

GARRON PARK

A person wearing a red and black racing suit and a white helmet with a red visor is sitting on a motorcycle. The motorcycle has a red and black fairing with a white eagle logo. The background is a dark, textured wall with blue and white paint splatters.

From Nothing #1

NORDIKA NIGHT

GARRON PARK

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to my soul sister, Sarah
because nothing is out of bounds

GARRON PARK

From Nothing Book One

NORDIKA NIGHT

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BEFORE WE BEGIN

Garron Park is an MM romance with all the angsty, aggressive, throat-grabby love. They start as enemies as well as rivals, and although that doesn't change, they learn to need and want each other as well. Reluctant acceptance is a big theme between these two hotheads!

While there is a bi-awakening/gay-for-you theme, there is no negative struggle with the shift in sexuality. The struggle comes elsewhere ;)

Not dark in theme, but harsh in lifestyle. Here are some possible content warnings:

- struggles of living close to/in poverty
- terrible parenting
- money troubles
- trailer park life.
- blood and fighting
- some violence
- a fuck ton of swears

- MM explicit sex scenes
- drug and alcohol dependency (not of a main character)
- a shady loan shark
- underdogs

Garron is a fictional town. Garron Park is a fictional trailer park. It is not meant to represent any other trailer park or the citizens and communities within trailer parks. It is completely made up for sake of the story.

This book is written in Canadian English, which just so happens to be fairly heavy on the extra letters within words, but we also use Zs more than Ss so do with that what you will!

/

—MADDOX—

LIFE WASN'T PRETTY, BUT that's what made it so fucking fun.

Devon's fist slammed into my jaw with a fury that'd been building our whole lives. A frenzy of adrenaline mingled with rage as I tasted the tang of my blood against my tongue.

This battle had been brewing since we were kids, and this might not have been our first fight, but it was the first one where I legitimately wanted to kill him. Rip him apart. Remove him from my life once and for all. *Eradicate him.*

No colour but red existed when he was near me, and whenever he grinned at me like a condescending prick, I barely heard anything other than the blood rushing in my ears and my subconscious telling me to knock him out. Take him down. Put him in place.

I spat blood on the muddy ground, wiping my face with the back of my wrist. There was a crowd now, but my glare stayed focused on him and all the rage he barely contained. Just like me. We were both one wrong move from snapping entirely. One wrong move from a night in prison. One wrong move from finally blowing up.

I knew we shouldn't be fighting at a time like this. There would be consequences if we got caught, but none of that mattered. While faced with Devon Sawyer, holding onto rationality was damn near impossible. I didn't even bother trying anymore.

He raised his fists while the sky opened, raining down to cool our tempers, but the crowd kept cheering, egging on the fight. On the balls of his feet, bouncing, ready for my next attack, he smirked at me with bloody teeth. The goading would come any second now; that was how it always went. He ran his mouth, my mind snapped, and then we ended up in a no-holds-barred, bare-knuckle brawl. Predictable, but consistent.

Consequences floated around in the back of my mind, but fuck me, they were hard to grasp when all I saw was the manifestation of him on his ass, bleeding and begging.

"You done, Maddox?" Devon taunted. "Forgot how easy it was to beat you."

My blood burned hotter and the red in my vision turned dripping and crimson.

"Shut the fuck up, Devon," Nate, his brother, shouted from behind, trying to break through the crowd to get to us.

I ignored Nate, zeroing in on Devon. Like fuck it was easy to beat me. I'd been putting up this fight all my life, and tonight wasn't going to be the night he won. I'd fight him forever just to prove that point.

When Devon smirked again, his blue eyes blazing with the same level of insanity I felt, I knew whatever bullshit he said next would be what set me off.

"You pissed she came to me? Did you really think she was—"

I lunged at him. With one hard punch to his cheek, my knuckles rang out with pain that sang like harmony. I tackled him to the ground, getting a fist to the ribs in the process, but the sting of it had nothing on the feel of him struggling under my body. *Keep fighting, fucker. You won't win.*

It wasn't even about the girl. It was *never* about the girl. It was him. Him and I, and the rivalry we'd been living in for as long as we both could remember. I pinned him down with my weight, my knees squelching in the mud, my fists pummelling him wherever they could land, and the rain mixing with the sweat on my forehead.

