the kitchen leads into the backyard. There's a huge pool with lots of space and outdoor furniture. Beyond the pool there's a long lawn that's big enough for parties.

At the very end of the lawn, there's a shed and a few trees. That looks like the perfect spot for me to disappear to when I want to be alone. There's enough shade under the trees to sit there and read. This place is massive and I hope I don't get lost.

My room is the last place on the tour and when we step in, I see that it's bigger than my last room.

"Everything will be here soon and the guys will also unpack it so you won't have to lift a finger," Jonathan says to me with a smile on his face. He points to the door across

from mine. "That's Knox's room, Just let him know if you need anything."

Oh great! Of course the asshole is right across from me. Mom and Jonathan get ready to leave. They probably want to spend some time together.

"Oh, dinner is at seven and everyone needs to be there," Jonathan says before both he and my mom leave me to my own devices.

I walk further into my room and check it out. I go into the walk-in closet and see all the space that's here. I definitely don't have that many clothes to fill this up.

I put the suitcase on the bed and open it, taking the baggie out first and then walk into the bathroom to look for a place to stash it. After I do, I walk back into the room and start emptying the clothes from my suitcase by placing them on the bed. I'll need to get hangers from the closet to hang them up. I'm so engrossed in what I'm doing that I don't realize I'm not alone until I hear his voice.

"Don't get too comfortable. You don't fucking belong here. It's only a matter of time before you and your mom are thrown out on your asses!" his hard and angry voice says, coming from the doorway. I quickly look up and see Knox standing there, glaring at me.

"Looks like I do, since I'm here. And you don't have a say in anything since your father runs shit around here," I tell him just to piss him off. Why couldn't he have just given me a day to get used to this place before he went around snapping and snarling at me.

"You and your mother are nothing but fucking gold-digging sluts!" he snaps. "And that's the only reason why

you're here."

"In case you didn't realize this, asshole, but no one told your dad to ask my mom to marry him! I didn't ask to be here either!" I fume at him. I'm tired of all the fucking name calling. I swear no one on this earth makes me madder than him.

"You disgust me!" he sneers.

"Yet you still can't stop fucking me! You seek me out every chance you get!" I huff.

"When you're getting it free from a whore, why would you want to stop?" he questions with a smirk on his stupid face.

"Keep lying to yourself, Knox. The only one you're fooling is yourself, dickhead. You want me so fucking bad, you don't know what to do with yourself. You fucking hate that you want the whore you can't leave alone. It must fucking kill you inside, doesn't it?" I snap at him. I watch as each of my words penetrate him and hit their target.

He can act all tough like he doesn't give a shit, but he cares and that's what has him so fucking pissed. He wants me as much as I want him, but I'm not about to tell him any of that.

"Now if you're done insulting me, get the fuck out of my room," I sneer at him.

I'm surprised when he leaves, but I know that in no way it means it's over between us. He'll find some other way to make me pay. I'm here in this house for less than an hour and already we're throwing words and insults at each other. Everything I said to him is true. I just don't know how I'm going to survive him while we're on his turf.

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CHAPTER

Twenty-Five

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RAINE

AS SOON AS Knox left my doorway after our little spat earlier, I threw myself onto my new bed and stayed there for the rest of the afternoon. I was waiting to get dinner over and done with since it seemed like it was going to be a family affair.

I just lay there and stared up at the beautiful ceiling. It looked like one of those ones you'd find in Greek architecture, you know the ones that looked lifelike? I was in awe of having one of those in my room, not going to lie.

My thoughts eventually wondered to what it would take to get through to Knox and make him not hate me anymore. I don't think that would ever happen, but maybe it would be worth a try to dig and see what I could find.

I know he's hurting because of his mom's death and he's taking much of that pain out on me. I just can't figure out why that is. *Am I ugly? Is that why he's picking on me? Because I'm the ugly new girl?*

So many questions and no answers. I have a feeling that if I knew how his mother's death relates to me or if it even relates to me, then I'd know exactly why he hates me. Then

again, I just fucking moved here. Obviously, it can't relate to me. Maybe he just hates thick girls. I have no fucking clue.

Anyone with a brain can see that he's clearly hurting and not at all okay. I see the way he hides himself behind that gruff-and-mean exterior but deep down, he's just a boy in so much pain. I wish I could help take it away from him.

Now I sound like one of those idiots who are always making excuses for other people. The truth is, I think he needs therapy. But if I even mention that to him, he might literally kill me. I guess I have no choice but to let him deal with whatever it is on his own. It's not like he'll listen to a word I have to say concerning his mental health, anyway.

I have no room to talk since my mental health isn't faring much better either. It seems like we're both broken in some way or another.

Feeling restless and itching to get high again, I get up from the bed and get another pill from the bathroom where I hid them earlier. As soon as the pill goes down my throat, it instantly feels like my world is right again, at least for the time being.

I know I can't feel the effects of it yet, but just knowing that it's in my system is enough to make the itchy feeling stop. Lately I've become too dependent on those pills. If I go a day without taking them, it literally feels like I want to crawl out of my skin.

I check the time and see that it's only five thirty, which means I have a lot of time before dinner. I also have enough time to let the pill's magic spread through my system, so I'll be mellow by the time I have to face my new family.

In no time, I feel like I'm floating. The high I was craving is finally taking over and nothing will ever feel better than this. Everything seems more colorful and vivid and I'm loving it.

From my spot here, it looks like the ceiling is moving. I watch as the two figures at the opposite ends of the square where the design is, look like they're reaching for each other. I giggle at the thought. In my mind, it's a representation of Knox and me. I'm always reaching for the one thing that'll never be mine.

I wish someone would reach out for me like that and love me and tell me that everything will be okay. Even the people who act strong everyday need to be told that they're loved and that everything will be okay.

I don't know if I've been strong or not these past few weeks but I'm trying. Trying so fucking hard but it's useless. Every time I get high, I feel weightless and it helps me not think about how much my life really sucks, and I'd prefer that compared to dealing with my problems.

When I don't take the pills, it makes me remember all the things that are weighing me down. I don't want to have to feel that constantly. Though this high isn't much and it doesn't last long, I think I need something else.

Vaguely the word addiction comes to mind but I'm too far gone to think much about it. I don't think I have a problem though. I just love feeling good. When you're accustomed to feeling shitty and horrible and filled with self-hate, then you'll do just about anything to make those feeling go away, or rather get them out of your mind for a

while. Because let's face it, the heavy shit like that never goes away no matter how much you want them to.

My mind goes back to needing something else and I grab my phone from next to me. I text the Venom Brothers and tell them that I need more of the good stuff and to also get me some weed. I don't have any and I know they can get anything you need.

I get a text back which lets me know that I'm to meet them tomorrow at the same place as last time. I agree.

Time passes and before I know it, the alarm I set earlier goes off at six thirty. With a groan, I get up and take a quick shower and get changed before heading downstairs. It's time to face the new family.

I get lost twice on my way and I'm glad one of the maids gives me directions to the small dining room. Well thank fuck for that. I would've hated to be in one of those super large dining rooms when it was just four of us... three if I'm lucky.

But of course I'm not. By the time I find the dining room, I'm the last one to get there. Knox is already seated at the table. I can't believe the asshole beat me here and a sour expression crosses my face as I look over at him. I thought for sure he'd be a no-show.

He doesn't even notice my expression though because he's not looking at me. His jaw is set in a tight line. It might as well be carved from stone with the lack of expression on his face. My mother and Jonathan are whispering quietly to each other while Knox looks like he wants to be anywhere but here. I hurry in and take my seat opposite him.

Before I even get a chance to say anything the asshole speaks. "Oh, her majesty finally decided to grace us with her presence," he drawls in what sounds like a bored tone but I see him clench his jaw. I'm guessing he doesn't want to be here anymore than I do.

"I'm so sorry for being late. I got lost twice and had to get some help," I say, turning to my mom and Jonathan to give my apology. My cheeks are red with embarrassment for already messing up on our first night here. I don't apologize to Knox because he can suck it for being an asshole.

"It's quite alright, dear. I know this house will take some getting used to, and it's only your first night here," Jonathan says, giving me a warm smile that makes me feel a little at ease, knowing that I'm not completely messing things up too badly.

"Thank you," I say as emotion suddenly clogs my throat. I didn't realize how bad I wanted to make a good first impression until now for my mom's sake. Seeing that Jonathan is being nice instead of mean goes a long way into making some of the worry go away.

"So tell me, Raine, how are you liking Riverside so far?" Jonathan asks as we wait for the servers to bring our food out. I chance a glance at Knox and see that he's already staring at me with a smirk on his face.

I look away, stammering out a response to Jonathan. "Oh um, it's been nice so far. Though it's super hot here," I say and he chuckles.

"Yeah, Texas does get pretty hot. But it should start cooling down soon. Maybe you'll like it more," he says,

giving me a wink.

"I hope so," I say drily. Our food comes out and the servers place a plate in front of each of us. Everyone has steaks on their plates along with some kind of rice and some vegetables on the side.

Just looking at the food causes my stomach to revolt, especially when the smell finally gets to me. It smells amazing but I've hardly eaten properly in a while. I go on these insane binges and then I eat nothing. It's messing with how I function.

I think that's why I take the pills religiously. They don't make me hungry when I have them in my system.

"So how's school been?" Mom asks a second later and I look up from my plate to look in her direction.

"It's been fine. Same old, same old," I lie, and then I feel shitty a second later for lying to my mother.

"That's great. I'm so glad you're still doing well in school and fitting in," she tells me and then turns to Knox. "How has school been for you?" she asks him. I see his jaw clench again as though it's taking a huge effort to even answer her. Almost like he doesn't even want to speak to her.

"It's been great actually! Football is great and I even have a girl who can't get enough of my dick," he tells her. His eyes are on mine as he smirks at me. His school experience is amazing because he's making mine a living hell, though I'm not about to tell them that.

"Knock it off, Knox," Jonathan says but Knox doesn't reply. In fact, he doesn't even look at him. It's now that I'm

studying them that I realize there's a tension between them. Maybe his life isn't as perfect as it seems.

"Oh, come on, it's fine," my mom says giggling. "You probably had your days when you were a playboy too,"

Ugh! I can't believe she's defending this asshole. I know he was talking about me, even though she doesn't and I'll take that to my grave. The asshole left the part out where he throws a fit every time he even thinks I'm with someone other than him.

"He's lying, guys! I've seen him around school and he follows her like a lost puppy. Poor girl can't even have friends because he's always going after her. Then he turns into an idiot when he thinks she's with someone else," I tell them. I'm not watching them, I'm watching him and boy is he pissed, but I just smirk at him. Take that, asshole!

"Trust me, I don't have any feelings for her. All I want is to fuck her because she already knows that she's nothing but my whore," he seethes.

"Knock it off, Knox! That is no way to speak at the dinner table," Jonathan tells him in an authoritative tone.

Neither of us listen because I continue, "Liar, liar. But it's fine, I'll just let you continue lying to yourself. If I didn't see your obsessive behavior myself, then I'd be inclined to believe what you're saying," I snap at him. He's about to respond when Jonathan cuts in again.

"Behave you two! Knox, I expect you to treat whoever you're seeing with respect," Jonathan snaps at his son.

"You mean like you respected Mom when she was alive? Should I take cues from you, Father? Because trust me, you

weren't anything of a role model," Knox spits at his dad with venom in his voice.

"We'll discuss this later. Now let's get back to dinner!" Jonathan says through clenched teeth.

Knox shrugs and goes about eating his food, but I can tell he's still pissed. I take a mini bite of the steak and feel my stomach roil at the thought of eating more. It tastes like lead going down my throat.

I move the food around my plate with my head down as my mother and Jonathan continue like we didn't just have an awkward moment at the table. Like Knox and I weren't trading words with each other.

Though now I'm a bit curious about what is going on between Knox and his dad. They clearly don't have a close relationship like my mom and I. I can feel the animosity between them. It's strange, that's for sure.

"Why aren't you eating?" Knox asks suddenly and my head snaps up at him. Fucking hell. The asshole couldn't just keep his mouth shut? I know he didn't ask that with any kind of concern or kindness in his heart.

"Raine? Are you not eating again?" Mom questions and I suddenly feel all eyes on me.

"What? I am eating. Mom, I'm fine. I'm not going through that phase anymore," I tell her, giving her an eye roll to get her off my scent. "I've been eating this whole time." I shovel a big bite into my mouth and start chewing to show her I'm eating. I'm guessing she doesn't buy my act though.

"Should I take you to the doctor again?" she questions, her voice filled with concern.

I guess eating disorders aren't anything new to me. The first time it happened was after my surgery and then again when my parents started fighting a lot. Who the hell would even think about food when their parents were always down each other's throat?

"No. I'm fine, Mom. Knox is just being silly," I say as I glare at him. I make a big show of eating my food until it's all gone because my mom keeps glancing over at me. She thinks I don't notice her, but I do.

When we're done with dinner, I tell Mom and Jonathan goodnight before hurrying back up to my room. All the food I just ate is turning in my stomach and the urge to throw everything back up is overwhelming.

I know if I don't get to my room soon then it'll happen right where I am. Once I make it there, I throw the door open and rush into my bathroom. I kneel on the floor in front of the toilet just in time as everything I ate a few minutes ago comes right back up.

I keep vomiting until I'm dry heaving and my stomach starts to cramp. When I'm done and don't feel the urge to throw up anymore, I sit back down on the floor in front of the toilet. Tears begin to spill down my cheeks.

I don't want this for myself. I don't want to keep doing this but I'm falling down the rabbit hole of self-loathing more and more each day. I'm not sure how to get myself out of it.

"So, the rumors of you being bulimic are true?" Knox's voice comes from the bathroom doorway and my head snaps in his direction. I try to wipe away the tears then stop because it's no use. I know he already saw them.

“Just leave me alone, please!” I snap at him as I slump back against the wall, suddenly feeling exhausted.

“You really are pathetic,” he sneers as he looks at me with disgust and contempt.

I don’t have the energy to care but I still manage to answer him. “And yet here you are again, seeking me out,” I mumble.

“Just wanted to see if the rumors were true,”

“Well, I guess now you know. You can go spread the news to everyone,” I say tiredly.

“Obviously that’s what I’m going to do. I fucking love humiliating your fat ass,” he gripes.

“What else is new?” I question. “Now if you could just leave, I’d like to take a shower,” I say, feeling all the hopelessness I’m feeling transfer into my words.

I have no doubt that he’ll spread the word and that will cause more bullying for me. I’m almost scared to go to school and that’s saying something. He hesitates for a second, but then he walks away and I let out a sigh. At least we didn’t come to physical blows or rip into each other like we usually do. That has to be some kind of win, right?

I shower again to get the smell of vomit off me. After I’m done and in my room again, I move to sit on the floor by the side of my bed. I grab my drawing stuff from under the bed, open the notepad and start drawing.

Some of the drawings are of Knox and some are depictions of what I’m trying to convey as the mess inside my head. I draw until I’m too exhausted to continue and then I put my equipment back under my bed.

The drawings all have one thing in common and that is Knox being the monster in my story. *Though at the time, I didn't know there would be others.*

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CHAPTER

Twenty-Six

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RAINE

I PRACTICALLY HAD no sleep last night and now I was just cranky as hell as I make my way down the stairs. I guess it didn't help that I was sketching until I was too exhausted and my fingers started to cramp from going at it for hours.

My whole body hurt after I was done since I was bent over in an awkward position while sitting on the floor, sketching the whole time. No wonder I couldn't sleep when I finally made it to bed.

The pain was worth it though because these new ones came out amazing. I loved them because in them I saw just how much my skills have improved in the last few months especially with this new set. The only thing I really hated was the subject of my art.

Knox Riverside...

I wish my mind wasn't so intrigued by the guy. I wish I hated him as much as he hates me but apparently that isn't the case no matter how hard I try. He just has to look at me and instantly all my attention is focused on him. I mean, how could it not? The guy was a masterpiece. That's why I

keep drawing portraits of him. *Well, they're not exactly portraits per se.*

When I get to the kitchen, I'm surprised to see my mom and Jonathan there. I didn't think I'd see them this morning. I thought they'd have left already since they have a gazillion dollar company to run.

"Good morning," I say to them both as I walk further into the kitchen.

"Good morning, sweetheart," Mom says.

"Good morning, Raine," Jonathan says. "How did you sleep? Do you like the new place?"

"I slept okay," I lied. "And yes. You have a very beautiful home," I tell him with a forced smile on my face. It's not a lie because it really is a beautiful home.

"Well, I'm glad you like it. Hopefully, in no time, you'll come to think of it as your own home," he tells me with a genuine smile on his face. I return his smile but don't say anything. The truth is, this will never be or feel like my home. Knox will do everything in his power to not let me feel safe. I'm sure if he could kick me out of here, he would.

"What would you like for breakfast, miss?" one of the maids ask.

"Just an orange juice please," I tell her with a warm smile.

"You're not eating breakfast?" Mom asks. I hate it when she pays too much attention to me.

"I'll grab something at school, Mom. I'm late because I have an early study session," I lie. She gives me a disapproving stare to let me know that she's not happy with me at the moment.

“But—”

“I’ll see you later, love you!” I say, cutting her off as I rush to make my way out of the kitchen before she can say anything else. Curse the deities if there is one because I run smack dab into Knox’s hard and muscular chest as I am about to head out of the kitchen. “Shit, sorry!”

“Watch it, fat ass!” he grumbles low enough so that I’m the only one who hears his insult.

“Good morning to you too, dickhead!” I grumble under my breath. I’m just about to make my exit when Jonathan speaks.

“Oh, Knox, I’m glad you’re up and ready to go! I’m going to need you to give Raine a ride to school until her car is fixed,” he says, and I’m wondering what happened to my car.

“Um, I can drive myself. My car is fine,” I say dumbfoundedly.

“Sorry, I forgot to tell you. When the guys brought your car here yesterday, all four of the tires were flat,” Jonathan tells me.

“How?” I question.

“No idea but anyway, I’ll get some new tires for you,” he says smiling at me.

“Umm, okay. Thanks I guess,” I say with a tight smile.

I know I haven’t been in the right frame of mind for a while but I swear it’s like someone is fucking with me or something. If that’s true though, it can literally be anyone and I wouldn’t know who it was because everyone in the senior class hates me.

A second later, it hits me. That's what was wrong with my room when I couldn't figure out what was going on the night I left Mom at the restaurant. Someone was in my room and some of my stuff was rearranged.

Fucking hell. That thought leaves me feeling cold inside. They aren't just leaving this whole hate/bullying thing for just school. Someone or multiple someones broke into our house and were in my freaking room. Well, I'm sort of glad we moved now. I hope this place has good security so I won't have to deal with that.

Back to the whole riding to school with Knox idea. For the record, it's a bad idea. I don't think Knox and I in the confines of the same car is such a good idea.

"Oh, no. It's fine! I can just take an Uber or borrow Mom's car so I don't have to put Knox out or anything like that," I tell him.

I mean, he and my mom are going to the same place so I'm sure they can go together while I use her car. Knox and I are going to the same place too but that's different since the asshole hates me.

"Nonsense. You're not putting Knox out because you two are going to the same school," he says and I let out a sigh. There's no use arguing with the man when he has his mind made up. At least that's one thing he and his dad have in common. They're both stubborn and like to boss people around.

I honestly never thought he'd be so nice to me. He's super nice to Mom because they're in love but I thought he'd treat me like I didn't exist. But everything has been different from what I thought.

He's definitely not acting like the rich entitled prick I thought he was going to be, though the same can't be said for his son. I guess that's why I'm always surprised when he speaks to me and it's with genuine kindness.

"Erm, okay, I guess," I reply, giving him a smile. Knox just snorts and rolls his eyes. The douche is always ruining any kind of nice moments.

"Let's go! If you're not in my car by the time I'm in it, then I'm leaving you behind!" he snaps at me, low enough again so that no one else can hear what he's saying.

Now I have to run behind him just to keep up with the bastard. I hate this guy. I throw open the passenger door just as he opens his and quickly get in and buckle myself before closing the door as he sits down in his seat.

Well that was a close one. I barely managed to grab my bag from the stairs before I had to run after him. It's not until he's pulled out of the gates and is on the road do I realize that I left my phone in my room charging. Shit! Oh well, I guess I'll have to do without it today. When we're about five minutes away from the house, Knox pulls over onto the side of the road.