He blocked enough shots, but I was on a goddamn warpath, and I wasn't about to leave any casualties. My temper exploded, and whenever that happened, there was nothing strong enough to pull me out of the frenetic energy that consumed me and my tunnel vision.

Devon's knee slammed into my thigh, but I blocked out the pain and kept on hitting. I hated him. Fucking hated him. Hated him more than anything else in my life, and would even go so far as to say he was responsible for ninety percent of my suffering. He ruined me, made a goddamn hobby of it, and had no morals in his tactics.

"Enough!" Xavi snapped. My brother grabbed my flailing arms and tried to pull me off Devon. "Maddox! Stop this shit. Think about tomorrow," he demanded, trying to get a hold of me, yanking me off Devon while Nate tugged on Devon's arms.

But I couldn't think about tomorrow. Not when Devon was taunting me like that. Not when he was still smirking, trying to get free of his brother's hold.

"Calm the fuck down, Madd," Xavi barked in my ear, getting me to my feet and pinning my arms at my side. "Fuck, you're dumb."

I ignored him. I didn't care about being dumb, not when the prize was watching Devon bleed. My body bristled with the need to engage with him. I didn't know if it was some sick addiction, or if I was simply incapable of seeing reason when it came to him, but I hated letting him get the last word in.

Nate's arms were around Devon, holding him hostage, but that didn't stop the fucker from smirking at me a third time. Our fights might be bred from competitiveness and rage, but our methods of brutality couldn't be more different.

I was stoic, silent, and lethal.

Devon was playfully dangerous, loudmouthed, and sinister.

Together, we were worse than the storm brewing in the air, and this whole goddamn camp knew it. Why did we fight like this? It was just the hand we were dealt in life, and it'd been happening for so long that I think we needed it.

"Good try, Madd," Devon quipped, spitting blood. "Think about me later, bud. I'll be fucking your girl while you—" Nate cut off whatever the end of that bullshit was.

I sprang forward, not getting very far. Xavi held me back with another warning to smarten up. "You'll get disqualified tomorrow if you keep this shit up, Madd." He grabbed my face, forcing my eyes away from Devon. "Leave it be."

I hated 'leaving it be' because, once again, Devon got the last word in. When the sound of that prick laughing made my jaw clench, I tried to breathe through the grating edge on my nerves and keep my back to him. Nate called Devon a dick, and then Xavi forcefully steered me away from the muddy field, pushing me towards our trailer.

My brother's unmoving hand on my back was the only thing that kept me in check.

My adrenaline still pumped out of control by the time we made it back to our camp. But when the rain tapered off, leaving the air humid and the sky lit up with heat lightning, it wavered, giving way to all the cuts and bruises from the fight. My knuckles were bloody, my jaw ached, and my hamstring was cramping up like crazy.

"Why do you take his bait so easy?" Xavi asked, handing me a beer while shaking his head at me.

"He runs his fucking mouth, Xavi!" I cracked the beer open, not really wanting it.

"Yeah, and you run yours. You might not say a lot, but the shit you do say is meant to hurt. You two are like a pair of teenage girls, gossiping and bickering all the time just to get a rise out of each other. You just fight with fists instead of claws, and your insults are blunt rather than passive aggressive. You let him get to you, Madd." Xavi sank back into a broken lawn chair that buckled under his weight. "Don't let him in your head."

I'd tried that. Countless times. He was a hard asshole to tune out, especially because everything he said was solely directed at me. Devon knew how to push every button I had, and I hated him for it. It was instinctual now. This need to rise up to his challenge and start my own was the only way I knew how to survive around him. It was to the point where every move I made was to fuck with him or retaliate against him somehow. In all aspects of life. I hated it, but I didn't know how to live without it anymore. Somewhere along the line, it became the norm.

"Plus," Xavi went on, "you're fucking stupid. If the officials had caught you two, you'd be thrown from the race and banned from the track for a

month. Then you'd blame each other and fight about that, too."

I glanced at my dirt bike beside the trailer. Yeah, getting thrown from tomorrow's race would have crushed me. I didn't have much in life, but I had motocross, and without it, I'd lose any small sense of peace I'd ever found.