"Get out," he says in a calm but deadly tone. Is this guy ever in a happy mood? He's always mad about something.

"What?" I ask in bewilderment because what the hell is going on?

"I want you out of my car. You're stinking it up with your disgusting smell," he says through clenched teeth.

Seriously, what the hell did I do to him? I literally just went downstairs to the kitchen this morning and somehow

he's pissed about that? I'm so confused with my life right now.

"Seriously? That makes no fucking sense!" I yell at him.

"Don't make me throw you out! Find your own way to school. I'm not your chauffeur," he grunts.

Knowing that I'm not about to win this fight, I take my seatbelt off and then get out of his car, making sure to slam the door really hard when I get out. He doesn't waste any time. He drives off and leaves me there in his dust. What an absolute asshole!

Of all the times to forget my phone it just had to be today. I start walking but instead of going in the direction of school, I walk in the opposite direction that will lead me to the abandoned warehouse close to the train tracks instead. Without said phone, I can't get an Uber. I'll just go there and wait until it's time to meet the Venom Brothers to collect my stuff from them. This beats going to school anyway.

The walk takes longer than I anticipated and by the time I do get there, my feet are killing me. The door to the warehouse is ajar so I just step right in. It's empty but at least there's shade and I won't be in the hot sun anymore. I walk to the very back of the open space and take a seat by the windows and just sit there.

I grab the paperback I put in my bag the other day. I'm still reading *This Love Hurts* by Nikita. Let me tell you, this book has made me cry multiple times already. Not that I need much to make me cry these days because you know, life sucks.

I'm deep in the middle of reading and sobbing when I hear a noise coming from the front by the door. I look up to see a girl with bright blue hair. I've never seen her before, but then again, I'm new here. I don't know everyone in this town.

"Oh, um, hi. I didn't know anyone was here. Are you okay?" she asks as she steps further into the open space. We look to be about the same age so I don't feel threatened in any way but then again, looks can be deceiving. I'm a little cautious at first. I mean, I have experience with that sort of thing.

"Hi. Um, yes. I was just reading a book. That's why I look like a mess right now. I didn't know anyone came here but I can leave if you want me to," I tell her.

"Oh no, you're good. I wouldn't mind the company if I'm being honest. Haven't had a chance to meet anyone except my stepbrothers since I moved here like three days ago," she tells me.

"Oh that's pretty cool. I just moved here myself," I tell her.

"How has it been so far?" she asks curiously.

"Want the truth or a lie?" I ask as a hollow laugh leaves me.

"Truth,"

"It fucking sucks. The kids here are fucking despicable," I grumble.

"I take it you go to the academy here?" she questions.

"Yep. And I can't wait to finish," I tell her.

"Sounds horrible."

"Are you going to be attending too?" I ask her. It would be nice to have another friend around school.

"Nah, my mother decided that homeschooling would be better since I'm such a delinquent," she says, rolling her eyes. "Like that's going to stop me."

"Well that sucks. I could use a friend there," I tell her.

"Just because I'm not going to your school doesn't mean we can't be," she tells me, smiling.

"You're right and I'd like that. I have like one so far and he doesn't even go to school with me,"

"I'm Camryn by the way," she tells me.

"I'm Raine,"

She takes a seat a few feet away from me and we settle into comfortable conversation for a while. She asks about the book I'm reading and I tell her all about it. She's intrigued and said she'll definitely be reading it as well. Looks like today is turning out to be a good day after all.

"Do you smoke?" she asks me a few minutes later.

"Yep. I just started," I tell her and watch as she pulls out a blunt from her bag and lights it up. She takes a pull and then moves closer and hands it to me. I also take a pull before handing it back. Before long, we're sharing it between us.

Hoping she won't judge me, I take out the baggie from my bag. There are only two of Percocet left and I offer one to her. She takes it and gives me a huge smile.

"Ah, a girl after my own heart," she says and I giggle. "Now this is what I call a party!"

In no time, we're both high, giggling, and trading stories with each other. A few minutes later, we both suddenly stop

laughing when three pairs of boots are standing in front of us.

We both look up to see the Venom Brothers standing before us in all their sexy and bad boy glory. Too bad they don't do anything for me. The only person who always has my pussy leaking is my stupid stepbrother.

"Well, well, well... what have we here, little sister?" Ransom asks, looking directly at Camryn. She rolls her eyes at him.

"We're not siblings. You guys are just my stepbrothers," she says, slurring her words and my mouth forms an O.

"You didn't mention that!" I slur back after shoving her shoulders.

"You know them?" she asks as she tips over from my shove and a giggle bursts out of her. "Oops."

"You, little miss, seem to be quite the troublemaker," Ransom says, turning to look at me, though there is no venom in his words. They just seem to be coated in amusement.

"Me?" I ask innocently, while staring up at him with my best innocent expression. He just laughs.

"We brought your stuff for you. And it seems like someone found our stash, right, boys?" he says to me and then aims his question to Wolf and Cyrus.

"Yeah. It seems like our sister needs to be punished," Wolf says, looking right at Camryn. She rolls her eyes at him.

"I thought you guys hated me?" she grumbles, and an amused expression crosses all their faces.

“Oh look, yet another thing we both have in common. My stepbrother hates me too,” I say, as the pain that thought always brings resurfaces in my chest. I have to blink away the tears that want to form. There’s no way I’m crying in front of an audience.

Ransom hands me the pills and the weed they brought for me and I give them the money for it.

“You’re welcome to come party anytime you want to, bestie,” I tell Camryn.

“Ooo, I’m down for it,” she says, giggling.

“As much as I’d love to hear the two of you giggling nonstop, we have things to do. So it’s time to go,” Cyrus says.

Camryn and I just begin giggling again. We have no idea what’s so funny but we just can’t seem to contain ourselves.

“Alright, let’s go!” Ransom says and then he lifts Camryn up and throws her over his shoulder while Wolf does the same to me.

They both walk toward their SUV and throw us both in before getting in themselves. Then they’re driving off.

“Hey, bestie, give me your number,” Camryn says and I give it to her.

“We are so talking about these hotties being your stepbrothers when we’re sober,” I say before I even realize I’ve said it out loud. I slap a hand to my mouth which causes Camryn to laugh hysterically.

A moment later, they pull through the gates to my new home since they were open and I’m left with my mouth open.

“How’d—”

“We know everything that goes on around here,” Wolf says, giving me a wink. “Your stepbrother isn’t the only top dog around here,”

“Are you okay with making it up to your room?” Ransom asks.

“What am I, an amateur?” I laugh.

“Pretty much,” Cyrus says, rolling his eyes.

“Don’t roll your eyes at me, mister! By the way, how come you guys don’t hate me like everyone else?” I ask the question that’s been burning a hole in me.

“One, we don’t associate with petty high school drama. Two, we can make our own judgments on people and three, our sister here seems to like you, so I guess that makes you cool in our books,” he says. I want to cry with how nice they’re being right now.

“Not your sister!” Camryn pipes in.

“Damn it, Cyrus! You’re ruining our street cred! Tell anyone about this and we’ll deny it. But yeah, you’ve already had it rough. Having someone in your corner is what you need,” Ransom says, winking at me.

“Thank you, guys!” I tell them. “And I’m glad you found me,” I tell Camryn.

“Right back at ya! We have to hang out again soon!” she tells me.

“I’d like that,” I tell her as the guys drive off.

She was nice and I really hope that this is real and I have another friend. I have Aiden but another one wouldn’t hurt. I don’t want this to turn into what happened with Kinsley—getting my hopes up at having a friend only to be

let down in the worst possible way and being hurt by that person. I guess we'll see how this new friendship goes.

I stumble my way to the front door. As soon as I step through the door and close it behind me, I'm slammed up against it, and a very pissed off Knox is looming over me. I stare up at him. Both his hands are over my head and his body is blocking me in.

"Where the fuck have you been?" he snaps angrily at me. I shrug and don't answer, which seems to anger him more. "Answer my fucking question!"

"Why the fuck do you care? You left me stranded on the side of the fucking road! If you really wanted to know where I was then you shouldn't have left me there!" I scream angrily at him. How fucking dare he demand to know where I was when he fucking abandoned me at the side of the freaking road. "Tell me again how the big bad Knox doesn't care about the whore!"

"Did you let any of them fuck you? Is that why they brought you here? Are you fucking drunk?" he seethes.

"So what if I did and what if I was?" I retort. I'm trying to look up at him but there's like five of him standing in front of me right now. Damn it. I really am fucking high right now but I love the feeling. A giggle escapes me.

"Do you think this is fucking funny?" he growls.

"What do you want me to tell you? That I had a four—no wait, fivesome with the guys and that girl? Huh, is that what you want to know? That I was out being the whore you keep calling me?" I snap at him.

"For your sake, none of what you just said better be true!" he growls in my face.

“Move out of my way, dickhead!” I mumble as I try to move away from him, but he doesn’t budge. In the next moment, my whole world tips over, or at least that’s what it feels like. I realize it’s because he’s thrown me over his shoulder and is walking somewhere with me.

“Wow, you have a nice butt for an asshole,” I say and then giggle at my words.

“Shut the fuck up!” he says as he slaps me on my butt. Involuntarily a moan slips out of me and I’m not sure if he heard me.

When we get to where we’re going, he puts me back down to my feet. I see we’re in my room. I’m confused for a second because he just stands there and stares at me. When he turns around and closes and locks the door behind him, I realize that I might be in big trouble.

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CHAPTER

Twenty-Seven

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KNOX

AFTER I LEFT Raine's room last night, I was grumpy as fuck for the rest of the night and barely slept a wink. Her words kept running through my mind on a continuous loop. Obviously they were true, and that was why I was so pissed.

I'm gonna go with my earlier sentiments and say that this girl is a witch. In the last two weeks or so, she's had me doubting myself and making me feel things that I never thought I'd feel, especially for her.

I watch her as much as she watches me, and I don't know but something's been changing for me. It's the little things about her that have been catching my attention. I still hate her but I'm also intrigued a little more now. It still doesn't stop me from being rude to her or hating her. I guess you could say that I'm very conflicted.

That is why I'm in a piss poor mood as I make my way toward the kitchen to grab some coffee before leaving for school. I almost get the wind knocked out of me when Raine runs right into my chest and I'm instantly more annoyed than I was a second ago. I almost forgot the fact

that she was living here now, and once I remember that tidbit of information, my mood sours even more.

“Watch it, fat ass!” I grumble so that only she can hear me.

“Good morning to you too, dickhead!” she growls back just as quietly.

I push her away from me because her touch burns my skin. The witch is definitely doing some shit to me. As much as I hate her, I can’t stop obsessing over her. The fact that she’s called me out on it a few times already, just serves to piss me off even more.

Somehow she’s captivated me without even doing anything. I’m not sure how to handle that. Well, I do, and it’s to continue with my childish games.

I push her away from me and I see her face instantly fall at my reaction, but I can’t bring myself to care. I can’t even let go of the hate I have for her. It would feel like I’m letting my mother down and that thought burns like a motherfucker.

I’m just about to walk back out of the kitchen and forget the coffee I wanted when I hear my dad tell her that I’ll drive her to school because some shit is wrong with her car. I didn’t hear what he said but I seriously don’t care either way.

“Let’s go! If you’re not in my car by the time I’m in it, then I’m leaving you behind!” I growl at her, a smidge more pissed than I was a second ago. I turn to leave, not saying a word to anyone else, least of all my father. The man can go suck a bag of dicks for all I care.

I hear her running to keep up with me and I smile to myself. Dick move, I know, but when the hell did I ever claim to be nice?

She throws open the passenger door just as I open mine and quickly gets in before buckling herself in and closing the door as I sit in the driver's seat. I clench my jaw but don't say anything because I have something else planned.

I drive off and when we make it about five minutes away from the house, I pull over onto the side of the road and turn to look at her.

"Get out!" I growl at her in a deadly tone. Her head snaps up, and she looks at me with wide eyes as she processes my words.

"What?"

"I want you out of my car. You're stinking it up with your disgusting smell," I snap just to be petty as hell. It's a lie though. She smells delectable and all it's making me want to do is get her out of the car so that I can bend her over the hood and fuck the shit out of her. But I can't do that or I'll seem weak.

"Seriously? That makes no fucking sense!" she yells at me and I shrug. She grumbles something under her breath that I don't quite catch.

"Don't make me throw you out! Find your own way to school. I'm not your chauffeur," I snap at her. Without waiting another moment, she gets out of my car pissed as hell and slams the door extra hard. I clench my jaw, trying not to react to her pettiness.

She's lucky I have to be at school soon for practice, otherwise I would make her pay for that stunt. Nobody

disrespects my baby like that, least of all her. I don't wait another second as I peel away from the sidewalk and leave her standing there in my dust. Let the bitch find her own fucking way to school.

I don't give a fuck.

Liar...

My conscience seems to be a bitch today too, it seems.

I get to school, park, and get out of my car before making my way inside to the locker room so that I can change into my football gear.

Coach is pulling us out of our morning classes today so that we can get some extra practice in. Since we're all doing well with our grades, he never has any trouble getting us out of class whenever he wants to. I step inside the locker room to see that the guys are here and already dressed in their gear.

"Yo, bro! What's good?" Ash asks as soon as I step up next to them and start stripping.

"Missed you at the party last night, bro," Ax says.

"If I remember correctly, wasn't a certain redhead supposed to be moving in sometime yesterday or the day before?" Ez asks. Should've known he would be the asshole to bring it up.

"Can't you talk about your own life instead of always butting into mine?" I ask exasperatedly.

"Nope. Yours is way more interesting compared to mine. So tell us, bro, how is life with the redhead living in your house now?" he asks gleefully. "By the way, aren't we due for a visit to Knox's house, guys?"

Ez acts like he's waiting for me to confess to something. I have a pretty good idea what it is, but it ain't happening.

"No, you're not due for a visit and things are going... My dad made me drive her to school this morning," I say.

"Wow! Didn't think you would've been so nice." Ax snickers.

"I wasn't," I tell them while a smirk crosses my face.

"What did you do?" Ash groans out.

"Left her on the side of the road."

"Damn. That's cold, dude." Ax whistles.

"What if she gets hit by a car or something? Or what if she gets kidnapped? Then we'd never get to see each other again!" Ez says dramatically.

"Oh stop being a drama queen! She'll be fine! Besides, no one's ever been kidnapped from here before," I tell him as I roll my eyes.

"What if she becomes the first? I mean, there's always a first time for everything," he counters and now my thoughts are occupied with her.

"She'll be fine! Now quit being such a girl!" I groan. When Ezra gets started, he's like a dog with a bone and won't stop chewing until he's finished.

"When are you gonna stop being a dumbass and tell us what's going on with you and her already?" Asher questions.

"Nope. Not ready yet," I grumble.

"Fine, dickhead! But if this goes wrong and blows up in your face, I'm going to be the one to tell you I told you so! I've been telling you that you're in love with her but you're

too much of a dumbass to see or acknowledge it," Ash grumbles.

I'm so not in love. And definitely not with her.

"You're one to talk. Have you told Kinsley how you feel yet, asshole?" I question and he instantly shuts his mouth. "Yeah, that's what I thought. Handle your shit first and then I'll handle mine."

Before I get a chance to say anything else, Coach walks into the locker room and yells for us to get a move on and make our way out onto the field.

"Well that certainly could have gone better," I say to the guys as we all trudge back into the locker room after practice. That session couldn't have gone any worse if we tried. Before anyone can even respond to me, Coach storms into the locker room after us.

"What the hell is wrong with you girls? Whatever that was happening on that field, it sure as hell wasn't football! What do you have to say for yourselves?" Coach rants and raves and everyone's stare is on me since I am the captain. Fuck my life.

"Sorry, Coach, it won't happen again!" I shout loud enough for him to hear.

"What the hell was happening to you out there, Knox? Do I need to get you some help or something?" Coach asks and I clench my jaw. He probably thinks I'm still messed up over my mother, and I am. But today's shitshow was because of a certain redhead and not my mom. Ezra's words had me thinking about her and that messed with my head throughout practice.

“No, sir! Today was just a bad day and it won’t happen again!” I say.

“You’re damn right it won’t! Each and every one of you better shape up by the time the next practice session begins! The way you played today, it’s like you don’t want to win the upcoming game, which is only a few weeks away, might I add!” he yells again. I don’t know why he’s yelling since the entire room is so quiet you could hear a pin drop, but he just keeps yelling at us. Oh, he’s definitely riled up right now.

This is all Ezra’s fault. If he hadn’t said that something could happen to Raine because I left her on the side of the road, then I wouldn’t have been thinking of her. Not what I should’ve been thinking about because I don’t care, right?

I don’t even know what the hell is going on with me. Clearly, I’m losing my fucking mind and the fine line between hate and liking her has been getting blurred in the past few days. I’ve been lashing out at her because of my confusion and I want to stop but I can’t. When I look at her, sometimes I just want to strangle her and that’s where things always get complicated.

I think that’s why I always fuck her so hard. I try to fuck the demons away but they never leave. However, she does seem to love the rough fucking I give her way too much. That’s why she’s my perfect little slut.

As soon as we’re finished showering, I make my way to the cafeteria with the guys. We get our food and then walk over to our usual table and sit down. I take a look around to see if I can spot her but she’s nowhere in here.

My eyes clash with Ivy's and I roll my eyes. She looks like a lost puppy without me, as if I'd fuck with that skank again. She's lucky I didn't have any feelings invested in her or I would've ruined her for what she did.

Maybe Raine didn't eat lunch here today. I know why she wouldn't since someone is always making fun of her whenever she's in here. But then again, after what I saw after dinner, she's probably just throwing up what she already ate.

I fully settle back in my seat and start to eat my food since I'm starving. Practice took a lot out of me and I needed to refuel.

When we make it to class after lunch, I look for her again but don't see her. The seat she normally sits in is empty and I decide to check the tracker on her phone. It shows that she's at home and I get pissed.

I know it's irrational and I have to force myself to sit here instead of going home to see what the hell she's up to. Somehow she's dug herself so far under my skin, I can't seem to get her out from under there.

You'd think with the way I hate the girl that I'd be able to fuck her and get her out of my system, but ever since that first time, when I fucked her and realized that she was a virgin, my brain just went *mine* in an instant. Even if the rest of me doesn't agree with that statement.

"Tell me again how much you're not obsessed with her," Asher says from next to me. When I look up, I see a smirk on his face. I didn't even notice he was looking at what I was doing.

"What?" I question, feigning ignorance.

"Don't even try to deny it, asshole. I know what it is because I have the same shit installed on Kinsley's phone," he says, smirking.

"Ha! So you are obsessed too!" I laugh.

"Too?" he smirks, and that's when I realize what I just said.

"Fuck off, asshole! I'll see you dickheads later," I grumble and then get up.

"Where you going, bro?" Ax asks, snickering.

"Home."

"Oh, is it because a certain she who shall not be named isn't here?" Ezra asks with a shit-eating grin on his face. I let out a long groan before walking out of class with the intention of heading home.

When I make it home, I walk straight up to her room to see where she's hiding. I don't know why I feel the sudden need to have her. I hate that she's under my skin at all and because of that, it always feels like my skin burns at the thought of her.

I'm petty enough to hope that the same thing is happening to her because I can't be the only one suffering. As soon as I enter her room, I can tell that it's empty and has been for a while. Where the hell is she?

Now I'm pissed, wondering where the hell she went since she wasn't in school at all. She better be prepared to answer me when she gets home. I walk back down to the kitchen to grab a snack. I'm sitting at the table for two seconds, when I see a car pull up in front of the house.

Dad keeps a monitor in here for when he's home so he can monitor the place. We have security for that shit but I

guess being aware as well never hurt anyone.

Raine gets out of the vehicle and instead of coming into the house right away, she stands there talking to a girl. I also watch her talking to the three guys as well.

It takes a second to recognize them and I clench my jaw in anger at the sight. It's the Venom Brothers, or that's what they like to call themselves. They live right at the edge of town. Everyone knows they are who you go to when you want drugs and that type of shit.

I'm wondering why the hell she's with those guys in the first place. I've never had a problem with them before and I'd like to keep it that way. I stay out of their way and they stay out of mine.

There are whispers that they're involved in the Mafia or some shit. Don't know how much truth there is to that. I've never cared before but they know I run this school and town and I leave them to run their drug business. It's a win-win for everyone.

Ransom says something to her and I see a genuine laugh cross her face. It's one I've never seen on her and I take a second to look at her features. Her laugh brightens her face up into something that's so beautiful it takes my breath away.