Of course, Devon had to be my biggest competition on the track, too. Fuck him, though. I loved this sport, and not even he could ruin it for me.

I chugged half the beer and washed away the taste of blood in my mouth. "You don't have to babysit me. Go party."

The real mind fuck of it all was that Nate and Xavi—my brother and Devon's brother—were best friends. How they managed to keep their friendship so solid without letting our bullshit ruin it was beyond me, but somehow, they managed. Our fights weren't worth their bond, and as much as I hated it, I respected it. I'd never had a friendship like that. Barely even had a true friendship outside the one I shared with my brother.

"Yeah, I will. Once you cool off," Xavi said, resting back in the broken chair and fanning his face. It was hot as hell tonight, but that fit the mood. "Why'd you get so heated, anyway? I didn't think you were even with that chick anymore."

"I'm not." Like I said, it wasn't about her. Was never about the girl.

"Then why let him taunt you with that shit?"

"It's him, Xavi! He has to take everything from me, and I'm fucking sick of it. I doubt he even likes her. He just does shit like that to show me he can. Just to piss me off."

"It works," Xavi laughed. "You're pissed off."

Yeah, I sure as shit was. Devon shouted to the whole camp that he was fucking my girlfriend. *Ex-girlfriend*. But he made it look like he stole her

from me. He always managed to make me look pathetic, and I was sick of feeling inferior to him just because he had the bigger mouth.

“Nate said Devon doesn’t even hook up much,” Xavi said. “That it’s all a front.”

“A front for what? Just to piss me off?”

“Yeah, so stop letting it.” My brother stood up, set his beer down, and gripped my shoulders. “Come on, Maddox. We’ve got enough shit to worry about in our life, yeah? This, right here, motocross and the camp, is supposed to be our happy place. Enjoy it instead of letting Devon in your head because, come tomorrow night, it’s back to the shitty reality we call life.”

I sighed. He was right. These weekends away at the track were the best part of our lives. Once we left camp and went back home, it’d be right back to shit jobs, money problems, a dead-beat dad, a wino mom, and the realities of being from Garron. A town where no one ever won.

“Alright,” I relented, nodding. “Sorry. Go do shady shit and stop worrying about me. I’m gonna swim and go to bed anyway.”

Xavi smiled, tossing his empty can at me. “Stay the fuck away from Devon tonight, Madd. Promise?”

Asshole. “Promise.” I gave him the double bird and watched him disappear down the path.

Grabbing a towel and a bag of chips, I headed for the beach. I knew a spot that would be empty right now, and emptiness was what I sought. The main beach would be a party place tonight, but I’d been coming here long enough to know all the deer trails to the smaller, private sections.

The path was dark, but I was okay with that. It gave me the sense of solitude I needed to be alone with all the thoughts in my head. I needed to

sort my mind out before the race tomorrow. Devon might rile me up, piss me off, ruin most things in my life, and taunt me until I was crazy, but motocross was still mine.

There was nothing like feeling the rev of an engine between my legs, knowing I had enough control of it to make it do what I wanted. With a hard path and a ton of obstacles before me, it was one of the only areas of my life I felt competent. I had the skills, the strength, and the confidence to tackle the track, and knowing that made me feel better about myself.

Sure, Devon had those skills, too, but he couldn't touch me out there. His loudmouth had no purpose when I couldn't hear it over the rev of the engine, and as an added bonus, I didn't have to see his smug grin behind his helmet. It was just me and my bike out there, ripping up the trail and conquering one thing in life completely on my own.

As I walked, crunching leaves and twigs on the path, I wondered why Devon would taunt me with my ex when he wasn't even hooking up with her. Well, if Xavi was to be believed.

Just to rattle me? If I was being completely honest, and despite the fact that it made me feel like an asshole, I only dated her because I heard Devon was interested. I could sit here and spout off all the despicable shit he did to me all day, every day, but I was no saint either.

I needed Devon out of my life before one of us went too far and one or both of us ended up in prison. It wouldn't be an uncommon life path for someone from Garron Park, but I didn't want that future.

Stripped down to my boxers, I waded into the warm ocean water. Life certainly wasn't pretty, but tomorrow would be.

2

—MADDOX—

FUCK, IT FELT GOOD to stand above that prick on the podium. Looking down at him, knowing I beat his ass on the track, reliving the four-hour enduro race where we were neck and neck for the vast majority of it, but I still won, was priceless.

What wasn't priceless was watching Devon and Nate pull into the trailer park in Garron, where we lived, to get laid into by their dad. Jim wound up and damn near knocked Devon out for not winning the first-place cash.

It wasn't really pity I felt for him—my dad had done the same to me—it was more like a mutual understanding. I knew what it felt like to be of an age where we were supposed to be out on our own but got stuck living this shitty life, taking care of our parents, who didn't care enough to take care of themselves.

It was pretty normal here. Fuck, I was twenty-five and Xavi was twenty-eight, and the two of us were still paying for our mom to live in this shit box of a trailer so she could drink her wine and take her pills safely rather than whoring herself out for her addictions. We were still under the thumb of our dad, who lived in a different apartment in town, but claimed we owed

him the money. Paying him was easier than the aggression and the gaslighting, so even though I felt good about winning first place, the pride was all I'd get. The money would go straight to him.

Devon, on the other hand, wasn't even granted the pride of placing second. He took the beating, the ridicule, and the embarrassment for second place. Nothing hurt worse than the whole park seeing you get your ass handed to you by your dad at twenty-five years old. And it hurt Nate worst of all; he had to stand off to the side, held back by their dad's redneck friends, watching his younger brother get hurt.

"Come on, Madd," Xavi said, nodding at the gas pump in my hand. "We're all topped up. No point in watching that shit."

I saddled the pump and put the cap on the truck's tank. Yeah, no point in watching, because if Devon hadn't popped the clutch too early, it'd be me getting that beating.

I tried not to look in the rearview mirror as we pulled out of the station and across the road into Garron Park. That asshole made my life a living hell, and I knew I shouldn't feel bad for him. It's not like he didn't deserve it.

But not like that.

Why did I feel bad? He wouldn't feel bad if the roles were reversed. He'd watched me get hit by my old man time and time again, and never once had I witnessed any sort of remorse or sympathy on his face. Not even when we were kids. Maybe it was because he got it worse, or maybe it was because he hated me, but the reason didn't matter.

Devon Sawyer was all cocky smirks, smug grins, and scowls for me. Nothing else. So fuck him. Fuck his dad. And fuck the beating he was enduring. He'd live.

“Nate will take care of him,” Xavi said quietly, almost as if he didn’t know if I needed or wanted to hear it.

“I don’t give a shit.” I gave half a shit, but that was only because I knew the shame he was currently feeling. It wasn’t right that we were stuck in this life—all of us—but I shouldn’t have to feel guilty for winning. I needed the money just as much as he did.

As we pulled into Garron Park, I noticed Devon’s mom sitting on the front porch of their trailer, looking dazed and confused. I hoped someone had been taking care of her while Devon and Nate were gone all weekend. She wasn’t well; something was mentally wrong with her, but again, they’d probably never get answers because...who could afford that kind of care around here? There were programs and government-funded facilities, but the waitlist to get into them was as long as the remainder of her life.

Not everyone from Garron Park was a piece of shit, so chances were good that someone had been keeping an eye on her. And while they were at it, I hoped someone had checked on our mom. There was always the chance of coming home and finding her dead from an overdose or completely trashed from a wine binge. As much as I didn’t want that to happen, I’d long since stopped trying to pause my life for her. If she didn’t care enough to help herself or didn’t have the capacity to do so, I couldn’t always play her hero. It was late evening on Sunday, so there was a good chance she was already a few bottles deep by now anyway—if she was still alive.

“You wanna lie to dad?” Xavi asked as we pulled into our lot. “Tell him you only won half?”

We didn’t have much parking space at our home lot, so the trailer we stayed in at the track stayed there full time. Sometimes, we pulled it from

track to track, but other times, we just stayed with someone else. It was give and take in this world.

“He’d have looked up exactly how much the pot was,” I scoffed, undoing my belt. “Just give it to him so we don’t have to deal with him. I’ve got extra shifts this week on the rig.” I handed him the envelope of cash from winning.