I push all those feelings away though, and cling to all the anger I'm still feeling. That's what I need to keep doing and not let her make me drop my guard where she's concerned. It looks like she's about to finish her conversation and head inside so I walk out of the kitchen and head straight for the front door.

As soon as she steps through and closes the door behind her, I grab her and slam her back against it. I stand there looming over her with a pissed-off expression on my face I know she can't miss. I brace my arms over her head and I'm directly in front of her so that my body is blocking her from going anywhere. I have her caged in.

"Where the fuck have you been?" I snap my question at her and she just shrugs her shoulders at me, which just serves to make me even madder. "Answer my fucking question!"

"Why the fuck do you care? You left me stranded on the side of the fucking road! If you really wanted to know where I was then you shouldn't have left me there!" she screams at me, her breathing coming out hard and chopped. Then she switches gears and digs into me. "Tell me again how the big bad Knox doesn't care about the whore!"

"Did you let any of them fuck you? Is that why they brought you here? Are you fucking drunk?" I seethe. I don't know how the fuck she can be so fucking stupid by hanging around drug dealers while drunk!

"So what if I did and what if I was?" she sasses. All I want to do is strangle her ass. When the hell did I become this possessive asshole for her? It seems like I just woke up and flipped a switch.

This morning I hated her and now I want to strangle her. The thought of her fucking someone else is about to make me go mental. She has the fucking nerve to giggle like this shit is funny.

"Do you think this is fucking funny?" I growl in her face.

“What do you want me to tell you? That I had a four—no, wait fivesome with the guys and that girl? Huh, is that what you want to know? That I was out being the whore you keep calling me?” she snaps at me.

“For your sake, none of what you just said better be true!” I growl in her face.

“Move out of my way, dickhead!” she slurs, and that’s the last fucking straw. I throw her ass over my shoulder and start to make my way back upstairs to her room. She’s wiggling in my arms, trying to get away.

She starts babbling, “Wow, you have a nice butt for an asshole,” she says and then giggles to herself. Yep, Definitely drunk or some shit.

“Shut the fuck up!” I snap and then slap her ass just for the fun of it. I hear the unmistakable sound of a moan slip out of her lips and the sound goes straight to my cock. My dick doesn’t even care that we’re supposed to be mad at her right now. All he cares about is getting inside her tight-as-fuck pussy and nothing else.

I open her room door and put her down to her feet. She looks up at me and I stare at her for a second. She has a confused expression on her face as I turn around and close and lock the door. When I turn back to her, she starts to back away slowly. She keeps going until the back of her knees are up against the bed.

She falls backward and is now lying on the bed. I pounce on her before she has a chance to get up and move away from me. I’m straddling her hips as I grab her throat, running my nose and lips against her neck. I feel the shiver

that runs through her body at my touch and I smile against her skin.

“You don’t smell like a slut... but then again, with you, I can never be sure,” I growl.

“What do you want, asshole? I’m tired and not in the mood for one of your fucking mind games!” she says, trying to be angry but her words come out breathless. She lets out a groan when I suck the skin at the base of her neck where her pulse point is. She can hate me all she wants but her body doesn’t lie. She wants this as much as I do.

I can already tell how aroused she is. I can smell the scent of her pussy juices in the air. It’s an aphrodisiac I’m slowly becoming addicted to. But no matter how much I want to taste her pussy right now, she still has to be punished.

“What I want right now is to punish you for doing things that you aren’t supposed to do,” I growl at her.

“Like what? In case you have yet to realize this... You. Don’t. Own. Me,” she seethes.

“That’s where you’re wrong and I’m going to show you just how much. Stay here,” I tell her and then get off the bed and walk toward the door.

I go into my room and grab the leather cuffs I bought specifically for her when the idea of having her bound and at my mercy made my cock as hard as granite. I walk back into her room and lift the cuffs up in my hands so that she can see. I smirk when her eyes go wide. I see her gulp. She looks like a scared little kitten, which just makes the smirk on my face grow.

“Wha-what are you doing?” she asks with a slight quiver in my voice.

“Giving you your punishment,” I tell her.

She looks like she’s ready to bolt. Anticipating her move, I pounce on her before she can actually make the move.

“I don’t want to have sex with you,” she says but her statement lacks any real conviction. She needs this, but she has to pretend to hate it because of the constant animosity between us. She has to at least act like she doesn’t want it for her own sake.

“Too bad. I’m going to enjoy this and I suggest you do too. Then again, you always seem to love it when my cock is inside your tight-as-fuck cunt hole,” I tell her and watch as her eyes flare with lust. My little slut loves it when I talk dirty to her.

“N-no,” she counters and I laugh.

“Little liar.”

I start to undress her and pull her pants and panties down in one motion. I’m just about to pull her shirt off but she stops me.

“Ca-can we leave my shirt on?” she asks. I figure what the hell, as long as I get to her pussy that’s all that matters to me.

“Fine. I don’t care to see the rest of you anyway,” I tell her. Her room barely has any light coming through it since her shades are still down but I think I see her face fall at my words. Not paying attention to that, I continue.

“Asshole,” she grumbles.

I didn’t mean it in a negative way at the time, I just meant all I really need to see is her pussy, but whatever.

She can be mad all she wants because she'll be coming on my cock in a few minutes anyway.

"Move up," I command and she must hear the tone in my voice. She obeys me instantly and I see the moment she realizes what she just did. She pins me with a glare and I smile at her, giving her one of my most arrogant ones.

I grab her right arm and wrap the cuff around it, then grab her right leg and connecting it to the other part of the cuff before doing the same with her left side. I look down at her with her arms and legs connected and I love the sight.

She's on her back and the position has her pussy spread wide open for me. Even in the dim light I can see how fat and juicy it is for me already, waiting for my cock to slide inside.

"Mmm, you look every bit my little slut spread open like this for me," I tell her in a husky tone. I'm turned on as hell, looking at her spread and bound for me to feast on and then devour.

I can see her wet pussy hole opening and closing like it's begging for my cock to fill it. I don't think I'd be able to keep the lust on my face hidden if I tried. I look up at her and see that she's staring intently at me. I know she can see my face clouded with want for her. The more I stare at her sopping cunt, the more it oozes pussy juice that leaks down to her ass crack.

I let out a groan. I shouldn't be liking this... any of this. It figures that the one person I hate would be the one to crumble my fucking walls, piece by hate-filled piece. It's all kinds of fucked if you ask me. I hear her let out a groan and

look up to see I'm not the only one who's affected. She can't hide the lust in her eyes either.

"You're perfect in this position, my little slut." I smirk up at her. I move my hand along her legs and run them up and over her shirt. She stiffens for a second and I see a panicked expression cross her face. I'm about to ask her what's wrong, but she cuts me off.

"Stop playing games, dickhead!" she grumbles.

Before she even has a chance to say anything else, I raise my hand and bring it down right onto her bare pussy. She screams as the slap to her pussy and clit registers. I guess she loved it because a groan slips out of her lips and she gets even wetter than she was a second ago.

"Did my little fucktoy love that?" I ask, but she doesn't say anything, refusing to answer me. I know her game. She won't answer because she fucking loved it. I give her another one of my smirks that makes her mad but I don't say anything either. I lift my hand and slap her pussy again, harder than before. I give her five slaps in quick succession and I'm surprised when she screams and squirts on my hand that is still on her pussy. "Are you going to answer me now?"

"No. I didn't love that," she snaps at me.

"Then why is my hand covered in pussy juice right now, little liar?" I question as I shove two fingers into her pussy. She's so wet and juicy, my fingers slide right into her pink and puffy, begging-to-be-fucked hole.

She groans at the intrusion and I pump my fingers faster, eliciting more moans and screams from those cock-sucking lips of hers. When I think she's had enough, I pull

my fingers out and hold them up for her to see. They're wet and slimy with her nectar and I bring my fingers to my lips and suck on them. I lick her pussy juices away and clean my fingers, letting out a groan at how good she tastes.

I hear another moan and look up to see her staring at me while I'm licking her juices away. The intensity on her face is burning hotter and brighter. Something snaps inside me and my need for her overtakes me. I hop off the bed and remove my clothes as quickly as I can.

Her eyes are molten with need as she watches me. I know she can't wait to have my dick inside her. I get back onto the bed and straddle her hips, then move all the way up until I'm straddling her chest.

This new position has my dick right in her face and she licks her lips in anticipation. I stroke my cock as I watch the need on her face.

"Open those cock-sucking lips of yours," I growl in a husky voice. She opens her lips without hesitation and I push my hard-as-fuck cock right down her throat before pulling it out again. I keep teasing her.

"Such an eager little slut, aren't you?" I chuckle at her eagerness.

"Stop playing games asshole and just give me your fucking dick if that's what you're doing!" she snaps at me with nothing but impatience in her voice. It's a miracle she hasn't combusted yet with how hot her pussy is right now.

She opens her mouth again to probably lay into me, but before she can even get a word out, I slam my cock down her throat again. She gags but I keep my cock there a little

longer. I don't even care about her punishment right now. All I want is to fuck the shit out of her.

"Is this what you wanted?" I growl at her and she shakes her head. "Thought so. Look at you, baby, such a slave to my cock."

I grab her head with both my hands and hold her in place as I begin to face fuck her. Fuck! My cock feels so good sliding in and out of her mouth. My cock is coated in her saliva, making it wet as fuck. I love a good sloppy blow job. They always feel the best.

I pump into her mouth a few more times before pulling out. She's panting as I look down at her, her cheeks flushed. I get off her and move between her legs, leaving her in her spread open position for me.

I grab the base of my cock and place it on her pussy, rubbing the head up and down before I slam my cock into her waiting hole. She screams at the intrusion of my big cock and a pleasure-filled groan escapes me. Her hole clenches instantly, keeping me inside her and the feeling is so good.

Her pussy is tight and so fucking hot, it's no wonder I'm fucking obsessed with it. I start to thrust my hips into her in a steady rhythm. If her trying to move her hips under me to get more cock inside her was any indication, she's loving it.

"Oh my God! Go faster!" she screams. "Fuck me!"

"Oh yeah. Take this fucking cock, baby! Take it like the fucking cock whore I've turned you into," I growl at her, and in an instant, I feel what my words do to her. She squeezes my cock in a vice grip with her pussy and it takes

everything in me not to shoot my seed deep inside her pussy and mark her with all that cum. I groan at how good my cock feels inside her, soaking her pussy walls.

“Fuck, yes! Give it to me, you asshole!” she growls as she goes wild underneath me. I feel her trying to move her hips faster but she can’t because of her position. I pull back a little just to fuck with her. “No! Don’t stop! Put it back inside!”

“You’re not the one running the show here, babe, I am.” I smirk as I grab a hold of her, just under her knees and push them further back. I begin to slam my hips harder into her.

I can feel my cock touching the opening of her womb and it feels amazing. Fucking anyone else has never felt this good and the thought that I’m seriously fucked crosses my mind for a brief second.

“Fuck, Knox! You feel so good inside my pussy! We shouldn’t be doing this but fuck, it feels so good!” she screams as she starts to come on my cock. “Fuck me harder! Fuck me like you hate me!” she babbles incoherently.

“Yeah, that’s it, baby. Try to fuck yourself on my cock and flood it with all that yummy pussy juice that’s mine only. Don’t worry, I am fucking you like I hate you, because I do,” I growl as I speed up my thrusts. A few more pumps later, I’m spilling all my seed straight into her waiting cunt.

“Fuck! Fuck! I’m coming!” she screams. Her pussy has a death grip on my dick now as she comes and squirts all over my cock. Her body is trembling from the intensity of her orgasm and I smirk down at her.

“Fuuuuck!” I groan out loud as I finally come down from my orgasm and collapse down on top of her.

We’re both panting as I lift myself up and loosen the cuffs from around her limbs and then I just lie there next to her. Her T-shirt is coated with sweat. We both are.

Don’t ask me why I do it because hell if I know, but I pull her into me with her back against my chest and hold her. We don’t say a word. We just lie there in silence. This is the first time we’ve ever been quiet around each other, not spewing some bullshit to one another. I’ve got to say, I kind of like it.

But I’m not about to let anyone know that. We probably spend about fifteen minutes like that before my dick becomes rock hard again. I let out a groan as I start to grind my hips into her ass.

“Why the fuck can’t I stay away from you? It’s like you’ve cast a spell on me, witch,” I groan in her ear, and I feel her body shiver against mine.

I roll her onto her back and position myself so that I’m looming over her. I grab a hold of her jaw and turn her face so that we’re both looking into each other’s eyes.

“That’s the first real thing you’ve ever said to me. Then you must be a warlock because you seem to have cast the same spell on me,” she whispers, her voice tinged with a hint of vulnerability. If I’m being honest, it’s the same one that I’m currently feeling as well.

I don’t know but I feel like something changed between us just now...

I’m not sure if I can fight my feelings at this point but we’ll see what happens. I already have a feeling that we’re

going to end in disaster.

I still have a secret I'm keeping from her. One that I can't let her know and one that will destroy her if she ever finds out. After what just happened between us, I'm not sure if I want to destroy her anymore.

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CHAPTER

Twenty-Eight

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RAINE

WELL TODAY'S THE DAY...

The day I've been dreading for weeks. It's crazy how time flies when you're in misery. My mom and Jonathan are finally tying the knot and I'm still not sure how I'm feeling about the entire thing.

On one hand, I'm happy for her, but on the other hand, it's bringing me so much anxiety. In just a few hours, Knox will officially be my stepbrother. It feels like time flew to this day or maybe time just got away from me because of my new drug habit. It has been keeping me blissfully unaware of half the things around me.

The only things that managed to stay the same were that I still hated this school, the people here were still assholes, and I was still confused as fuck when it came to Knox and my feelings for him. I still hated him but I also still felt things for him which were not good for me.

He made me feel exhilarated when we were together but he also made me feel like a weak little girl because of the way I let his words get to me. All those nasty things he'd

called me and kept calling me when I first got here are still stuck inside my head, like demons that won't go away.

That one night earlier this week when he was a little vulnerable with me, it was the last. The next day, he went back to acting weird, like we didn't have a moment together that night. The rest of the week pretty much went that way.

I avoided him as much as I could and I even drove my own car to school. The next morning after that disastrous one, Jonathan let me know that he had my tires replaced and I was thankful for that. I still didn't know who messed with my car since it could literally be anyone.

I'm not going to lie. I'm scared. It feels like things are getting worse and I have a feeling that something big and bad is coming soon. I just don't know what it is. This past week I've spent most of my free time by myself in the library or in my room when I was home.

Everything that's been happening to me is the main reason why I've become addicted to the pills I've been taking. It's the only thing that doesn't make me remember how bad my life is, if only for a few hours.

These days when I look in the mirror, I can finally see the change in me. I see the weight I've lost and how my body looks better, but I still can't quit taking the pills. I keep pushing myself to lose more weight because I think it will make me feel better. In reality, I feel like shit.

The bullying still happens and people still taunt and pull pranks on me. So I guess the weight had nothing to do with anything. They all still hate me because Knox hates me and that's the root of the whole problem, isn't it?

I wear baggy clothes, so no one sees the weight I've lost. The cutting has gotten worse and my body is filled with so many more scars. Some deep, some not, but it looks horrible every time I look at myself.

Yet I can't stop hurting myself. It's become second nature and somewhere deep down inside, I know it's bad and I shouldn't do it. But it's the only thing that keeps that pain at bay.

Even though things are weird between Knox and me, I wouldn't say that it was as bad as it was when I first got here. Somewhere along the line, said line got blurred and now I don't know which side we're on anymore.

Hiding in the house you were living in is almost like mental torture as well because I want to avoid Knox as much as I can. I don't want to upset him and end up on the wrong side of one of his mood swings that I always end up getting caught in.

Sometimes when it can't be avoided and I'm in the same room as him, I see the way he tries to hold himself back. Those are the times when I run into my room to avoid any sort of confrontation. It still feels like I'm standing at the edge of a cliff, waiting for him to either pull me back or push me over.

It's quite exhausting and I'm barely coping. I don't know how I went from being so full of life with good grades to being nothing but a shell of my former self.

I might look different now, but I hate myself. Every time I look at myself in the mirror, I hate the girl who stares back at me. I thought I'd love her when she looked the way

she does now but it was nothing but a fantasy or more like an illusion.

It's difficult to love this version of myself because I created her for them. I didn't create her for me, and that's what I took this long to realize. *How could you possibly love something you created to please other people and not yourself?*

Even though I know all of this, I still can't stop myself from going along the path I'm currently on. I've been on it for weeks. I'm not sure I can break the bad habits that I've picked up. It physically pains me to look at myself these days if I am being honest.

The last few times Knox fucked me, I always made sure it was dark, or I was wearing my shirt at least. I didn't want him to see the map of my destruction across my skin. He probably wouldn't care if he saw them, but just the idea of him seeing me like that makes me feel sick to my stomach. I don't know what would come out of his mouth but I know it would probably be something that would crush me, and I just can't bear that thought. Plus, I'm ashamed of what I've done.

But even though I'm ashamed of my actions, I couldn't stop if I wanted to. The pills, the cutting, it's all become a part of my everyday life, and I don't know how to cut the bad habit. I know it won't make any sense, but cutting has become a source of peace for me. The scent of blood as I slice my skin calms me instantly and makes the noise inside my head go from being loud to being a dull ache instead. That's all I need, especially on the really bad days.

I let out a sigh as I come back to the present and out of my head. I put the finishing touches on my makeup and then pull on my dress. I had to get it altered a little earlier this week. The weight loss made it loose. I take a seat on my bed to put my shoes on before grabbing my clutch.

Knowing that today is going to be somewhat stressful, especially with the whole town there and my anxiety being bad, I take a Percocet and pop them in my mouth before I open my door to step out of my room. As soon as I'm in the hallway, Knox steps out of his room too.

Whenever he's near, my mind always seems to gravitate toward him. I look him up from head to toe and I'm instantly breathless with how gorgeous he looks. He's dressed in a black tux that fits him to perfection. He gives me the once-over and I can see the lust in his eyes. His electric blue eyes captivate me just like they always do.

Whenever I look into them, it always looks like he's at war with himself. I wish I knew what it was but I know he'd never tell me if something was bothering him. A slut like me doesn't deserve to know his inner thoughts. He said that once when I made the mistake of asking if he was okay and wanted to talk.

A wave of sadness washes over me at the fact that we'll never be anything. I know that maybe there's some good in him but it's a side of him I don't think I'll ever see. He'll always hate me. Even when he tries to hide it, I still feel it all the same. Now that our parents are getting married, things seem like they'll just become more complicated.

"You look handsome," I choke out through my unraveling emotions.

"Thanks. Uh, you look... nice," he finally says.

I nod, and then without another word, walk away from him. I won't let him see how much his actions affect me, even though he probably already knows. It's not like he'll even care anyway. We've been fucking for weeks and he could barely get himself to say that I looked nice.

I'd laugh if it didn't hurt so much. I hear his footsteps behind me but I keep heading down the stairs. Mom already left for the church but I know that Jonathan is still here. Knox and I are supposed to ride with him.

"You excited for today, kiddo?" he asks as he gives me a smile when I make it down the last step.

"Super excited!" I say, faking my enthusiasm.

I'm not really excited, but I'm definitely not saying that. I don't want to ruin his day. In the week since we moved into his mansion, I've had a few conversations with him and he's been very nice to me. I don't want to be a bitch. I like talking to him, even though his son always gives me the death glare whenever he's around to witness it.

"Let's go then! I don't want to be late to my own wedding!" he says and laughs. I laugh along with him.

Knox and I both follow him outside to the waiting limo and get in. Jonathan sits next to me and Knox sits across from us. The tension I noticed when I first moved in is still there between them and I wonder what's the cause of it.

Knox always looks like he wants to kill his dad, while Jonathan pretends like everything is fine between them. Or maybe he does believe that everything is fine.

Right now, Knox's face is a mask of hate and anger, though when he catches me looking, it turns to one of

indifference. He's clenching and unclenching his jaw every few minutes and I'm wondering what's eating him. I'm sure it's the thought of our parents getting married. I mean, it doesn't take a genius to figure that out.

In no time, we pull up to the church. When I step out of the limo, I stand there and take in the beauty in front of me. It's not the main church that people go to, which was the one where they held Knox's mom's funeral. Nope, this is something I've never even seen before since I've barely explored the town at all.