“I’m working doubles a few days, so maybe next weekend you can keep the pot.” He looked at me. “We’re almost set up to get the fuck outta here, Madd.”

“Yeah.” I met his green eyes that matched mine. “Almost.”

Not even close to almost. We’d been hunting a certain level of income for years, and we were still stuck chasing it. At some point, we just decided that if we had enough for a few months’ rent, some food, and to keep the truck, we were set. So I guess that’s where we were. Almost there.

Except we weren’t, because all the extra we made went to an account to save up enough to get Mom into some sort of rehab place she didn’t want to go to. If we could get her taken care of, we’d be able to leave Garron Park and the rule of our asshole dad. He wasn’t as much of an asshole as Devon’s dad, but he was a junkie cunt who manipulated us, and that was bad enough.

All I knew was that if we didn’t run soon, we’d end up living and dying in this shitty trailer. I didn’t even need to run from Garron; we just needed to break the control our parents had on us and our lives. Those were the shackles of our life. Our parents and money. We needed to run towards our own lives, even if they were shitty.

“Wait, I thought she was with Devon,” Xavi said, nodding to the front step.

“Jesus Christ,” I groaned, hopping out of the truck. “You going to dad’s now?”

“Might as well get it over with. Go easy on her, Madd. It’s not her fault she’s trapped between your bullshit with Devon.”

Debatable. It was partially her fault. I walked up to the front porch as Xavi pulled out, looking at the girl who Devon taunted me with.

“What’re you doing here, Julie?”

She stood up, dress dirty, flip-flops falling apart, hair curled. “I didn’t hook up with him, Madd. You have to believe me.”

After what Xavi said at the track, I did believe her, but that didn’t change the fact that she went to him instead of me—her boyfriend at the time. “It’s fine. We weren’t going anywhere anyway, right?”

“Why not?” She backed up the steps as I climbed them. “We have something, don’t we? We were doing good.”

Yeah, until she ditched me for Devon Sawyer. “We were fucking. There wasn’t much more to it than that. You told me you’re leaving in the spring anyway, so what’s the point?” I pulled open the front door of the double-wide, letting out a huff of relief to find Mom passed out but clearly breathing. I kept walking towards my closet of a bedroom, Julie hot on my heels.

“Yeah, but we could still spend the summer together. We have good sex.” She wrapped her arms around me from behind, lowering her hands down my abs to fondle me.

We didn’t have great sex, but I let her touch me for just a second before pulling her hands away. We wouldn’t both fit in my bedroom. There was a sliver of floor space, and the rest was taken up by a double bed, a dresser, and a nightstand. The only light came from a small window on the far wall.

Turning to face her in the doorway, I grabbed her hands and held them between us, stopping them from wandering. Now that she'd betrayed my trust, whatever interest I had in this thing was long gone. I hadn't even had that much investment in it to begin with, and the sex had been basic and pretty predictable, to be honest. I was in a sex rut, so that wasn't all on her.

"I gotta work all summer anyway, Jules. I'll be away at the track on weekends, and pretty much working whatever shift I can get during the week. I just don't have anything left in me."

That was the honest truth. It was exhausting being me, and other than motocross and my brother, there were no lights at the end of my tunnel.

"This is about Devon, isn't it?" she asked, getting annoyed. "I didn't sleep with him!"

"Yeah, but you tried to." I dropped her hands.

She crossed her arms. "Neither one of you is ever going to be happy. All you care about is fucking with each other and outdoing each other. It's getting pathetic."

Yeah, it really was. "I know. Sorry."

I was too tired to have this conversation. I needed to check on my mom, keep an eye out the front window to make sure Devon and Nate survived their dad, and worry about Xavi going to meet our dad.

"I'll let you cool off, but we're talking about this when you aren't so..." She shook her head. "I'll come by tomorrow."

I was about to tell her not to bother, but she wouldn't listen anyway. She slammed the door on her way out, and it didn't latch, letting in a swarm of bees she'd stirred up on the front porch. Awesome.