I'm in awe of it. It's made entirely of glass with a huge glass dome at the top. The whole place is literally breathtaking. Even from out here I can see all the flowers that are decorating the outside and inside of this place.

I feel a nudge on my back and when I turn around, I see Knox looking at me with a raised eyebrow. I didn't realize I was just standing there and staring.

"Sorry," I say, my cheeks heating with embarrassment.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" Jonathan asks with a wink and I smile at him, thankful that he filled the silence so I don't feel like a complete idiot.

"It is. I've never seen anything like it before," I tell him. It's an afternoon wedding, so the sun isn't that hot right now. I'm sure they probably have measures in place to keep the sun out so it isn't blasting everyone inside.

"Let's go inside then," he tells me as he begins to walk in the direction of the stairs.

I would have come with Mom earlier but she said she had everything handled. I hope I'm not a bad daughter

when I say I was relieved when she said that. I can imagine the hustle and bustle that probably took place all day.

When we get to the top of the stairs and come to the doorway of the church, there's a white carpet that leads from the door to the altar and then rows and rows of chairs are on both sides.

The decor is done in cream and white and there are flowers hanging from the ceiling over the entire room. I'm blown away with how gorgeous it all looks. It looks like a flower heaven up there.

"Your mom should be in that room," Jonathan tells me as he points to the side. There's a smaller building to the right of the main one and I walk away in that direction. The door is open when I get there so I walk right in.

There's a big hall here and then doors that lead to different rooms. The space is filled with a flurry of activity. People are moving up and down and the wedding planner is on the phone, barking orders at someone.

I spot a door with the sign that reads *Bride* on it and make my way there. I knock and then open the door, before stepping inside and closing it behind me.

When I turn back around, I see Mom standing there, already dressed. Even though I saw her in this dress when she did the fitting, I'm still blown away at the full effect of it along with her hair and makeup done.

"Wow, Mom! You look amazing!" I tell her in awe.

She turns around to look at me and a huge smile crosses her face. "You really think so?" she asks and I shake my head.

"Jonathan won't know what hit him!" I tell her as a laugh escapes me.

"Are you all set? Do you need your makeup or anything done?"

"No. I'm all good. I did it at home," I tell her. She walks over to me and pulls me in for a hug. She squeezes me and then pulls back a little to look at me with her arms still resting on my shoulder.

"Are you alright, baby? You've been acting differently for a while and I can't quite put my finger on it. You've lost some weight. I feel like something's bothering you and I'm worried. Is it school or is it because I'm marrying Jonathan?" she questions with a furrowed brow. "I can call the wedding off if it upsets you. It's not too late," she says sincerely.

That would be super helpful but I don't want to be the cause of her not being with the person she loves. Every time I've seen them together, it does look like they really love each other.

Plus, I love how she's been looking so happy ever since she started dating Jonathan. I don't want to take that away from her.

"No, Mom! Don't worry about me. I'm fine! And it's too late to call off the wedding, so don't even try! And would you quit worrying! I've just been on a diet because I wanted to look good for your wedding. Isn't it amazing!" I tell her with a laugh, hoping to brighten my mood for her. Hoping she'll believe my lie. The wedding planner steps into the room and I'm saved from having Mom say anything else.

"We have about ten minutes until it's time," she tells Mom.

"Well, I better go outside to get set up," I tell Mom, slowly backing away and out of the room. I breathe in a sigh of relief when I'm out of the room. I head toward the middle of the open space and stand there for a second while waiting for instructions.

Knox walks in a second later and stands next to me. We're the only ones who'll be walking down the aisle before Mom does.

"Are you guys ready?" Silvia, the wedding planner asks. I shake my head and then look over at Knox. He nods his head. He still looks angry, but he's still doing this. I wonder why.

As soon as we step outside and onto the pathway that leads to the front of the church, flashes go off and I'm startled. I look up and see the paparazzi below by the steps. The flashes keep going and I'm dazed for a second. Fucking hell! I was not prepared for this, and I'm definitely not in the right frame of mind for this shit.

I try to ignore them as we make our way to the front and down the carpet to the front of the church. The place is packed with most of the town's people. I guess I should've expected this since leading up to it, everyone was acting as though this was the wedding of the.

There are just a few photographers inside the church and I'm guessing those are the ones that Jonathan approved. They take pictures of us as we begin to walk inside.

We're about halfway down the aisle when I turn my head to look up at Knox beside me. He does the same. He gives me a smirk that has nothing but evil intent shining through. That does nothing but confuse me.

Because of the confusion and not paying attention, when he lets go of my hand subtly moves his foot right in front of mine, my reflex isn't fast enough. I go tumbling face-first onto the carpet.

I hear the gasps of people, the clicking of the cameras and know pictures of this are being taken. A moment later, the whole room is filled with the sound of laughter. My cheeks heat with embarrassment and I wish I could disappear.

"Oh my God! Are you okay?" Knox asks loud enough with fake concern, for people to hear before he moves to help me up.

I look up at him with tears brimming in my eyes. I know he can see the pain in them because I don't do anything to hide it. I couldn't even if I wanted to. The wedding planners rush over to us to make sure I'm okay and I let them know that I am. I tell them I just tripped over my dress.

Every time I feel like we've made it one step forward to put the animosity behind us, he does something to show me that we went two steps backward instead.

I don't answer him. Instead, I start walking to the front again. Once we've taken our places at the altar, I stand and watch as my mom walks down the aisle gracefully.

I can still hear the whispers and laughs but I try not to pay attention to any of it. I stand throughout the ceremony, trying my hardest not to break down in front of everyone.

It's a real fucking struggle. I come close to doing just that a few times and have to will myself not to.

As soon as the ceremony finishes and Mom and Jonathan walk back down the aisle, everyone starts to make their way out behind them. The reception is being held at the mansion so they'll all be heading there.

I wait for them all to be gone. I have a feeling that if I move even an inch, the tears I've been trying to keep at bay will pour out of me.

I'm trying to keep it together when I hear my name being called. I look up to see Aiden and Camryn rushing toward me.

Since they're my only two friends, I invited them. When they're within touching distance, they both grab me by the arms and steer me out the door that's a few feet away from where the altar is. It leads to a garden at the back of the building. I don't realize my knees are so weak. It feels as though I'm about to collapse.

As soon as we step outside, it's right into a big and beautiful garden, though I couldn't appreciate its beauty at that moment.

"Oh my God! Are you okay?" Aiden asks as he pulls me into a hug. The sobs finally break free, and I feel Camryn at my back.

"Shhh. Just try to calm down. You have us," Camryn whispers as she tries to soothe me while rubbing her hands up and down my back. Aiden squeezes me tighter as more sobs leave me.

I feel the heat of someone's stare on me and look up and over Aiden's shoulders and my eyes clash with Knox's

through the glass. I let him see the pain I'm feeling for a moment before I look away from him.

I hate him. I hate him. I hate him!

He has an unreadable expression on his face. I want to think it's one of remorse but by now, I know that it's just wishful thinking. Knox Riverside would never feel any kind of emotion such as guilt.

"Can we just go? I need to go back to the house to take some pictures with Mom but can we go somewhere after? I don't want to be there for long," I tell them and they both nod.

We walk back through the door and through the church before heading to the parking lot where Aiden parked.

"Where are your guys?" I ask Camryn a few minutes after we left.

"They're not my guys," she tells me, rolling her eyes.

"Deny it all you want, but I'm definitely calling it and saying that they're pretty much in love with you," I tell her, smiling at her reaction.

"Ugh! No. And anyway, they'll meet us wherever we end up after we leave the reception," she tells me.

"Tell them to bring some goodies."

"Done, sister! I think we need some goodies right now," she tells me.

By the time we make it back to the house, the party has already started. "I'll be back in a few minutes," I tell both of them as I head to where the reception is being held.

I'm in awe of the decorations here too. The entire backyard is covered in string lights with more flower

decorations. There's music, and everyone is partying and having a good time. *Well, everyone except me.*

As soon as I make it to the backyard, I spot Kinsley laughing with the guys. There's Knox, Asher, Axel and Ezra, and I feel a pang in my chest at the thought of how she just threw our friendship away so easily. She spots me looking in their direction and the smile on her face instantly vanishes. She looks away from me.

I look away as well and walk over to where Jonathan and Mom are taking pictures. She spots me and calls me to take some with them. They call Knox over and the four of us take additional pictures. I make sure to keep my distance from him while we pose for the pictures. He's standing next to his dad and I'm standing next to Mom.

Once all of that is done, I excuse myself and make my way inside. I use the bathroom downstairs. After I step out of it, there in front of me is Ivy. I let out a sigh, not at all wanting to have anything to do with whatever is about to happen here.

"What do you want?" I snap at her to get the ball rolling.

She attacks me and we both go crashing onto the floor. Fucking hell, this girl is a psycho.

"You think that just because your mother is married to Knox's dad and you'll be living here that you'll get to have him?" she screams at me. I knew trying to avoid her wouldn't last long. This bitch seems almost as obsessed with me as Knox does. She claws at my face. I let out a scream and try to push her off me.

"You can fucking have him, you fucking psycho! No one said they wanted him, except well maybe you. But you're

not really mad at me, are you? You're just mad at the fact that he doesn't want your skanky ass!" I snap at her while scratching and clawing at her.

I'm so fucking exhausted with all the bullshit that follows me around.

"You have no idea what you're talking about! He fucking belongs to me!" she snaps at me.

Who the fuck even invited this bitch here?

"So it wasn't you having a gangbang at that party? The one who was caught cheating?" I throw at her innocently, and she goes postal on me.

I don't know who did it, but someone uploaded her video onto that stupid website. The comments mostly said it was when she was supposedly with Knox.

Now I'm not kink shaming or anything, if anyone is into gangbangs and that sort of thing, fine, but the girl is a fucking bitch for cheating! And she has the nerve to call me names when I've only had sex with one person.

My neck and cheek burn from the scratches she inflicted on me and I scream in pain. She caught me off guard at first so I didn't get the advantage on her.

I manage to punch her in her nose again and she lets out a scream of her own. Before she can retaliate, she's pulled off of me. I let out a groan at the pain on my neck and face, and I can feel the blood leaking on my face. From the feel of it alone, I know she got me good.

"I'd suggest you leave her the fuck alone and get out of here!" Aiden snaps as he pushes her away and stands between us.

“Who the fuck are you to tell me what to do?” she screams at him.

“Bitch, I’ll knock you the fuck out if you don’t move it!” Camryn snaps at her, appearing next to Aiden.

“You think you’re tough? You can’t do shit to me. I’d fucking kill you first!” Ivy snaps.

“Oh, I’d like to see you try. It’d be so much fun to skin you alive and watch you suffer before you die a slow and painful death. No one touches her and lives,” Ransom says, pointing to Camryn and then me. “I won’t let you touch her either. I suggest you get your skanky ass out of here!” he snaps. I guess she can see the seriousness in his eyes because she scurries away from us.

“Fuck! I knew I should’ve come with you!” Camryn says as she rushes over to my side.

Aiden goes into the bathroom and grabs some tissue before handing it to her. She helps me clean the blood from my face. I feel so tired and humiliated.

“You guys good?” Cyrus asks a few moments later and I shake my head.

“Good, then let’s get the fuck out of here!” Wolf says, grinning, and I agree.

I don’t want my mom to see me like this. She’ll ask too many questions and I don’t have any answers to give her.

I don’t even bother changing the dress I’m wearing even though I planned to. I just walk out the front door with the guys and Camryn.

“Where do you want to go?” she questions me.

“Are there any beaches around here?” I ask.

“Yep! There’s one not far from here,” Ransom says, answering me.

“Great! Can we go there? I haven’t been to one in ages,” I tell them.

“Your wish is my command,” he says, giving me a bow, and I roll my eyes at him.

I love that the guys have also kind of become my friends in a way. I know that’s mainly because of Camryn but I’m not stupid. The guys might be nice to me, but I can sense that they’re dangerous.

I get that underlying feeling about them. Like if you mess with them, then they won’t hesitate to unleash their wrath on you. It makes me feel good that I’m on their good side.

“Can you guys just give me a few minutes before we leave? There’s something I need to do quickly,” I tell them and they all nod.

I run back into the house and straight into the kitchen to grab a bottle of water. I then slip into the garage and head straight for Knox’s Venom GT. It’s a beautiful car and I’m guessing it’s expensive as hell. I want to cause a little trouble.

I’m feeling reckless right now. I open the gas tank and pour the bottle of water in it. He might—no he’ll definitely kill me if he finds out, but this is so worth it! I want to hurt him where it definitely will. I’ve seen him tending to this car like it’s his baby or something.

Suck on that, dickhead!

When I get back out front, Wolf tells us to follow them. Camryn gets into the car with them and I get in with Aiden,

and then we're off. It takes about twenty minutes to get to the beach and once we do, the guys park. We step out of the vehicles.

We step onto the boardwalk and then make our way onto the beach. The lights from the boardwalk create a nice glow on the sand. It's not too bright but we have enough light so that we can see our way.

I kick my shoes off and keep walking until we get to the edge of the beach, close to the water. The sand between my toes feels amazing. It's been a while since I've been to a beach and I forgot how at peace it always makes me feel.

I plop down onto the sand and close my eyes for a second and take in the sound of the waves and how calming it sounds.

The night air, along with the waves and the stars, make me feel a little less like I'm drowning. The beach at night is always my soothing place and I'm hoping the feeling kicks in soon.

"You okay?" Aiden asks as he plops down next to me. He throws his arm around my shoulder and pulls me closer to him before placing a kiss on my forehead. A tear slips down my face. "It's going to be okay."

"I'm fine and I hope so," I whisper.

"Just so you know, you're brave and strong," Camryn says as she sits on the other side of me and puts her arms around me as well.

"I don't feel that way. I don't think I ever will either. I'm nothing but a failure... My grades are tanked and I'm so stressed. I don't even know if I'll get into any of the

colleges I applied to. Fucking hell, I'm so close to losing it," I cry.

"Breathe, babe. We're here to support you. Besides, the storm won't last forever," she tells me.

"Maybe it will. I love storms, just not the one currently invading my life." I try to laugh, but it sounds hollow and dead.

"You'll get through this. Besides, you have us by your side," she says matter-of-factly. "If that bitch touches you again, tell me! I'm going to fuck her up!"

Her words make me feel better and I let out a laugh. I can't imagine the guys letting her get into any sort of fight.

"Thank you both for always being here for me," I tell both Aiden and Camryn.

"What? I don't get any thanks too? And here I was, bringing goodies for us," Ransom says in mock indignation as he walks up to us along with Wolf and Cyrus.

When I look at them I let out a laugh. I see they've brought the liquor, cups, ice and even some weed for us.

"It's party time!" Wolf smirks and I can't help the smile that escapes me. The guys and their antics always seem to bring me out of my funk.

"Aww, you guys are my heroes." I laugh.

"Don't tell anyone or you'll ruin our street cred," Ransom says with mock seriousness, and we all laugh. Today was shit, but my night is turning out to be good with this bunch.

Cyrus takes out his phone and a little speaker. He starts to play some music as Ransom and Wolf pour drinks for everyone.

“To new friends who all hate the sucky people in this town!” Camryn yells out, and we all cheer before taking a sip of our drinks. I know she’s only saying that for my benefit but I appreciate it all the same.

We stay on the beach and party—drinking, smoking, and dancing—until it’s well past midnight. I enjoy every moment of it. This is the most fun and freeing moment I’ve had since coming to this horrid place, and it makes me appreciate my new friends all the more.

They never judge me. We all have our vices and things we keep hidden and I love that about them. We’ve all got our own demons to bear and I think that’s why we work. It shouldn’t make sense but somehow it does.

Camryn and I have shared personal things with each other but the guys keep their shit locked up tight. I do know Aiden’s secret and that’s the fact that he has to keep his relationship with Saylor a secret. I hate that for them but I guess that sometimes you just have to do what you have to do, right?

The Venom Brothers, well, those guys are a mystery. I don’t think I want to know what secrets they’re hiding. It’s best to leave well enough alone where those guys are concerned.

When it hits one a.m., I decide it’s time to leave. I’ve had enough fun where I didn’t have to think about the humiliating moment I had today, in front of pretty much the whole town, and I was at peace for a while. No doubt that will all end once I get home again.

Camryn and the guys drive home while Aiden drops me off. When he pulls up to the mansion, I release my seatbelt

and then lean over to give him a hug.

“Thank you for today and tonight,” I tell him, giving him a warm smile as I let go of him.

“Anything for you, sis,” he tells me, giving me a wink.

“I’ll text you later,” I tell him before getting out of the car. I watch as he drives off before I make my way inside, barely managing to keep myself upright because of how fucked up I am from the alcohol and weed.

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CHAPTER

Twenty-Nine

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RAINE

I'M DEFINITELY MORE FUCKED up than I thought I was. I almost fall flat on my ass twice while trying to make my way inside the house. It's almost two a.m. and I'm surprised that the place is empty. I thought rich people partied all night or some shit like that.

I'm glad though because I don't want my mom to see me like this. I don't want her to see me falling apart and barely hanging on by a thread. I'm especially glad it's empty because I don't want to face people after the embarrassment that was caused by Knox. God, just remembering how humiliating that was is like a knife straight to the heart.

I'm sure my face is fucked up with the scratch marks that Ivy left. I guess I can put today as another one of the worst days of my life. When the fuck is the move here supposed to get better? I wish I fucking knew the answer to that question.

I feel weird right now. I shouldn't have mixed the pills and alcohol but it's too late now. The stress of everything is getting to me, and I feel angry.

Angry at Knox for everything he's put me through and how unfair it is that he doesn't get to face any sort of consequence for his actions. I stumble up the stairs. I don't know what makes me do it but I go into his room instead of mine.

Looking at how neat and pristine everything is, a wave of anger sweeps over me and I start to destroy his room. I start with everything on his desk, throwing his computer against the wall and ripping up all the papers that's on his desk.

This won't improve things but I feel a little better. I'm destroying things that are his. I fill the tub in his bathroom with water and throw books, journals and what looks like albums inside.

I go into my room and grab the hair dye, before going back into his room and just spraying it everywhere. I aim it at his walls, his blanket and then pour some in the tub and all over his bathroom. I'm not even thinking about the consequences, I'm just thinking about how good it feels to mess up something of his. He'll kill me for this but whatever.

When I'm done, I stumble back to my room and grab something out of my bathroom and one of my empty sketch pads, pencils, and my phone before making my way back downstairs.

Since the backyard is empty, I figure I'll go there and sit by myself for a while. Before doing so, I grab a bottle of rum to take with me. It's not a pity party if you don't have alcohol with you, right?

I know I'm going to need it since the demons inside my head are active right now and alcohol seems to be the only thing that calms them down. That or when I'm cutting or drowning myself in pills, at least until they start again.

When I step out into the backyard, it's empty thankfully. The string lights are still on and they cast a nice and intimate glow around the entire space. It's picture perfect but I can't find the beauty in it because it represents things that I hate.

With a sigh, I leave the area and head all the way to the back of the property where the tree is and I take a seat on the grass. It's peaceful here but again, the scene does nothing to calm the chaos inside my head.

My chest feels funny and I brace my back against the tree to try and calm myself. I have no idea what the hell is happening. Maybe it's because I was drinking earlier, and that's the reason why my heart feels like it's about to beat out of my chest.

I breathe in and then out as I let the cool night air wash over me for a few minutes. I grab my phone and check the school's website because I can't help myself. It's a form of self-torture that I can't seem to break either. It's become an addiction like with the pills. As always, I regret it instantly whenever I see the contents.

My face falls when I see all the new and horrible things written about me. There are even a few videos from different angles of me falling today along with other horrible shit.

Not wanting to look at this crap anymore, I exit out of the website and sit there for a while, staring blankly out at

the night sky. A sob crawls up my throat as I suddenly feel a wave of emptiness hit me. I feel so lost and I have no idea what to do anymore to survive this place.

This feeling suddenly taking over me makes me realize just how unhappy I am. I don't know how to fix that shit to make myself feel better. I feel nothing but despair in my soul. I haven't been living at all in the last few weeks. I've just been existing in this void I keep myself in. The drug-induced one that won't let me leave its grasp, while trying to hide from all the bullies.

I open the music app on my phone and play the song "I Don't Wanna Be You Anymore" by Billie Eilish. It fits my whole state of being right now. The tears slide down my face in a steady stream as I let all the pain I've been feeling flow through me.

I cry for the girl I used to be before I let their hate and their words get to me. Before I let it all influence the way I changed myself just because I didn't want them to torment me anymore. In the end, I realize that it never would have worked. No matter what I did, they'd still hate me. It's in that moment that I really realize that I'll never be the girl I once was, ever again. I let them get inside my head and I've done terrible things to myself because of it.

That naïve girl is dead and gone. With that thought in mind, I take the new razor blade I grabbed from the bathroom and take it out of its wrapping. I pull the sleeves of my dress up and then I start cutting my arm again.

I watch as the crimson lines appear. The more I look as I cut, the more I wish I was brave enough to just slice my vein and end it all.

My chest heaves as I cut deeper than I've ever cut before. As much as it pains me to hurt myself like this, I keep going. It feels like it's the only thing I can do to stop myself from completely breaking. *Is it weird to think that hurting yourself is the only thing saving you?*

When my arm is a bloody mess, I drop the blade in the grass and then pull my sleeve down again. I pick the pencil and sketch pad up and start to draw. My fingers are covered in blood and I can feel it dripping down my arm, but I'm in no state of mind to actually care right now. Instead, I focus on the pad and I do something I haven't done in a while. I start drawing self-portraits.

My fingers glide on the paper as though someone else is drawing. They move but it's like I'm somewhere far away, looking in on myself, but I'm not the one creating the action.

By the time I'm done, all I see is a bloody and thin drawing of myself. There are cracks in my face that give me a distorted look. I hate the fact that it's how I see myself now. *Ugly...*

When I can't bear to look at it anymore, I throw it on the grass next to me and then start another one. I feel like I'm possessed. The need to keep drawing myself with all my flaws on display is almost like a compulsion.

This one is more of the same, only my face looks like the wind is blowing it away, like I'm just wasting away. It's exactly how I'm feeling. I push that one to the side as well.

I open the rum I brought with me and take a swig directly from the bottle. I take a few gulps of the liquid and feel the burn of it as it goes down my throat. I can feel the

alcohol pooling in my stomach and it burns. My stomach grumbles and I can't remember the last time I ate a proper meal. I sigh, another thing that's going downhill for me.

I keep drawing until my eyes start to feel heavy as exhaustion begins to weigh me down. This last sketch of me has me as a zombie—half of me is pretty while the other half of my face is missing an eye. My cheeks are hollow and my smile is all the way to my ear.

I discard it. I look at all the sketches in front of me and it takes me a moment to realize that all of them show nothing but the self-hatred that I feel for myself.

I hate what I've become and I hate myself.

I just have a few more months and then I can leave this all behind. I hope that I can make it 'til then. I open the baggie with the pills I brought down with me and I take out two before swallowing them down with the alcohol.

A hand appears in front of my face and snatches the bottle away from me. I look up and see Knox standing there with a stormy expression on his face as he's looking down at me. The asshole made me drop my bag of pills too.

"What the fuck are you doing?" he growls at me.

"What does it fucking look like I'm doing, asshole?" I slur at him.

"Where have you been?" he questions in a pissed-off tone.

"What does it matter? You know what, you can piss off while you're at it because you're just pissing me off," I snap. I try to get to my feet because I don't have the energy to deal with whatever his issue is right now.

I don't manage to get to my feet though because I fall right back down to my ass. I feel my chest begin to hurt. My breathing starts getting a little erratic and I'm having cold sweats. Instantly, I know that something is wrong. My body is feeling worse than it was earlier.

"Can you just go away? I'm not feeling so good," I groan out through frantic breaths.

A second later, flashlights are pointed toward me, and without thinking, I lift my left arm to cover my eyes. I see Asher, Axel, and Ezra all standing there and staring at me.

"What the fuck?" Asher gasps.

"Bro, her arm!" Ezra says in a frantic voice.

I look toward my arm and realize that the sleeve is covered in blood. I quickly bring my hand down to my lap again and bend my head so I'm not looking at anyone.

"What the fuck did you do?" I hear Knox whisper in an unrecognizable voice. He bends down and is about to grab my arm, but I quickly crawl backward and away from him.

"Wanted to kill myself like everyone wants but I'm too much of a chicken to do it. Is that what you wanted to hear?" I snap. His eyes land on a spot next to me. When I look at what he's looking at, I see the pill bag and the alcohol lying on the ground.

"What, you're a fucking drug addict now?" he demands angrily.

"I don't see how that is any of your business," I snap at him. I stand up and make it this time, but he grabs a hold of me and backs me up until my back hits the tree. He's standing in front of me.

“Somebody check and see what the hell she was taking,” he snaps.

Asher walks over and grabs the baggie off the ground. The other two shine their phone light for him to see. I watch as he takes the pills out and inspects them.

“They’re Percocet,” Asher says. Knox’s head snaps back to me and there’s an emotion there that I can’t quite place and I don’t care to either. But it’s one I’ve never seen before.

“Why the fuck are you taking pills?” he growls in what I’m imagining is a pained voice but that’s not right. He doesn’t care, so I don’t know why he’s acting like he does now.

I shrug without answering and that seems to set him off. He grabs both my shoulders with his hands and shakes me.

“Answer me!” he demands, and I let out a dry and hollow sounding laugh.

“Why the fuck do you think I’m taking them, asshole?” I scream at him, not caring who’s around.

“Because you’re fucking stupid?” he snaps and I just lose it on him. I start hitting him in the chest, so overcome with my anger and all the hate I feel for him.

“It’s because of you, you fucking prick! I haven’t known a moment of fucking peace since I got here! You just shoved your fucking hate down my throat and guess what? Your hate is too much to bear,” I sob. “It’s like a fucking drug you kept feeding me. Why are you so surprised that I had to get real drugs to help me cope and not drown under all the pain and hurt you’ve inflicted on me?” I scream at

him while I continue pounding on his chest as I fucking break down in front of them.

"I-I—"

"We all have our vices don't we? You're addicted to hurting me, humiliating me, and calling me the worst names in the book. Me? I'm addicted to the things that might one day kill me. I'm addicted to you and look where it's leading me! You can't stop fucking me like the whore you keep calling me, and yet I'm still nothing but your dirty fucking secret, aren't I?"

"You're—"

"Don't fucking give me any of your bullshit. Don't act like you suddenly care, not tonight. And to answer your previous question, yes I'm a drug addict now. Silly boy, that's what addicts do, don't they? They keep wanting more of the bad shit, knowing that it's impossible to stop themselves from wanting it." Sobs rack my body as the pain in my chest from earlier increases.

"Am I pretty enough for you now? Don't you like the new me? Or is she still a cow and ugly and fat... Want to know the truth about me? I tried to change the way I looked because you and your minions tore me to shreds. But guess what? I hate this girl standing in front of you, but not as much as I fucking hate you," I whisper through my tears.

I make a move to walk away from him but I barely make it a few steps when I crumple to my knees as my stomach cramps. I clutch my middle as I cry out from the sudden and intense pain racking my body. It was just twinges earlier, but now it's full-blown pain. I double over as another wave of intense agony shoots through me.

I clutch my stomach again as I crumple onto my side on the grass as I wait for the pain to go away, but it just seems to be intensifying as the seconds tick by.

“What the fuck is happening to her?” Ezra’s shaky voice screams out.

“Fuck! I don’t know but we need to get her to the hospital now!” Knox growls as he rushes over to me and picks me up. Then he’s running with me in his arms.

Asher gets in the front seat of Knox’s car and he gets in the back with me on his lap. The cramps have become unbearable and tears stream down my face.

“I-I think I’m dying,” I whisper as my chest also begins to hurt. I rub it to try and make the ache go away.

“You’re not dying. You have to make it,” he says in a voice filled with emotions I’ve never heard from him. My eyes feel heavy so I close them for a second.

“I’m tired. I need a nap...” I say, trailing off. He slaps my face a few times and I open my eyes to look up at him.

“I need you to stay awake for me, baby. We’re almost there. I just need you to keep looking at me,” he whispers.

“It hurts to look at you,” I whisper, choking back the emotions.

“I know, baby, I know. Just don’t leave me, okay? I can’t lose another person I love to pills,” he tells me, his voice sounding choked up with emotions and far away.

“I was never on the list of people you love. All I was ever given was your hate,” I whisper, closing my eyes again.

CHAPTER

Thirty

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KNOX

I'M SCARED...

So fucking scared because I have no idea how many pills she took. Plus, she was drunk off her ass and still drinking when we found her in the backyard.

As Asher drives us toward the hospital, I feel myself entering that dark place I found myself in after my mom overdosed.

The same dark place that started this whole revenge and bully shit to begin with. I was pissed and angry and fucking hurt that I missed all the fucking signs of her taking drugs. But then again, even if I did notice, I'm sure I wouldn't have cared at the time.

But now I do. I care more than I want to and it's still fucking with my head. The last time I was vulnerable with her, which was a few days before the wedding, I couldn't stand it. Of course, I went back to being the asshole that I was.

I didn't do vulnerability in front of anyone so I had to show her that she still meant nothing to me. I guess that fucked with her more than I was expecting.

I was never on the list of people you love. All I was ever given was your hate.

My mind keeps replaying those words from her a few minutes ago and I feel like an ass. Even though what she said was true, her words did nothing but gut me. I've well and truly turned everything into a fucking mess.

All I ever gave her was my hate. I never once showed her or even hinted to her that my feelings might be changing. I saw it as a weakness on my part, for having feelings for someone I hated so much.

I'm an asshole, but you all knew that already. And even though I just admitted that, I still haven't come to terms fully with my feelings for this girl. Because of that, it made me keep acting like an ass. But right now, I really don't want her to die.

The two sides of me are warring with each other. One side says I should just forget everything, and the other says I should continue because she deserves it. I'm here in the middle not sure which way to go anymore.

I keep remembering everything my mom went through and it reminds me of all the reasons why I should still hate Raine. Another part of me wants me to acknowledge that this is not just some passing fling but to acknowledge the real feelings that I have for her.

Ever since she moved into my home, I find myself watching her in secret. I've become a tad bit obsessed with her and I hate it. *Fucking hell, when did life get so complicated?*

When she stepped out of her room already dressed yesterday, she literally stole my fucking breath away. She

was so beautiful. Sometimes it ached to look at her because she represented all the things I shouldn't want but couldn't help myself from wanting.

I remember the look in her eyes when she looked up at me. She was taking in every inch of me. I could see the lust and want paint her face with desire. She tried to hide her reaction but no matter how much she tries to hide, I know I affect her more than she wants me to. She told me I looked handsome, and I was so captivated by her that I couldn't form words. All that eventually came out of my mouth was that she looked... nice.

I instantly saw the way her face fell. She probably thought I was being an ass as usual and didn't want to tell her she looked beautiful. Something about the way she looked was bothering me. I couldn't put my fingers on what it was. It wasn't her appearance per se, but it was something.

When we made it downstairs, my father was already there. I hated the way he gushed at her. I knew why and it just made me mad all over again. I clenched my jaw as I watched him, wishing I could just smash his face in. Yeah, I'm still harboring a lot of hate toward him, that hasn't changed at all. I'm not sure if it ever will.

By the time we got to the church, and we were ready to walk down the aisle as our parents' best man and maid of honor, I was still pissed off. I had no intention of doing anything to her but suddenly I just wanted to embarrass her. So with a slight movement of my foot, a move that no one would notice, I tripped her.

It wasn't until that moment when she fell onto the floor that I realized what was bothering me about her earlier. She looked thin as hell.

After she fell, the laughter immediately began throughout the room and it was nothing but music to my ears. It made me feel better.

Then my jealousy was rearing its ugly head when I saw her lean on another man, especially one that I didn't like. I wanted to punch the asshole's lights out for even touching her. I had to leave before I did fuck him up. I don't want any other asshole to touch her. She's mine.

And there I go again...

The thing is, sometimes when hate is all you know and have toward someone, it's difficult to change that mindset. That is exactly what is fucking me up now. I don't want to hate her anymore but I also don't want to like her. Plus, I still have big secrets I'm keeping from her which just makes things even more complicated to deal with.

How the fuck do I justify feeling something other than hate to the people who inadvertently were the reason for my mother's demise? The line is a slippery slope and I don't know which side I should be on anymore.

When I set out to get my revenge and make her life a living hell, I never in my wildest dreams ever thought my feelings for her would ever change. But somehow they have, and that is quite the inconvenience.

As I sit here in the waiting room, waiting for a word on her condition, it's excruciating. I barely manage to keep myself in this chair. When we finally made it to the hospital, I wasn't sure what the fuck happened.

I was just on autopilot the whole time, hoping it wasn't anything serious. I remember rushing out of the car before it even came to a full stop, with her cradled in my arms. I remember shouting to get someone's attention so they could hurry up and take a look at her. She wasn't looking so good. She started to look too pale for comfort. The nurses rushed over quickly, and I hurriedly explained what I knew before they took her away. I've been anxious since.

When they realized who I was, they moved even faster. That was one of the perks of being stupid rich and having your name plastered on the building. Everyone was ready to do my bidding.

I made the decision not to tell the parents about this since they left for their honeymoon earlier. I'd be keeping a closer eye on her from now on anyway. If she thought I was an asshole before, well it's going to be nothing like the Knox who's going to be on her ass now. *I don't think she's ready for the Knox who will actually give a shit about her.*

The guys are all sitting a few chairs away from me. No one has said a word since we all sat down. I know they don't want to tell me I told you so, even though I deserve it. So they're all keeping quiet.

I look down at the white dress shirt I'm wearing, and it's the first time I notice the blood on it. For the first time since my mother's burial, I feel the emotions choking me, making it hard to breathe. I know it's her blood and the feeling inside me is indescribable.

She's been cutting herself... and I didn't know.

It's all my fault. Now that I know she's been taking pills, a lot of things make sense now. Earlier when she

disappeared, I checked the GPS on her phone but it was in her room. She left with her new friend, Camryn, and that asshole, Aiden, along with the Venom Brothers. I wasn't too pressed because I was still pissed at her and didn't give a shit about her then.

I didn't care but my mood was even more sour after she left. The guys kept calling me a grouch all night and I admit that I was being one. In truth, I was starting to feel uneasy because she wasn't in my sight. Eventually the guys took me inside to the den where we had some drinks away from everyone else. I wasn't in a celebrating mood. I hated the fact that my father just got remarried when my mother was laid to rest only a few weeks earlier.

When the guys weren't looking, I managed to get my phone out. When I checked her location again, I saw her location had moved from her room to the backyard. I decided to go after her. I had no idea that tonight would go so horribly wrong when I left the den to go after her.

From a distance, I could see her lift the bottle of alcohol to her lips. As soon as I was close enough, I could tell that something wasn't right with her. As I got closer, I snatched the bottle away from her and all hell broke loose.

For the first time ever, she let me see the destruction in her eyes. Well, more into her soul if I was being honest. She had all her emotions and pain on display for me. She's always hid that from me. She never let me see her when she was weak. I'll admit it, even if you don't believe me, that was when I really saw how truly affected she was. She wasn't the strong girl who acted like she didn't give a shit

anymore. Instead, I saw everything she was so good at hiding.

For some reason, I was pissed. I wanted her to be strong and fight me off because I couldn't stop myself from hurting her. I don't know why the fuck I expected her to fight me alone and not be affected in any way. *That was a stupid thought, I know.*

Don't get me wrong. She's been strong as fuck from the beginning because I watched for weeks as they tore her to shreds and how she fought them off when she could. In that moment, when I was seeing everything that she was hiding, I realized that it was only a matter of time before it all caught up to her.

"Mister Riverside?" a doctor calls out as he comes through the door and pulls me out of my thoughts. I'm up and out of my seat in a flash.

"Is she okay?" I quickly ask.

"She's out of the woods and is now resting. The good news is she didn't take enough pills to overdose. She is severely dehydrated and she's lost a lot of weight. I'd look into getting her to rehab. If she continues like this, it could cause severe damage to her stomach, and she could eventually develop heart issues as well. I'd also make sure she eats more. She's on her way to becoming malnourished," he says.

The force of his words slam into me. I didn't know it was this bad, or that she was affected this much. She kept it all hidden and I have no one to blame but myself for acting like an asshole.

"Thanks, doc. I'll make sure I get her the help she needs. Can I see her?" I ask.

"She's asleep now, but you can," he tells me.

I nod then turn to the guys after the doctor gives me her room number and then leaves. "I'll stay with her. You guys can go."

"You sure, bro?" Asher asks.

"Do you need anything before we go?" Ax asks.

"We're here for you, bro," Ezra states.

"I am. No and I know," I answer them all in one breath.

They all pull me in for a hug before leaving and then I make my way to her room. When I step inside, I see her lying there, looking so fragile and small in that bed. A wave of pain hits me out of nowhere. She's asleep and she has IVs in her arm. The sight of her hooked up to the machines causes my heart to ache.

There's surgical tape on her arm from her wrist up to her elbows. I don't know how I missed that shit. Then again, I know how and it's because she started wearing baggy clothes along with long sleeves. She was hiding all the fucking scars! I want to punch the wall or something, but I refrain from doing so. I don't want to wake her up.

I stare at her for a while, calming myself down before dimming the light in her room further. I slip onto the bed next to her. I know when she wakes up later, she'll go back to hating me again, but right now, I need to be as close to her as possible. I need to make sure she's fine because all this shit is one hundred percent my fault.

I'm on her right side and I carefully pull her in closer to me so that her head is in the crook of my arms. A furrowed

expression crosses her face for a second before it smooths itself again. A little sigh escapes her in her sleep as she settles in my arms. Her body settles into my side and I cover us both with the blanket from her bed.

It's already five a.m. and I just lie there with her in my arms, my mind wandering to all the shit I need to change where she's concerned. Something has to give, mainly with me. I'm the dickhead here and we can't continue like this.

For the first time since I've known her, I'm finally admitting to myself that I have feelings for her, and I need to show her that side of me. I need to let go of the burning hate I feel for her and show her the other side of me. The side that she's never seen and probably doesn't even think exists. After a while, I let out a sigh and close my eyes, hoping for sleep to come soon. It's funny how right now, I feel exactly how perfectly she fits against me, like we were made for each other...

I'm sorry, Mom. It feels like I'm betraying you but I don't want to hate her or hurt her anymore... That's the last thought I have before finally succumbing to sleep and exhaustion, wrapping my arms a little tighter around her.

CHAPTER

Thirty-One

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RAINE

BEEP, *beep, beep...*

The steady sound of a machine is what rouses me from my sleep. The first thing I notice is the hard body pressed up against me and the arm around my body. I tilt my head slowly and look up at Knox's sleeping face.

I don't think I've ever had a moment to look at him while he was vulnerable in sleep. As I watch him, I realize he looks human. He doesn't look like the formidable boy who orchestrated this whole mess that I've found myself in. *He looks mortal like the rest of us and not at all like the god everyone sees him as.*

But as usual, when I look at him, the pang of hurt and pain that always suffocates me because of everything I've had to suffer through because of him is still there. My mind goes over the events of last night and I'm ashamed that I let him see me when I was falling apart. I have no doubt that he's probably found a way to use that against me somehow and that thought causes my chest to ache further.

I'm not even sure why he's here right now. He's always made his hate for me crystal clear and now he's holding me

like he's afraid I'll disappear or something. It makes no sense. I'm so fucking confused.

I remember all the shit I spilled to him last night because I was my breaking point. I inwardly groan at how pathetic I must have been in his eyes. Then again, he's never thought the best of me in any way.

At least I'm in a nice room. My mind goes to my mom and I hope that she doesn't know I'm here. She'd freak the fuck out. I look out the window and see that it's morning already. Well, dawn is just breaking through the sky. I guess I wasn't asleep for very long since it was already late when all that shit went down.

I look at the sky for a few minutes until I feel a wave of exhaustion hit me again. It's bone-deep exhaustion like I've never felt, and I realize how truly tired I really am. I'm tired of living this life, tired of living in a constant state of exhaustion and unhappiness. I wish I could end it all. It hurts to live such a hollow existence.

Some days, I'm fine and others, I'd get this wave of sadness and emptiness in my heart. I wish I had something to fill the void with but nothing brings me joy or happiness anymore. I don't have anything to use to fill said void.

Realizing that makes me feel so hopeless. It makes me cry for all the pain in my heart and soul and all the things I wish I had—like someone to love me and tell me that life is worth living and high school won't last forever. I wish someone would tell me those things because I can't find the will to tell myself that anymore. I wish someone would just hold me and make all the hurt go away.