Taking the burnt-out cigarette from between my mom's fingers, I put my hand in front of her nose to make sure she was still breathing, grabbed her a

glass of water, and hid the lighters from her. We didn't need a burnt-down trailer if she was going to spark up another smoke when she woke up.

It was barely after dinner, but I had to get up well before the ass crack of dawn for work tomorrow, so I crashed into bed, trying to shut myself off.

Nope. I climbed right back out of bed and checked the home phone for voicemails. One of the neighbours called to say they brought Mom home on Saturday night, and the shift manager on the rig called to say my morning shift got cancelled, but there was an afternoon one available. I called him back to say I'd take it and decided I needed to sleep anyway.

I crashed.

Until someone banged on the door hours later.

"Shut the fuck up," I grumbled into my pillow, seeing the alarm clock in my peripheral. It was two in the morning. Who the hell would be at the door? It was probably one of my mom's drinking buddies.

The banging didn't stop. It grew more frantic and insistent, so I climbed out of bed for the second time, my eyes blurred as I tugged the door open.

They cleared pretty fucking quickly.

"Hey," he said without any bite to it. "Is, uh, my brother here?"

God fucking dammit.

I wasn't supposed to feel sorry for him. Devon stood in my doorway with a cut on his cheek that definitely needed stitches, a bloody nose, two swollen eyes, and way, way too much blood dripping down his chin and neck. His t-shirt was ripped, and I could see a few splotches of blood soaking through the fabric by his stomach and chest. Even his damn shoes were bloody, and his blond hair was crusted with dried dirt and blood.

Devon kept his eyes cast downward, completely out of his element for coming here—to his rival's house—looking for safety in his brother. This

must have been the most desperate I'd ever seen him because I knew, I just fucking knew, he wouldn't have risked coming here if his situation wasn't dire. He glanced behind him, and then back at his feet.

"No," I answered, but stepped aside so he could come in. "You need something?"

"No," he mumbled. "I'll just..." He trailed off as his dad's car pulled down our lane.

"Get the fuck in here, asshole." I grabbed the front of his shirt and tugged him through the door, slamming it shut behind him.

I pressed my face to the small window in the door, watching his dad cruise the narrow streets. He had a flashlight pointed out the driver's side window, looking for Devon.

"He do that?" I asked, without looking at him.

Devon didn't answer, but he didn't need to. Of course he did that.

"Shit, he's stopped out front." I watched, waiting to see what he'd do. "He's coming." I spun to face him. "You wanna hide or some shit?"

Devon swallowed, looking like he was going to deny me. So I ignored how pale he was, and shoved him into the kitchen area, glaring at him just as his dad started banging on the door.

"Just bend the fuck down and stop being a dick. Hide!" I snapped at him.

"Fuck you, Maddox," he snapped back, but when his dad's fist banged again, he crouched down to hide behind the counter.

My mom could sleep through a bombing when she was wine fazed, so she didn't even stir when I ripped open the door in nothing but my boxers. "What?"

Jim Sawyer was the worst kind of asshole. He swayed on his feet, clearly drunk, and planted a palm on the doorframe for balance. "That boy of mine

here?”

“Why the fuck would he be here?” I tried to close the door in his face.

His palm hit it. “You see that little prick, you tell me,” he slurred.

“He’s not dumb enough to come here.” It was no secret that we hated each other. “Nate ain’t here either, so fuck off.”

When Jim just stood there, amping up to something, I braced myself. I wouldn’t put it past him to take a swing at me, so I circled my hand into a fist in preparation.

Jim glared, and I glared right back. He could get fucked if he tried to come in here. “Tell Nate he better get his brother home by tomorrow or there’ll be hell to pay.”

“Yeah, whatever.” I closed the door, slamming his fingers in it. He cursed me, but he didn’t bang again. I stood there, listening to him breathe on the other side, waiting for his footsteps to tell me he was leaving.

Finally, he stumbled down the steps and his car drove off.

Now what was I supposed to do with Devon? He couldn’t go back out there while his dad was tearing up the park looking for him, but I didn’t know if he’d drop his pride enough to stay here.

“He’s gone,” I said, giving him the decency to come out of hiding without looking at him. “Anyone see you come here? Because he’s going door to door.” Which would piss people off, and sooner or later, someone would knock him out.