On the days I can't find the will to live anymore, I still try to tell myself that I'll get through this phase of my life. But the more I try to make it better, the more it damages my psyche. People always say that in order to have a happy life, you need to make yourself happy by doing some self-healing and love yourself first.

But none of them ever tell you how hard it is to try and heal the broken parts of you. They don't tell you how hard it is to fall in love with all the parts of you that you hate. If you hate it so much, how are you supposed to love it in order to heal?

Believe me, the road to self-love is a hard and ugly one when you have so many issues with yourself, along with mental issues with no one there to help you get through it. It always feels like you're alone with no one to help guide you onto the right path again.

I shift my body so that I'm no longer looking at the sky or at him. I can feel myself getting choked up because of my thoughts. It's a never-ending cycle of berating and hating myself inside my head on a daily basis. *I just wish the voices in there would shut the fuck up.*

I've already made enough of a fool of myself last night, and I don't need him seeing me like that again. Every time I look at him, it always feels as though I'm drowning under the weight of him. How can someone so beautiful create so much destruction without lifting a finger?

He must have felt my movement because his arm tightens around me and I close my eyes tightly and pretend I'm asleep in case he wakes up. I don't know what I'd even

say to him. Would I tell him to leave or would I beg him to stay because I love the pain he inflicts on me?

Sometimes I hate myself more when I realize I crave his brand of hurt as much as he craves hurting me, and I'm not talking about when his minions attack me. I'm talking about when we're together. In those stolen moments, all of his defenses are down and I get to see a different side to him. It's one I crave, but it's also one I hate. It shows me what could've been if we didn't have this hate like ours.

I won't even deny that the feeling of being in his arms right now is one I wish I could feel on the nights when it gets to be too much for me. His warmth fills the coldness I always feel deep inside me. But there are so many unspoken things between us still that it'd be a minefield to get through.

I must have eventually fallen asleep because when I open my eyes again, the room is bright with daylight streaming through the window and it looks like we're well into the day. I look up at the clock above the door and see that I was right. It's after one p.m. The most obvious thing is that I'm alone right now.

I'm wondering how long Knox stayed and where he went. But then again, I'm glad for the moment to myself. What would I even say if he was still here? My room is empty and a wave of loneliness washes over me, making me feel sad again. I let out a sigh, wondering when the sadness will go away.

I hate hospitals and want to get out of here. Whenever I'm in one, it always brings up memories of the past, and I get scared and almost have panic attacks. Trying not to

have one right now, I take a deep breath in and then slowly let it out, and then repeat it a few times.

I'm still doing that when the door opens and a doctor and a nurse step into my room. I sit up a bit in the bed and wait expectantly for what I know is coming.

"Miss Carrington, how are you feeling today?" he questions in a friendly voice.

"I feel fine," I tell him.

"I'm sure you're aware of the effects that drugs has on the body when taken in extreme doses. I'm also sure you're aware that you shouldn't be taking them especially given your medical history," he says.

I just stare at him because obviously I know. But do I care? No. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been taking them every single day for weeks.

"If you keep this up, you're running the risk of developing heart complications as well as other complications because of the surgery you had as a child. We pumped out the pills you had in your stomach, but you're severely dehydrated and close to being malnourished. Are you following me so far?" he asks.

"Yes. I understand. I'll take care of it." I sigh. I knew what I was getting myself into would have complications, but I didn't have time to think of that. I needed the Percocet to lose the weight, and then I also needed some Adderall to use when I needed to focus. Yeah, the Percocet wasn't the only drug I got and was taking.

I've sort of accomplished both. I managed to lose the weight and I've even managed to get some of my papers done in time even the one I lost somehow. I'm not

completely caught up however, but all in all, I'd say the pills were a big help to get done what I managed to do. Why would I quit a good thing like that?

"Normally, I'd give you a mandatory transfer to rehab but Mr. Riverside said he'll see to it. I trust that he'll get you the help you need," he tells me, and all I want to do is scream in his face but I keep my mouth shut.

I don't want him keeping me here longer than necessary. I'm sure the only help that Knox Riverside will give me is making sure that I find myself in an early grave instead of getting me any kind of care.

But whatever, I don't care. It's not like I can stop going down this path I'm on. I've tried but it's no use. I'm already way too addicted to the feeling it gives me. I don't want to lose that because if I'm not high then I'll just be thinking about how miserable my life has turned. I'll just pretend I'm going to do what this quack wants me to and that will be the end of that until I get out of here.

"So am I free to go now?" I ask.

"Yes. You're being discharged but I will be following up with your progress sometime in the next week or so," he tells me, before he's saying goodbye and walking out of the room.

The nurse that came in with him walks over to me and starts to unhook me from all the machines I was attached to.

"You can take a shower and get dressed while we get the necessary forms ready for your discharge," she tells me in a friendly voice. She points to where the new clothes for

me to wear are. Wow, this is definitely a fancy hospital if they give you free clothes.

"Thanks," I tell her and then she leaves the room.

I slowly get down from the bed and walk toward the bathroom in my room. Once in there, I take off the hospital gown I was in and grab the towel before stepping into the shower. I shower quickly. I just want to get out of this place as fast as I can.

Once I'm done, I slowly begin to dry my skin. My movement is slow. My entire body hurts. I realize that I didn't bring the clothes with me into the bathroom, so I wrap the towel around me and walk back into the room.

I pull the panties up and just as I'm about to reach for the shirt and leggings, the door to my room opens. I freeze as I look up with my arms still outstretched for the clothes to see Knox standing there, staring at me.

I can't seem to get my limbs to work as I keep staring at him. I thought he would've left by now. I watch as his eyes travel down my body and his eyes widen a second later as they stop on my stomach. I can't name the emotion that crosses his face, but his jaw clenches.

It looks like disgust is written all over his face. I quickly grab the towel and cover myself when my limbs start working again. I try to hide but I know he just saw the secret I've been hiding from everyone. I grab the clothes and stumble into the bathroom as tears stream down my face.

He just witnessed my ruination and how weak I've become...

I drop the clothes onto the floor and brace my hand against the counter with my head bent as the shame of what I've done takes over. A moment later, I feel the heat of his body against my back. He places his hand on my shoulders and spins me around to look at him but I avoid looking into his eyes. Tears of humiliation are pouring out of me, and once again, he's here to witness me when I'm falling apart.

"Go away!" I snap at him but he doesn't listen to me.

"What the fuck did you do to yourself?" he growls as he pulls the towel away from me. He kneels in front of me so that he can get a better look at what I've done.

My stomach is filled with cuts—old ones, new ones—and all the words I've ever been called are carved into my skin. My legs are filled with cuts too because I needed more space. I ran out of room on my stomach and I needed to cut myself to cope. When I don't answer him, he looks up at me and his eyes are filled with something...

"Answer me! What the fuck have you been doing to your body, baby? I can see the outline of all your fucking ribs!" he snaps, and I start to cry harder. He looks at my stomach again. "Cow, ugly, fat, whore, slut, pig..." he whispers and then trails off.

"A reminder of everything that I am to you," I choke out through my sobs. "You said I was fat an-and ug-ugly and I-I wanted to lose the weight s-so y-y-you wouldn't c-call me th-those names anymore."

"Rai—"

"No! Don't say anything. This is exactly what you wanted, isn't it? You wanted me to hate myself as much as

everyone around here hates me, and by God, you succeeded! I fucking hate the girl I let everyone turn me into. I wish she was fucking dead already. But guess what? She's too much of a pussy to take the extra pills or cut too deep to end her pathetic life. So I guess you were right, I am pathetic!" I cry harder, so much so that it hurts to breathe. "I hate her... I hate her so much!"

He gets to his feet unexpectedly and pulls me into him, crushing me against his chest as more sobs rack my body. Now that I've started, it feels like I can't stop. So many weeks of trying to keep in the pain and hurt are tumbling out of me. He squeezes me tighter against him. I'm not sure how to feel at his display of emotion.

"Shhh, it's going to be alright. I swear to fucking God, I'll make it better, baby," he says, his voice sounding hoarse.

"You can't! Nothing is going to make it better!" I sob even harder. I just want to scream and let all the pain out. It's fucking consuming. "I fucking hate you as much as I hate the girl you've turned me into!" I push him away from me because of the anger.

I try to put on my leggings but my body is shaking from the anger, and I can't fucking do it. I let out a scream of frustration. I can't function right now.

"Here, let me help," he whispers in a quiet voice. I've never heard him this quiet or calm before, but I guess I'd shut the fuck up too if I had a walking skeleton standing in front of me. Bone-deep weariness is pulling me under again, so I let him help me. Once he's done, I walk past him and head for the door.

I'm ready to get out of here, and I don't have anything else to say to him. I've already bared my soul enough times in the last twenty-four hours to continue doing it, especially since I'm raw from it all. All I'm focusing on is getting home and staying in bed for the rest of the school year. I don't want to go back to that horrible place anymore.

When we get to the entrance of the hospital, I stop for a second, wondering how the hell I'm going to get to his house since I don't have my phone or even any money on me. His arm snakes around my waist before I can make another move.

"I'm taking you home," he says and begins walking us in the direction of the parking lot. I try to pull away from him but his grip on me tightens. When we get to his car, I come to a complete stop and look at it with distaste. My heart cracks as I remember his words to me the last time I was in his car.

"I don't want to go home in your car. I don't want to stink it up with my smell!" I snap as my voice cracks and the emotions threaten to choke me.

"Fucking hell! I'm sorry I said that, baby. None of that shit was true. Now you either get in the car or I'll put you in there myself," he growls down at me.

"Still the fucking asshole I see. I despise you!" I bawl as I stand there in front of him.

"I know," he says simply.

I rub my chest with my hand, trying to ease the ache away. It feels like my chest is on fire.

"We could've been friends or you could've just let me be, but you chose to destroy me instead. Was it worth it? All

the things you've done to me, did it justify your hate for me?" I whisper out my question to him.

He doesn't answer. He just stares at me, clenching his jaw. I know I won't get an answer from him. I don't care anymore because I'm extremely drained from baring my soul to him.

"Can we just go then? I'm tired," I say, letting out a long breath and then walking around to the passenger side. He makes it there before I do and opens the door for me and puts me inside. He buckles me up and then goes around to the driver's side. I don't have the brain power to dissect his actions so I rest my head against the door and close my eyes. A moment later, I feel him grab my hand with his in a tight grip before he starts to drive.

I'm going back into the unknown because that's what it is. I don't know what to expect from him, and I'm almost scared to find out. I'm already at the very edge of the cliff I've been standing on and one little thing might just push me over...

CHAPTER

Thirty-Two

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KNOX

"WE COULD'VE BEEN friends or you could've just let me be, but you chose to destroy me instead. Was it worth it? All the things you've done to me, did it justify your hate for me?" she whispers out her question to me but I don't answer, because I can't. There are so many things I want to say to her but can't. I don't want her to know the truth.

I can already tell that the truth might be the thing that finally pushes her over the edge and I don't want that to happen. I want her and if she knows the truth, especially if she knew I've known all along, she'll realize that I'm a much bigger asshole than she thought I was. Now that I've admitted to myself that I have feelings for her, I can't lose her because of my own shit.

"Can we just go then? I'm tired," she tells me, letting out a sigh before heading for the passenger side of my car. I make it there before she does and I open the door for her. I make sure she gets in before buckling her seatbelt for her.

I heard the exhaustion in her voice and it made that uneasy feeling run through my chest again. When I get into my side of the car, I see that she's leaning against the car

door with her eyes closed. I grab her hand in mine. I feel her stiffen but she doesn't open her eyes. I don't care though because I still keep her hand in mine as I put the car in drive to take us home.

I'm a mess of confusion right now. Everything I've known and everything I've done has kind of blown up in my face, all because I realized that the girl I hate now means something to me. I still need to figure all this shit out.

If I knew what I knew now at the beginning of my revenge scheme, would I have still done it? That's a question I don't have an answer to if I was being honest, hence the whole complicated factor.

When we finally make it back to the mansion, I let go of her hand and turn the car off. Looking over at her. I see that she's fallen asleep. I stare at her for a while, finally seeing her and all the changes I didn't notice from the time she moved here until now. But now they're all very noticeable and I hate it.

I slept in late with her this morning and it was the best sleep I've had in a while. When I eventually woke up, I left her to get some coffee and get a few minutes away from her to clear my head. Seeing her like that last night fucked with my head a bit.

Seeing the blood on her dress and the way she was completely fucked up because of the drugs and alcohol she took, and then when she closed her eyes on me in the car, I almost had a heart attack. I was so scared I'd lose her like I lost my mother. I didn't breathe easy until I got the news that she was stable.

Now I'm going to make it my mission to get her back to health. Like the doctor said, she's lost a lot of weight and she's dehydrated. I know she has an eating disorder, so yeah, I have my work cut out for me.

When I came back into her room and saw her about to put her clothes on, I completely stopped all movements and stood there in shock. That split second before she ran off into the bathroom hit me harder than anything had before because that was all my fucking fault.

So many things now made sense. Like the fact that whenever we had sex, she'd want the room as dim as possible. She always wanted to keep her shirt on and because I'm an asshole who didn't care, because I just wanted to get my dick inside her, I went with it. Not knowing all this time it was because she wanted to hide her scars from me.

Without giving it a second thought, I went after her in the bathroom and the sound of her sobs gutted me. She looked so torn and broken down. I wanted to make her feel better, but I knew she probably felt nothing but hate for me. I mean, I'd feel the same if I were her too.

She still wasn't dressed when I made it into the bathroom, and now that I was closer, I got a good look at her. She'd gotten so thin I could see the outline of her ribs.

I moved to stand behind her and the full effect of the damage she'd done to herself was visible on every inch of her skin. I wanted to punch myself in the fucking face because this was all my fault. I should've—fuck!

I didn't know what I should have done. Left her alone? Not worry about revenge? Just leave her be and fucking

deal with it another way? All. Of. The. Above.

When I first started my hate campaign against her, I thought the day I saw her broken and desolate, I'd love the sight of it. But I was wrong, so fucking wrong. As I looked at her and all that she did to herself, it felt like my fucking chest was caving in on itself. Nothing prepared me for the devastation I'd feel when I saw what she did to her stomach and legs.

There, in bright red lines, were words I'd often called her. I felt like total and utter shit. I could read them clearly because her skin was so pale. It looked like she went over them quite a few times with her razor blade. That was the moment I took a good look at her and saw the entirety of the destruction I caused her. That was the exact moment it became clear to me that I fucked up.

I didn't know how I was going to fix any of this, because she wasn't any of the things I called her. I know for a fact that I was her one and only and I fucking tainted everything that we did together because of my hatred.

I didn't even know if I'd ever be able to gain her trust now, not after everything I've done. But in that moment, I vowed to myself that I'd make her forgive me somehow, and I'd do all that I could to heal all the wounds that were there because of me. From the looks of it, those are soul-deep wounds.

If none of that shit works, I'll just remind her who the fuck she belongs to and that there's nothing she can do to change that.

After I saw her cuts, I knew she was feeling nothing but humiliation. She probably thinks I won. I know she thinks

that she showed me her weakness because I saw it, but that's the furthest thing from the truth. I know she's the strongest person I've ever known and if I wanted to keep her that way, then I needed to step my game up and protect her.

I come back to the moment and out of my head. I move her head onto the seat before getting out of the car and walking over to her side. I open the passenger door and unbuckle her before lifting her up into my arms and walking inside with her. She's sound asleep and doesn't make a peep.

After the last few hours, well weeks that she's had, she needs all the rest she can get. I walk up the stairs with her and head into her room. I pull the blanket up around her and then walk around to the other side and get into bed with her.

I don't want to leave her alone right now. I just want to be close to her. I pull her right up against me with her back to my chest and then I place my arm around her. I lie there for the longest time, just watching over her as she sleeps.

There are so many thoughts and feelings occupying my mind but the one that supersedes everything else is how she feels being in my arms, like she absolutely belongs here. I'm going to make sure she sees that too somehow.

When I finally leave her and head to my room, I see the destruction she caused and shake my head at her determination. I look at the mess she made. When I step into my bathroom, I see my mom's journals and some of her albums in the water.

Fuck!

I quickly rush over and pull them out. They're already damaged. I might be able to save the pictures, but her journal is toast. The pain that washes over me is nothing new.

I know Raine is the one who destroyed my shit and I want to retaliate. But I promised myself earlier that I wouldn't hurt her anymore. I finally admitted to myself that I have feelings for her.

I call for one of the maids to get everything cleaned and fixed and wait for that to be done before I go back into her room, lift her into my arms and take her into my room.

I lie down next to her for a while longer and let out a sigh at the fact that I lost some of my mother's things. It hurts but at this point it is what it is. I won't do anything to hurt Raine anymore...

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CHAPTER

Thirty-Three

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RAINE

THERE'S a manly scent in the air, almost like a sea breeze that fills my senses as I open my eyes. The room is dark. Once my eyes have adjusted to the darkness, I realize that I'm not in my room. I must be in Knox's.

I don't feel his presence next to me and I'm thankful for that. I don't think I can handle seeing him again so soon. Not after last night and not after he saw the way I disfigured my body. I'm too ashamed of it all to face him. I'm too raw from baring my soul to him like that. Seeing him right now will make me feel more out of control than I do. Then again, I haven't been in control since I stepped foot in this town.

I don't remember falling asleep on the drive from the hospital and now here I am, in his bed. I've wanted to see his domain since I moved in here but I knew he probably would have killed me if I had ever come in here.

My mind wonders to my mom and I wonder where she is, since she's not bursting down the door yet. I'm thankful for that because she'd definitely chew me out for being

irresponsible and messing up my life because of the drug habit I've picked up.

Speaking of which, I'm dying for a fix right now. I don't feel normal without it anymore. She has no idea what I'm going through because her life has been perfect since we got to Riverside, while mine just kept going downhill.

I know she loves me but I just don't feel like I can talk to her about everything that's been going on in my life. I'm afraid she won't understand or she might even tell me that it's nothing. Parents don't really consider heartbreak to be something detrimental to your mental health. I wish that was it but it's so much more than that.

I let out a sigh before getting up and out of his bed and walk toward my room. I step inside and head straight for my bathroom. I know what I'm about to do and my mind is telling me that it's wrong but I can't seem to help myself.

I need the drug because it's become my addiction.

I take the extra Percocet I bought from their hiding place and down two of them at once. I need them to function otherwise I'll be more of a mess than I currently am. I can feel my body starting to shake from not having any. I need to make the shivers go away.

It's a never-ending fight inside my head that my body loses every single time. I'm tired of fighting myself by trying to do the right thing when I want something else.

As soon as they make their way into my system, I can feel them working. I know it doesn't work like that but to me, I feel like it does. I instantly feel so much better and this is the feeling I've come to crave.

I walk back into my room and take a seat on the floor. I pull out one of my blank canvases. I need to do something besides think about all things I can't control. Tonight, I decide to paint instead of draw which is something I haven't done in a long time. Having a blank canvas in front of me always soothes me and that's just what I need.

I start and before I know it, I'm hyper focused on moving my hands around. Sometimes I get so focused that I don't even come up for air. The urge to finish what I started in one go is too much.

When I'm finally done and look down at what I've created, I see that I've painted Knox yet again. At this point, I'm starting to think he's another one of my obsessions. I paint or draw him as often as I take the drugs. If that isn't obsession or rather addiction, then I don't know what is.

The painting is one of him looking at me with one of his signature looks—the one that's always filled with hate whenever he looks at me. I've seen it so often that I've managed to capture it and bring it to life. As I continue to stare at it, I can feel the hatred jumping out at me from the canvas.

A minute later, I paint over the entire thing in red and add something else to it. When I'm finally done, I stop and stare at the painting in front of me. I stare at it for a while longer and realize that I've created an ambiguous image of him.

The obvious version is him in all his angry glory but when you tilt it sideways, it's one of him looking like a monster and well, it certainly fits the man I know. I get up

and move the canvas into my closet so that it can dry. I don't want him to come into my room and see it since he's always coming in uninvited.

I have an idea for the next drawing which is one of me. I get started on it since I'm still feeling restless. It's a full body one, and it's something I haven't done with myself for a long time. This one shows more of the self-hatred I can't seem to get rid of.

I look like a zombie with an ugly face and all the words Knox has called me are written on my skin in the drawing as well. *Slut, fat, ugly...*

The list goes on and I can't seem to stop this self-sabotaging phase I'm going through. I know they always say that you shouldn't let the words of others define you, but it's hard to not let their words slip inside your head and grow like a festering wound until you think that you're nothing but what they call you. Speaking from experience, that is a sad fucking existence.

No matter how hard you try to love yourself, you can't. Their words have grown into something that love can't make go away. I'm not sure the hate I feel in my soul would make the words disappear either.

The more they push, the more I feel depressed and just want to end my life. Just to take all the pain away. Bullying fucking hurts you soul deep. If anyone ever tells you to get over it, then they're just as fucking bad as the rest of them. They don't understand the pain you feel. Every. Single. Day.

The pain just keeps festering until you can't breathe with the force of it. Always wondering why. Why do they hate you? Why aren't you like them? Why aren't they

fucking with anyone else? Not that you want them to because you know how it feels to be treated that way. *Just why, why, why...*

It's a never-ending loop inside your head that makes you feel like you're going crazy all the time. Most days, I wish we hadn't moved here or that I could've stayed with my dad. But I had to stay with Mom instead. Dad said I'd be better off with Mom since he travels a lot. If I had known this is what awaited me here, then I probably would have run away or something.

I push the drawing of myself away. It just reminds me of how ugly I am and I hate it. My phone rings and I look around and spot it on my nightstand. When I look at, it I see it's my mom. I clear my throat before answering to make sure I don't sound high or like I'm dying.

"Hi, Mom. Where are you?" I ask as soon as I answer.

"Hey, honey! I missed you! I was hoping to talk to you before I left but Knox said you were out with friends after the reception," she tells me and I'm confused.

"Leave? Where did you go?" I ask again.

"Jonathan and I are on our honeymoon cruise on his yacht," she says happily.

"And you didn't tell me?" I question and yell into the phone.

"You weren't there for me to tell you, honey. I was looking everywhere for you," she says.

"You could've told me any time before the wedding," I accuse.

"I didn't know before, baby. Jonathan sprang it on me on our wedding day as a surprise!" she gushes, and I feel a pit

of despair take over me. I realize that it'll just be Knox and me in this house alone, for however long they decide to stay away.

"Well then have fun and I'll see you when you get back," I tell her, trying to sound happy for her but it's a chore to do so. We chat for a few more minutes before we hang up. It feels like the walls are closing in on me. I begin to claw at my throat because it's closing on me.

"Breathe!" I hear Knox say as he rushes into my room. He gets down on his knees beside me, grabs me by the face, and makes me look at him. My eyes can barely focus on him as I try to breathe.

"Go away! Haven't you done enough already?" I say, gasping and slurring my words. All I want is to be left alone for the time being. The thought of him being able to do whatever he wants to me since our parents are gone causes me to panic.

"Are you fucking high again?" he snaps at me. His face is filled with anger as he stares down at me.

"What? I-I have no idea what you're talking about," I grumble at him. "If I was, then I don't see how that's any of your business! Isn't that what you want? To see me break and beg at your feet for mercy because you're a sadistic bastard like that!"

"Don't act like you don't love being on your fucking knees for me, worshipping me and my cock like we're your god. That's when your pussy is the wettest, isn't it?" he growls at me.

I look away in shame because fucking hell, the bastard is right.

“Fuck off!” I mutter.

“Why, because you can’t stand the truth in my words, baby?” he questions, and like the traitor my body is, it responds to him calling me baby. It sounds nice coming from his lips and I hate to admit that even to myself.

He gets to his feet quickly and walks straight into my bathroom. I scramble up to my feet and follow him just in time to see him tearing my bathroom apart.

“What the hell are you doing?” I yell at him.

“Saving you from yourself,” he grunts. “The doctor said no more fucking pills and you’re still taking them! Are you trying to kill yourself?”

“I don’t need saving, dickhead! At least not from you! Isn’t that what you said you wanted?” I scream at him.

He turns around and pins me against the wall with an angry expression on his face. He’s not hurting me though. He’s just using his body to keep me in place with his hand around my throat.

“Clearly I do need to save you or you wouldn’t be high again right now! Tell me who do you want to save you, baby? You want that asshole Aiden to save you or better yet, one of the Venom Brothers, or do you want all three of them?” he growls in my face.

“And what if I do? I don’t see how that’s any of your business!” I snap. His hand snakes down my thighs until he’s cupping my pussy.

“It’s my business because this pussy, ass, and mouth belong to me. Or did you forget?” he says softly right in front of my face. I can feel his breath on my skin as I take it in.

"You hate me, so why would I want to belong to you?" I question.

"Maybe I don't hate you anymore. Does this feel like hate?" he asks, as he grinds his hips into my pelvis. I instantly feel the hard bulge of his rock-hard cock against me, and I want nothing more than to feel his cock inside me again. I let out a groan. "Make no mistake, things have changed. I may have wanted you to die in the beginning, but everything has changed now. Baby, you aren't ready for me."

"Oh, tell me all the pretty lies because that's all your words are, aren't they?" I groan when he slips two fingers inside my pussy and starts to pump them in and out of me. I'm soaked and I can hear the sloshing sounds my pussy is making. I scream as my orgasm crashes into me and I'm coming on his fingers.

"Tell me you aren't mine again, with the way you come on my fingers like my pretty little whore," he growls as he pulls his fingers out of me and sucks them into his mouth, licking them clean of my juices. My entire body ignites with lust as I watch his actions.

"I hate you," I whisper, the words having no bite to them.

"You wish you did but you don't. You were made for me and I realize that. Now tell me, do you want to get fucked against this wall like my pretty little slut?" I shake my head, not wanting to answer him but he's not having any of that. "Answer my question, babe, or you're not getting any of this dick." He smirks.

“Yes! I want you to fuck me like you own me, you bastard!” I snap.

“There’s no *like* because I already own every motherfucking inch of you!” he growls as he lifts me up. I wrap my legs around his waist. He moves my panties to the side and then he’s slamming his thick cock into my pussy with the force of a starving man.

He immediately begins to slam his hips in and out of me. I can’t help but scream at the way he’s fucking me and all the pleasure that is coursing through my body. I scratch and claw at him and he responds by sucking my neck hard. I wish I could take all of my hate out on him, but I don’t want to hurt him even though he deserves it.

“Fuck! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Fuck me harder!” I scream at him and he speeds up.

“Yeah, you like me fucking this pussy, baby? You like it when my cock fills you up so good, don’t you?”

“Yees! I love it when you fuck me so good. Please don’t stop!” I scream as I start to move my hips in a frenzy of movement. I want more. I feel raw and untamed and want more of him to fill me.

“Whose dick are you riding right now?” he questions.

I’m so far gone in pleasure it’s hard for me to answer right away. He lifts his hand up and squeezes one of my breasts to get me to answer him. I yelp at the pain and then pleasure I feel.

“Yours!” I yell. “I’m riding your cock!”

“That’s right! And make no mistake this is the only cock you’ll be riding for the rest of your life!”

"We shouldn't be doing this. Technically, we're family now," I pant.

"I don't give a fuck. I'm not giving this pussy up and you better be sure to remember that. Whenever I snap my fingers, you should be ready to ride this dick like your life depends on it," he grunts, as he slams into me over and over again. A thrust punctuates each of his words as he says them.

"No. Because by tomorrow, you'll just turn into an asshole again. You'll call me ugly and disgusting or whatever else you fancy, and I'm just going to hate you all over again. We'll be back at square one. I'm fucking tired of the back-and-forth because you can't make your fucking mind up. Fuck me or kill me, but stop playing fucking mind games with me. I'm barely holding on by a fucking thread here!" I snap and then look away from him. He stops thrusting inside me when I start my tirade. I didn't mean to bare my soul to him again. "You can tell me how much I'm yours and how much you want me, but I'm still your fucking dirty secret. None of your words mean shit to me!"

"You mean fucking everything because the game's changed, babe. You're mine whether you want to be or not. I don't care if you don't want to be because when the night gets here, you'll be riding my cock from here on out. Every. Fucking. Night!" he growls and then he starts thrusting inside me again.

I let out a scream as my orgasm crashes into me full force and he does something I didn't expect him to do again. He slams his lips against mine in a hot and heated

kiss. I groan as my lips respond to his and I kiss him back just as fiercely.

“Keep fucking me like the nothing I am, and the nothing I’ll be, as soon as you’re done!” I cry out.

“You’re everything now,” he whispers in my ear.

I feel the telltale sign of him coming. I feel the warmth of his cum gush into my sore and well-fucked pussy. I groan at how it feels. I loosen my legs from around his waist as he lets me down.

I think this is it, that he’ll just leave me standing here and walk away from me like he always does, but he surprises me. He gently pushes me toward the shower and then gets in with me. He turns the shower on. I’m confused and so out of my depth when he begins to wash me up.

I try to hide myself from him. I don’t want him to see my scars again but he moves my hand away. He gets to his knees and kisses all of them one by one. His action is one I never anticipated and the sight of it brings tears to my eyes. They spill down my cheeks.

He might be gentle now and it’s fucking with my head, but somehow I know none of this will last. I have an uneasy feeling that my life will get turned upside down again. I wish I didn’t feel this way, but I do. It’s hard to shake the feeling of doom I’m currently feeling and I hate it.

Knox took his time in the shower, worshiping my body. Or at least that’s what it seemed like to me. I still don’t want to get my hopes up because when I do, they always seem to get crushed.

He left me in my room and went to his to get changed and I do the same. I put on an oversized T-shirt and panties

and then crawl into bed. I lie on my side and stare at the wall. A moment later, I get out of bed and walk into the bathroom to take another pill. The effects of the one earlier wore off already and I need something to help me relax.

I take the bag out of my hiding place and open it. Just as I'm about to take one, his angry voice shouts out like a whip, startling me.

"What the fuck are you doing?!" he snaps as he walks over to me. He grabs the entire bag away from me before dumping the pills into the toilet bowl.

"No, stop!" I scream as I make a mad dash toward him. But he flushes the toilet before I can get to him. "What the fuck did you do that for?" I scream at him again.

"You're not taking that shit anymore. And I better not fucking see or hear you getting anymore either!" he snaps at me.

"I-I need them!" I cry out. It's like just knowing my pills are gone is making me feel itchy and like I'm going crazy. I start to pull my hair as my body starts to shake. "No, no, no, nooo... you don't know what you've done!" I cry out at him. I'm panicking. I don't know how to calm down.

He doesn't say anything. He just moves to the drawer in my cabinet and opens it, taking out all the razors, throwing them into the toilet, and flushing them down as well. I stare at him in shock.

"Didn't you want me to kill myself? So why are you fucking with my shit?" I scream as I fly toward him and attack him, pounding on his chest.

He isn't even fazed by my attack. He grabs my hands and then pulls me into him, crushing me against his chest

as I break down crying. We stand with his arms wrapped tightly around me until I've calmed down and then he lifts my chin so that I'm looking up at him.

"Like I said before, everything has fucking changed, baby. I'm not letting you do that shit anymore!" he growls down at me. "So fucking listen to what I'm saying. You're. Going. To. Stop. Fucking. Hurting. Yourself. Am. I. Fucking. Clear?" He enunciates each word.

"I don't know if I can fucking stop, asshole! This is what you turned me into! This is all your fault and I hate you!" I wail out at him.

"Hate me all you want, baby, but I'm doing this for your own good. I'm going to make it better," he tells me with so much conviction in his voice, I almost believe him. "And I don't fucking care if you like it or not!" I try to wiggle out of his grasp but he tightens his hold on me.

He scoops me up into his arms and walks out of the bathroom with me. He walks us out of my room before he starts walking down the stairs. When he finally puts me down, we're in the kitchen. I start to take a step back but he pins me with a look.

"Sit!" he tells me, as he points to the chair by the island. Not feeling up to another argument, I do as I'm told, but I make sure to grumble the whole time. He moves to the oven and pulls something out. When he turns around, I see he has a plate in his hand.

"What are you doing?" I question, already feeling queasy.

"Getting you food," he says in a tone that tells me what he's doing should be obvious, since I can see what he's

doing.

"I-I-I'm not hungry," I say, as I quickly stand from the chair.

"Move another inch and I'll tie you down to the chair and force feed you myself. Now sit, Raine!"

"But I'm not hungry." I sniffle.

"When was the last time you ate something? Ate actual food?" he questions and I snap my mouth shut. I honestly can't remember. I've taken a few bites here and there and drank some water or juice when I was close to collapsing, but that was it. I haven't had a proper meal in so long.

"I—"

"That's what I thought," he grumbles.

He places the plate in front of me and then takes the seat across from me, sitting there to watch me. "Eat."

Knowing he probably would stuff this food down my throat if I don't comply, I start to eat by taking a bite of the sandwich on my plate. It's probably really good because they have a top-of-the-line chef, but right now it tastes like sawdust.

I almost choke on it because it hurts to swallow it down. He hands me a glass of juice and I take a drink, trying to wash it down. But my body is already protesting and all I want to do is vomit everything out right this minute.

The wave of nausea that washes over me makes me gag and without waiting another second, I hop out of the chair and run down the hall and straight for the bathroom. As soon as I'm in there, I fall to my knees and bring everything back up again.

A second later, I'm dry heaving. I feel him behind me as he holds my hair back. It's all too much and I burst into tears. I'm ashamed and humiliated that he's been witnessing all my weaknesses.

I fall back onto my butt and cry my heart out as the emotions take me over completely. He helps me up a second later and without saying a word, he moves us to the sink and grabs a cup before filling it with water. He hands it to me before grabbing the mouthwash as well.

I use both and then he hands me a towel when I'm done. He then turns me around and pulls me into him, wrapping his arm around me and placing a kiss on my forehead before I rest it against his chest.

"I'm such a fuckup." I hiccup. "I'm fat and I-I need to lose weight. I can't eat anymore without hating myself for it and it's all because of you!"

"You're not fat. You're fucking skin and bones!" he snaps and then calms himself down before talking more gently to me. "I'm going to make sure you get better," he whispers.

"I don't think you'll ever be able to make me not hate myself. You shoved all your hate into me and now I don't know how to feel anything besides that."

"Fuck!" he curses. "I'll fucking make you feel all the love you deserve," he says with a conviction I don't feel. I try to pull away from him but he tightens his hold on me.

"Can I go back to my room now? I'm exhausted..." I sigh.

He lifts me up into his arms and walks with me back up the stairs, taking me to his room instead of mine. He crawls into bed beside me. I move away from him until I'm all the way at the end, but he's not having any of that. He pulls me

back toward him and sets me so that I'm lying on my side with my back to him and he's spooning me.

"Go to sleep. We'll figure things out tomorrow," he tells me while I'm still lying stiffly in his arms. I stay that way until I'm too tired to stay awake. I drift off to sleep with him still holding me tight like he's afraid I'll disappear or something, which is just absurd.

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CHAPTER

Thirty-Four

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RAINE

IS it possible to die from too much emotional overload? I literally feel like I'm on the verge of it. My mind is in a constant state of distress and I don't know how to make it stop. When I got too exhausted last night, I eventually passed out. But my sleep was fitful because even then my mind was active and worrying.

Now as I wake up this morning, I still feel him behind me. I thought he would have left by now but he's still here, and his arms are wrapped tightly around me. The last twenty-four hours have definitely taken its toll on me. I don't know what to do with my life anymore.

I'm not sure what today, or even next week will bring for me. I keep having this bad feeling that it's not over even if Knox says he's changed. I mean, he could be lying. I guess I'll have to wait and see how this will all turn out.

His action from here on out will clue me in. It's always best not to trust a word out of the devil's mouth. Beautiful beings always cause the most damage and oftentimes, you're already in too deep to get away from being burned.

At this point in my sorry life, all I want is some peace. As I'm lying here, I'm worried that once the sun comes out fully, everything he said last night will turn out to be another one of his games and he's still fucking with me. I'm scared he'll go back to being the bully I've come to know over the last few weeks.

He said all that he had to last night, but my plans haven't changed. I'm dying to get out of here and leave this town behind. But even that seems like it'll be impossible if I don't get my act together where school is concerned. I know I'm scrambling right now. I didn't manage to get caught up with all of my coursework yet and that is scaring me a little.

I'm a nervous wreck when it comes to that but at the same time, I feel the weight of everything crushing me constantly. I don't know how to balance everything now. When I try to get shit done, I feel empty inside. I have no motivation.

I feel like I'm definitely failing and if that happens, I don't know what I'll do. *I'm already close to my breaking point...*

I've only been awake for a few minutes and I can already feel a major headache coming on. I didn't take any of the pills last night and I have a feeling that's what's messing me up right now. I've become so dependent on them. When I don't have it, it feels like I'm having withdrawals.

A second later, I'm dashing out of his bed and out of his room and into mine, running straight for the toilet as a wave of nausea hits me out of nowhere. I retch into the

toilet for a few minutes as tears stream down my face. I feel so... how do I even explain the feeling?

I don't feel like myself, but also like my body is doing everything it can to work against me. I'm so out of depth with myself and my body that I hate the feeling. The anxiety, the sadness, the depression, and the self-hate are all at the forefront of my mind, constantly reminding me of how much I don't belong here.

I feel a wet cloth being placed on my forehead and I turn my head to see Knox kneeling on the floor next to me.

"I need my pills. I don't feel good," I wail at him. I'm feeling too much at once and I don't like how it makes me feel or react. I prefer to be high because when I am, I don't have to deal with my feelings. I can just push them aside and concentrate on being in the clouds rather than worrying about why my life has turned into such a mess. He still won't tell me why I had to suffer like this to begin with.

"No. I told you, you're fucking done with that shit!" he says through clenched teeth, and I flinch at the intensity of his tone. I can tell he's already pissed at me.

I'm so distraught at his words that I start to cry harder, right there on the bathroom floor. Is being an emotional mess a side effect of not taking the pills anymore? Because if it is, I have that down to a T.

"But... but—"

"No butts, baby. You're not taking any more drugs with me around and I'll be seeing to that," he grumbles.

"I need them to function! In case you didn't know, you're the fucking reason for all my bad habits!" I snap at him.

"Which is why I'll be the one to make sure you break those habits," he tells me in a serious tone. Who the hell is this asshole in front of me? I've never seen him like this and I have no clue what to do with that.

"I-I don't feel good. I feel weird in my own body. I have the urge to itch my entire body... What's wrong with me?" I cry against his chest.

"Shhh, nothing is wrong with you. It's all inside your head. Now come on and let's get you cleaned up. I'll make you breakfast after," he tells me.

"I'm not hungry." I snifle with my face still against his chest. *I hope nothing but snot from my tears covers his shirt!*

"I didn't ask. I said I was making you breakfast,"

"But I don't want it."

"I don't care. You're going to bring your ass to the kitchen and eat every single bit of it. Otherwise, I'm going to force feed it to you because I'm not playing," he grumbles at me.

"You're such an asshole. I'd like to go back to when you hated me," I mutter at him.

"Well too bad, not happening. I know you hate me right now and I don't blame you. But guess what, baby? I'm going to make you fall in love with me," he tells me in what sounds like vulnerability in his tone.

Ha! If he only knew how much I felt for him when I first laid eyes on him, but then he had to go and tarnish it all with his hatred of me.

I want to believe him but due to past actions, I don't. He might think he wants me to like him or that he even feels

the same for now, but what happens when he gets mad and hates me again? We'll be back to square one—him being the bully and me being the target.

"Don't get your hopes up. If I can't love myself anymore, you think I'd be able to love you?" I question.

"We'll see," he says.

I guess we will.

He stands up and helps me up before handing me my toothbrush. I take it and start to brush my teeth as he starts the shower and steers me inside when I'm done. He follows behind me.

My mouth goes dry at the sight of him completely naked in front of me, and when I realize that I'm naked as well, I spin around so that I'm facing the wall. I don't want him to see my body again. That was an embarrassing situation that I don't want to repeat again. But he's not having any of that. He steps up behind me and his hand snakes around my stomach as he caresses the skin there, causing me to inhale sharply.

"Don't hide from me," he whispers in my ear.

"It's ugly. I'm ugly," I mumble with my head bent down.

"You're not ugly. You've never been ugly, baby."

"Liar," I whisper as emotion tinges my voice.

He turns me around to face him again and then he lifts my chin up so that I'm looking at him. Before I can even say anything, his lips crashes down on mine. He backs me up against the shower wall with our mouths still locked together and I shiver when the cold wall touches my back.