For someone who ran his mouth all the time, Devon was eerily quiet. I walked into the kitchen to find him clutching his side, struggling to stand up, trying to hide his pain.

“Fuck,” I groaned. “What’d he do?”

“I’m fine,” he insisted.

This was karma. Throw the person I hated most in the world right at me, in the middle of the night, bloody and in danger of dying. Karma, you fucking bitch. I grabbed Devon's arm and hauled him upright, trying to get a look at where all the blood was coming from.

"Take your shirt off."

"I don't need your fucking help," he hissed at me.

"Yeah, sure looks like it." I rolled my eyes. "Take it off so I can see."

After an eye-war that he lost, I watched him grimace and groan as he tried to take it off. I knew he wouldn't want my help, so I let him do it on his own until it got stuck on his head. I pulled it the rest of the way off, and then my blood burned my veins like never before.

"Did he fucking stab you?" I tried to move his hand from his side. "You need the hospital!"

"I can't afford the hospital. Plus, he'll look there to make sure I don't go." He covered his side again. "Just...do you have a bandage or something?"

A fucking bandage? Was he kidding me? He needed a whole ambulance bay. "In the bathroom," I said anyway. "Come on."

It wasn't big, but it had the best light in the place. I got him sitting on the edge of the small tub and then pulled out the first aid kit. When my mom wasn't a drunk deadbeat, she worked at the hospital as a cleaning lady, so we had a fuck ton of medical supplies. She was a bit of a kleptomaniac when it came to first aid products, so I thanked her for committing that particular crime. Most of the cabinets and drawers in our house were bursting with this shit.

"You don't have to help me," Devon spat. "Just give me a bandage and I'll go."

Yeah, talking wasn't going to get us anywhere. So, without saying anything, I fought him every step of the way as I tried to pry his fingers from the wound on his side. It was still bleeding, but I wiped away the excess to get a better look. Kneeling in front of him, I took a hot second to remind myself I'd never be in this position again and looked at the wound.

"It looks...alright. I think it's just a bad flesh wound. Nothing vital," I said, not giving a shit if he cared. I needed to talk through this. Weird for a guy who didn't love to talk, but this was already the weirdest night of my life, so no shame in making it weirder. "Still pretty deep, though. Hold this." I put a strip of gauze over it and put his hand on top to slow the flow while I looked at the rest of him.

He had a shallow cut on his chest that was already clotting, and his cheek definitely needed some attention, but there was still glistening blood coming down his neck.

"Where the fuck is this blood coming from?" I followed the trail up to his hair.

"He...it was a bottle." Devon's eyes met mine. Whatever sort of truce this was, neither of us liked it. He looked away quickly, and I focused my attention on his head so I didn't have to see the shame in his eyes.

That prick smashed a bottle over his own son's head and tried to stab him in the side? Jesus.

"Lean your head back." I turned on the water, needing to wash some of this away so I could see better. "I can't see shit."

"You don't have to fucking do this," he said, but he grimaced as he leaned back.

I washed the blood from his dark blond hair, watching the red-tinged water circle the drain. When it turned mostly clear, I used a towel to wash

his neck and chest off, all without saying anything because...this was just too damn strange.

“It’s a good gouge,” I said once I found the source of the cut in his hair. “And there’s glass in it. This is gonna hurt.”

He cleared his throat. “Just do it.”

“You want one of my mom’s pain pills?”

“No.”

“Whiskey?”

He hesitated, then said, “No.”

I got it. Understood it. We didn’t want to become our parents. I headed to the kitchen for the bottle of cheap whiskey anyway, setting it on the closed toilet lid in case he changed his mind.

“You aren’t him,” I said, hating myself for saying it.

Devon didn’t comment on that, and I was still hating myself for saying it. Moving on, I got to work picking glass from his head. Once it was half-ass cleaned, to the best of my ability, I held up a medical suture kit and some medical tape. “You want stitches or tape? Not sure how well the tape will stick, but there’s medical glue, too, if you want.”

“Is it bad?” he asked, looking at both options.

“Yeah.” No point in sugarcoating it.

“Can you stitch?”