A second later, I feel his hand run up and down my leg before he slips them between my thighs and straight

between my pussy lips. His fingers glide through my already slick entrance and I pull back from his lips, looking up at him and breathing heavily. A groan slips out of me when he finally pushes two of his fingers inside of me.

"You're so wet for me as always, baby," he tells me, giving me a devilish smirk.

"That doesn't mean shit. I'm sure if someone else was playing with my pussy it'd be wet too," I grumble at him. I don't feel like letting him have any power over me right now.

"Cute but this pussy is mine and *mine* alone. I'm going to use your body against you to make you fall in love with me. I'm never letting you go, not now," he says with conviction in his voice.

"You're despicable and that isn't fair. You desecrated me, and you expect me to just fall in love with you now?" I ask him.

"Perhaps you're right, but I always make sure I get what I want. So yes, I will make it happen somehow."

"Maybe that's what your problem is." I sigh. "You don't care who you hurt in the process of getting what you want."

He doesn't say anything. He just taps my ass and lifts me up into his arms. I have no choice but to wrap my legs around his waist. He walks us out of the shower and into my room before lying me down on the bed, both of us still wet from the shower and soaking the sheets, but he doesn't seem to care.

He pulls me to the edge of the bed and then spreads my legs. Kneeling on the floor, he uses his fingers to pull my

pussy lips wide open for his viewing pleasure before he's diving in with his whole mouth on my pussy.

A scream rips out of me at the intensity of how good all of this feels, as he licks and sucks on my pussy before putting pressure on my clit. He nips and sucks at my flesh and I get wetter from his ministrations. I can't think of anything else but this feeling as he strums my body to his own tune.

If there's one thing he's good at, it's using that tongue of his. He moves his mouth to my clit again and sucks it hard as he pushes two fingers into me at the same time, and then he starts to pump them in and out of me. I'm so wet and hot, my body burning up with the pleasure. I can hear the squelching sounds my pussy is making as he keeps fingering me. A few seconds later, I scream as I squirt my juices right into his mouth. He drinks it all down.

"Delicious," he says when he finally moves his face from my pussy and crawls up my body. I move further up the bed and spread my legs for him. He settles himself between them.

He kisses me again and I can taste myself on his lips. I look up at him dazed when he finally pulls away and looks down at me. *How the fuck can you still have feelings for someone that has caused you nothing but hell?*

Looking up at him, all I can think about is what it would feel like to be his completely. What would it feel like to be wrapped up in him without his hate? What would it feel like to be completely loved by him? To be so consumed by him? I wonder because I haven't a clue.

He takes both of my hands and places them above my head where he uses one of his hands to hold them in place. Then he uses the other and grabs his cock before positioning the head at my entrance.

He pushes into me and then moves so that he's now using both of his hands to hold mine. He starts to move in a slow rhythm, in and out, in and out, as he squeezes my hands with his. A groan escapes my lips because it feels so good.

Having his cock inside me is always the best feeling in the world. He kisses me again, and a tear slips down my cheek.

"Go faster," I cry and beg, but he doesn't do as I ask him. I feel the emotions well up inside me. This is too much.

"No. Let me love you," he whispers.

"Why are you doing this to me?" I whimper as he starts to pepper kisses on my face.

"Because I'm showing you what it's going to be like from now on. Now that you're mine, everything has changed. It's about time you see it firsthand," he tells me as he keeps thrusting slowly into me.

Right now, he isn't just fucking me, he's making love to me. It's the one thing I've never experienced with him before. But it's as beautiful as I imagined it would be, which is why I have freaking tears running down my face. He lets go of one of my hands and brushes my tears away with his thumb. The move is gentle, not at all what I'd expect from him.

He moves his hand to my clit and starts to rub as he keeps up his slow torture. A few minutes later, we're both

coming together as he kisses me.

After the intense lovemaking we just had, we both took a shower again to clean up and now we're in the kitchen. He's shirtless, wearing only a pair of sweatpants as he's making toast for me.

I'm just sitting by the island, watching him as he works on making the food. I didn't even think he knew his way around the kitchen.

When he's done, he brings our food to where I'm sitting and then he takes a seat next to me. He gives me a stern look that says I need to start eating. I take a small bite as he digs into his own food while still watching me.

"Eat more," he grumbles at me.

"I can't. I feel nauseous," I whimper.

"Toast is supposed to settle your stomach, so eat it."

I do as he says and eat all of it. By the time I'm done, the overwhelming need to throw it all up is overpowering. I hop up and out of my chair and run for the bathroom again. Once I'm done and clean my mouth, I look up to see Knox standing there in the doorway looking at me with an expression I can't name on his face.

I walk out of the bathroom without saying a word. He doesn't either. He just hands me a bottle of water and I take it and take a sip from it. Water shouldn't make me feel any worse, right? He walks us into the den that's on the first floor and he puts on a movie for us to watch. He puts on *Titanic*, which is my favorite movie in the whole world. I'm surprised to say the least.

"How did you know?" I question.

"I know a lot of things about you. You weren't the only one who was paying attention," he says.

I'm confused but I don't say anything. What the hell can I say? He lies on the couch, pulls me on top of him and throws a blanket over us. We both turn our heads in the direction of the television.

"I'm sorry," he whispers a moment later, as he places a kiss on my forehead and wraps his arms tightly around my body as we lie there on the couch.

I ignore him because he's sorry? He's sorry? He's fucking sorry and I should just forgive him so easily? Yeah, fucking right. The only reason I'm not putting up a fuss right now is because I don't feel well.

"I don't forgive you and I don't know if I ever will," I tell him honestly.

"Then I guess I'll just have to do everything I can to make that happen," he says with total conviction in his voice.

A sudden wave of exhaustion hits me and I close my eyes for a bit. I must have fallen asleep because when I wake up, it's to the sound of voices in the room. I keep my eyes closed so they won't know that I'm awake.

"Would you assholes shut the fuck up so you don't wake her?" Knox snaps quietly.

"Don't get your panties in a twist! We're being quiet," a voice that sounds like Ezra says.

"How is she doing though after you know, the whole hospital stint?" Asher asks.

"Have you finally come to your senses, dickhead?" Axel asks next.

“One, you’re not being quiet, dickhead! Two, she’s trying but obviously we have some issues to work through. I’m going to make sure she gets better somehow. I can’t lose her. Three, yes I’ve finally come to my senses, asshole,” Knox grumbles and I feel the vibration of his chest moving against my face.

Not wanting to intrude on their conversation anymore, and before he calls me an eavesdropper, I open my eyes and lift my head up, rubbing my eyes.

“Oh, hi there, princess. Looks like you’re finally awake,” Ezra says with a smile on his face. I don’t smile back though because I’m wary of them. I look up and they’re all looking at me with different expressions on their faces, but I don’t have the energy to examine them. I get up into a sitting position with the intention of leaving Knox alone with his friends, but he holds me back.

“Stay. Please? I want you to get to know my friends,” he tells me.

“The same friends that did nothing while I was being bullied every day in that horrendous school? The same friends that watched you hurt me time and time again?” I question, then turn to look at them. “I’m sorry, but it’s too soon. As a matter of fact, I don’t know if I’ll ever—”

I get up and rush out of the den and back up to my room. I slip into bed and curl up in a ball and just lie there. A moment later, I hear the door to my room open and then he’s on the bed behind me. I stiffen, prepared for him to attack me but he surprises me instead.

“I’m sorry. That was insensitive of me,” he whispers.

"I hate you. But why do I want you near me even when it still hurts so fucking much? Why? Why? Why?" I sob my questions out at him.

"Shhh," he whispers as he pulls me into his arms.

"I just want to die. You've made me hate life so much."

"I'll make you love it again," he whispers with his lips against my forehead. I'm not sure I believe him. I don't think that'll ever happen.

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CHAPTER

Thirty-Five

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RAINE

IT'S ONLY BEEN three days since the wedding.

Three days since the hospital incident.

Three days since Knox did a complete change on me. I still don't know what to make of that.

I haven't been to school in three days but I'm going today. I'm stressed about school and my grades even more now since I saw that I failed the last test I took.

I'm fucking drowning in despair and it feels like the weight of everything is crushing me. I need to get into any college at this point. I still want to get out of this town. That part of my plan hasn't changed at all.

It's Halloween today and I'm not even happy about it even though it's always been one of my absolute favorite holidays. In the three days that we've been home after the incident as I like to call it, things between Knox and I have been civil.

Actually, he's been a pain in my fucking ass!

I've been constantly giving him the cold shoulder because I'm still so full of hatred toward him. Right now, I

don't want anything to do with him but he's being unbearable.

I can't go anywhere without him as my shadow and it's getting annoying. He said it's because he's keeping an eye on me so that I don't get any more drugs while I'm out of the house. Obviously he knows what he's talking about since that was my intention. I feel like a fish out of water, not being able to take the pills to calm me the fuck down.

I can't even pee in peace without him there. He says he's just making sure I don't do some dumb shit like use something else in the place of drugs to get high or cut myself again. I mean, if I have to suffer through his overbearing ass for any longer, I just might slit my fucking wrist and let him deal with that shit.

The other annoying thing is that every single day, he sits there and watches me to make sure I eat. We've had some major ups and downs with that. The first few days I couldn't stop myself from throwing everything up, and then I'd go through some breakdowns and curse his ass out. But this last week, it's sort of gotten a little better. I'm starting to keep things down a little more, though it's going to take a very long time for me to get back to my old self, the pre-Riverside version of me. I have too much trauma to work through.

Mom calls every day. She's been enjoying her honeymoon. I pretend that I'm fine and enjoying Riverside because I don't want her to worry. I want her to stay happy. I'm honestly glad she's gone and not here to witness the disaster that is my life right now.

I'm trying to work through all my issues and I'm still wary of him. I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop. I can't get myself to fully let my guard down and that's made things awkward.

But he just bulldozes his way into my space and won't let me be away from him. He's also been making me sleep in his bed every night because he doesn't want us to be apart.

So yeah, he's been an unbearable asshole most of the time. I've been trying to work through some of my issues with his help and I won't lie. I'm still confused as fuck by his change and I'm still waiting for the disaster I know is coming. I know because sometimes you just feel these sorts of things deep inside your soul.

According to the website that I can't stay away from, people have been losing their minds, wondering where we were since neither of us have been to school after the wedding. There's a lot of speculation.

They don't know what's going to happen now. Hell, I don't even know what's going to happen and it's my life. Even though he's been here, I can feel him holding back somehow, which might be for the best. I still don't trust him. *Hating him had been easier.*

The asshole made it his mission to constantly be in my space today. People are noticing if the looks and whispers they were giving me was any indication. I don't know what to make of his behavior but I am all around exhausted, trying to figure him out.

I think that's why he forces himself in my space all the time. Whenever I get angry at him, when I remember those

things, he just fucks me. Obviously that's not good but what else can I do when the guy acts all possessive and obsessive now?

If I didn't know better, I'd think we were joined at the hip with the way he acts now. I'm not allowed to be out of his sight for too long or it's like some part of his brain disconnects and he goes all caveman.

Even with all that's going on, I'm worried about things. We haven't put any sort of label on whatever the fuck this is, but we're stepsiblings now. We're definitely not supposed to be fucking each other. That's the whole other issue that keeps me up at night.

I love him... I hate him...

And that's how it goes on repeat inside my head. I'm never telling him about the love part because he deserves to suffer and I'll make that happen somehow. Things have been bad, especially inside my head and I'm just itching to get high again. The feeling is so unbearable, it feels like if I don't get high soon, I'll literally die. But the asshole watches me like a hawk and I'm beginning to feel unsettled again. I no longer have the things that helped me cope.

I'm itching to get out of this town when the time comes. As much as I've developed feelings for Knox this past little while, I still remember that he hurt me. I've been living with that pain inside me all this time, and it won't go away. It's deep seated in my soul and it will take a miracle to get all the hurt and anger out of my system.

I walk into the hall and walk straight to my locker with my head down. I can still hear the murmurs and whispers whenever I walk by. I'm starting to think that'll never stop.

Whenever Knox is around, they keep their mouths shut but whenever he isn't, they find their bravery.

How fucking miserable must your life be to constantly be tearing someone else down on a daily basis?

Before I can open my locker to grab my books, I'm spun around and Knox's lips slam down on mine. I'm vaguely aware of the instant whispering and gasps around us as I kiss him back. I can't seem to control my hormones around him.

I can't believe that he just openly claimed me when we've just been back here for like half a day and I've been telling him how much I hate him every chance I get. What he just did is on a whole other level because now they all know that it's more than that.

"Now they know. You're not my secret and I want everyone to know that you're mine. Like I said before, you're everything to me now, baby," he whispers in my ear. He pulls away from the kiss and then walks away with the guys.

I'm still in shock at what just happened. When I look up, my eyes clash with Ivy's and she has fire in hers. Fucking hell, this isn't going to end well where she's concerned. This bitch has been the bane of my existence since day one. I don't know when she'll get it into her thick head that Knox doesn't want her cheating ass anymore.

"You're fucking dead, bitch!" she screams in the hallway filled with students as she storms off. Yep, that definitely won't end well.

My anxiety is through the roof now. I don't know what people are going to say or do now that Knox kind of just

made us an official thing? I don't know if that's what it was.

I rush into the bathroom and hurry into one of the empty stalls. I sit down on the toilet and try to calm my racing heart. I stop myself from having a panic attack since that definitely won't be a good thing for me. I'm sure they'll think I'm an even bigger whore now. Fuck my life. Can nothing ever go right?

I've just finally calmed myself when I hear crying from another stall. I don't want to see who it is but I want to help. Without thinking, I walk out of the stall I was in and knock on the door that the crying was coming from.

"Are you okay in there?" I ask in a calm voice so as not to spook the person on the other side. I thought about not helping but I've been where that person is right now, which is crying alone in the bathroom. In all that time, I wish someone would've just asked if I was okay.

Camryn doesn't come to this school and neither does Aiden, so I don't have any friends to help me through the school day. The only time I really get to see any of them is during the weekends when we're all off and even then we're not alone. Knox makes sure that he's with me then as well.

"I'm fine. Just go away!" the voice snaps at me.

"Sorry, I was just seeing if you were okay," I say.

"Well, I'm fine!" she snaps and I recognize the voice.

"Kinsley?" I question. A second later, the stall door opens and she walks out. Her eyes are puffy and swollen. She's been crying. "Are you okay?" I ask again, trying to be nice even though she dropped me like I wasn't anything to her.

“Mind your own fucking business!” she snaps irritably, and I raise my hands in a surrendering motion and begin walking backward. I’m not going to try with someone who clearly doesn’t want help or anything to do with me.

Now that I think about it, she’s barely been at school since I came back. I guess she doesn’t know what’s going on, but that’s her problem and not mine.

Once I’m out of the bathroom, I see that the hall is now empty. I look at the time and see that the bell rang ten minutes ago. Instead of going to class late, I decide to head to the library because I have one last chance to finish this paper. I walk in and head straight for the back of the library where I plan to spend the rest of the day. I keep my head buried in my laptop for the next hour or so until I get interrupted. I look up to see Knox standing in front of my desk.

“Hey, baby. I just came by to tell you that I’m leaving now for the game,” he tells me. “I want you to come with me,”

“I can’t,” I snap at him.

“Why not?” he questions.

“Because you’ve had me so fucked up this semester that I’m failing. I failed Smith’s last test. He’s surprisingly giving me until tomorrow morning to write a paper and hand it in so I won’t fail. So tell me again why I should come to your fucking game!” I snap at him. The emotional exhaustion hits me full force again.

“Fuck!” he grumbles and then runs his hand through his hair.

Oh right, I completely forgot that tonight is their Halloween away game. Him mentioning leaving for the game just now reminded me. Everyone is excited about it. Most of the school is going since it's just a few hours away. No wonder the lady behind the desk didn't ask me why I was skipping class. Now I remember it's because we didn't really have class today since everyone is excited about the game.

"I would stay with you but Coach will kill me if I miss this game," he says, like he's actually contemplating not going.

"Well I don't fucking want you to stay. I want you to just go away like I've been telling you for the past three days!"

"Not going to happen! But I have to go. Make sure you text me as soon as you get home, okay?" he demands and I roll my eyes.

"Yes. I will. Now go!" I tell him just to get him to leave. He bends his head down and gives me a kiss on the forehead before walking away.

I get lost in my work again and don't even realize that the time has gotten away from me. It's already eight p.m. when I look at my phone. I pack my stuff up and get ready to leave. It's dark outside when I make it to the parking lot and get into my car.

I start to drive in the direction of home and make it a few miles away from school when I hear a loud popping sound coming from my car and it swerves a bit. I grip the wheel tight to stay in control and then pull over on the side of the road. Thankfully, there's no traffic where I am right now.

I'm shaken up a bit because that could've gone wrong in so many ways. I get out of my car when my breathing is back to normal and walk around the car to see what's going on. I see that the two tires on the right side are flat.

Fucking hell! Of all the times for this to happen to me. I pull open the passenger's side door and take my bag out to get my phone to get an Uber home. Before I can even look into it for my phone, something hits me hard behind the head.

I let out a scream as I fall to my knees. The pain is instantly inside my head from the hit. I'm dazed for a second but when I manage to look up, I see two figures clad in oversized football uniforms and they're both wearing masks. My head is pounding and it's starting to feel like I'm going to lose consciousness. I try to keep my eyes open because I know this isn't going to end well.

"Well, well, well... if it isn't the little whore of Riverside Academy!" one of them spits at me. The voice is muffled because of the mask so I can't identify it. It sounds like a woman's and it's full of venom and hatred.

"I've been waiting for a long time for this," the other one says as they both advance on me. I try to crawl away from them but the first one that spoke grabs me by the hair and yanks me back so that my movements stop.

Another scream into the night air rips out of me from the pain. The second one moves to stand in front of me and kicks me in the stomach before slapping me hard across the face. The first one lets go of me and the second one begins to kick me nonstop while screaming at me.

I'm curled up into a ball on the road as both of them are kicking and assaulting me. My entire body is in unimaginable pain and I just wish it would all stop.

"You think you're so much better than everyone here, don't you? Well guess what? You're nothing and I'm just about to show you how much!" one of them screams at me as they continue to throw punches.

"You think just because the QB is showing you some attention that he cares about you? Newsflash, bitch, he's just using you! You mean nothing to him!"

I get another kick and this one lands on my face. I instantly feel the blood running over my busted lips and down my face. I'm crying and screaming, begging them to stop what they're doing but my pleas fall on deaf ears. My eyes already feel like they're swollen shut already and the agony I'm feeling right now is more than I can bear.

One of them—I'm not sure which anymore—rips my shirt off of me and then my leggings. I'm left in my bare bra and underwear. I start kicking and screaming and trying to get away but one punch to the head puts me out of it.

When I come to again, the one who is definitely a guy has my panties off and is thrusting inside me. I scream so loudly and for so long while trying to fight him off but he slaps me across the face to shut me up. Then he grabs my throat and squeezes while he's still thrusting inside me.

I try to kick my legs and claw at him but he's way stronger than I am. As I feel my breath being taken away from me, making it hard to breathe, I feel something break inside me. The last piece that existed inside me, that was

holding me together, finally breaks. I know that I'll never be the same again.

"Take what you want from her! Fuck the stupid bitch because she's nothing but a slut who deserves what's she's getting!" the one that's just standing there and watching says with contempt in her voice.

I twist my head to the side, not wanting to look at the person above me anymore. In the distance, I see headlights and I just stare at them.

"Shit! Someone's coming. We need to go now!" the first one says. The one that was on top of me curses and pulls out of me before pulling up his pants.

"You just got fucking lucky, bitch! But don't worry, I'll make sure to come back for you soon!" he snaps. He lifts me up by the neck and punches me right in the head before he drops me again and both of them run away.

The pain that explodes inside my head is too much for me now. I lay there on the side of the road in just my bra, with my body violated and broken, knowing that I'll never ever be the same again. The last piece of worth I had was just taken from me and now I have nothing left.

I hear the screech of tires and shouting but I don't have the energy to lift my head to look. Keeping my eyes open after all the hits to my head is taking too much effort, so I close them and feel myself slip away into the darkness as everything goes black...

TO BE CONTINUED...

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About the Author



Nikita is an introvert at heart who loves to procrastinate. She spends most of her time reading or watching crime shows because she hates to leave the house unless it's absolutely necessary.

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