“What person in this park can’t stitch?” We’d been tending to our own injuries since we were kids. I couldn’t promise it would look pretty, but I know how to pull skin together, tie a knot and stitch it tight.

He sighed and then nodded at the suture kit. Then he spun the top off the bottle and took a long drink. To his credit, he didn’t make a damn sound as I added four stitches to his skull. I’d have to check it out tomorrow, and

maybe bring him to Angela's down the path to make sure I'd done it right, but it looked okay. I got to work on his side next. Devon drank a few more swallows as I added five stitches to the thing that looked like a stab wound. I let him look at it before I put a pad and tape over it, but he didn't offer more than a subtle nod. He didn't complain, either.

"Am I done?" he snapped, impatient.

"No." I set down the needle and thread. "Your face is all fucked up."

"Your face is always fucked up, Kane."

"Yeah, well, fuck you." I bent down, right at eye level with him. "You want help or not? I think it's just this one." I pointed to his cheek. He had a bunch of other cuts and scrapes, but that one seemed the worst.

"Why are you helping me? I don't deserve it." He took another drink.

"No, you don't," I agreed. "But I get what it's like. The dad shit." I watched his eyes shift to my jaw where there was a line of twenty stitch scars from my dad; it'd been an accident bred by a drug high, but still. "Was it about the money?"

"Yeah. Other shit, too."

I held up the butterfly strips, and he nodded. I never even knew medical glue was a thing until a few years ago. Xavi opened up an old wound, and Mom had brought it out. Worked like dissolving stitches; held the skin together and then disappeared on its own. I squeezed a line on the cut and then pinched his skin together. I added the butterflies over top to keep it all together.

"Can you go back there?"

Devon screwed the cap on the bottle as I kept my fingers on his face. "I just need to find Nate."

“He’s with Xavi somewhere. You can use the phone and call. Hold this.”
I put his fingers over mine.

I’d keep saying it all night but...this was so weird. Like beyond weird. Had we ever had a civil conversation? Was this even civil? Was it even a conversation?

I took my own swig of whiskey and grabbed the cell phone we all shared. The number of the other phone we had some minutes on was programmed in there, so I tossed it at Devon and left the bathroom, needing a minute to myself.

Was this really the same day I stood on the podium in first place?

I WAS EMBARRASSED, ASHAMED, and in so much fucking pain. Exhausted on top of that. It was hard to believe it'd only been this afternoon that I had to grit my teeth and bear the fact that Maddox won first place. Now, out of all people, he was the one who had stitched me back together. Why? Why did he do it?

My dad had been in a manic rage, and once I was in his clutches, I couldn't get out. I had to wait until he got drunk enough to get sloppy, and that'd been my only saving grace. He tripped up on a final hit, and I knocked him out. Then I ran like a fucking coward in search of the only person who ever made me feel safe. Ended up with Maddox instead. Irony at its finest, but I wasn't in the mood to appreciate it.

I pressed the phone to my ear and listened to it ring, still sitting on the edge of the tub. I couldn't even believe I'd come here, but I had no idea where else to look for Nate, and I knew I wouldn't be able to make it much farther than here in my current state.

"Madd?" Xavi answered the phone. It was almost four in the morning now. "You okay?" He sounded a bit drunk, and there was still a lot of noise

going on in the background.

I debated hanging up, but my brother was my last resort. “Uh, it’s Devon. Is my brother there?”

“He’s passed out. Want me to wake him up? You okay?”

I never understood why Xavi was nice to me when I literally made it my purpose to make his brother’s life hell. I couldn’t even understand their friendship or how it had survived all our bullshit over the years.

“Yeah, never mind. Just tell him I’m looking for him.” I wasn’t going to make Xavi drunk-drive my brother here. “See ya.” I hung up before he could say anything else, but the phone started ringing again.

Maddox showed up in the doorway and took it from me. “What?” He leaned against the frame. “He just needed the phone.” He looked at me, lying through his teeth for me for some reason. I wasn’t going to thank him, but I was grateful. “He’s fine. No, don’t drive. I’m telling you he’s fine.” There was a pause. “Yeah, fair point. Yes, I hate him, but I’m not lying. Okay, yeah...fine, see you tomorrow.” He hung up, then added, “Or today, I guess.”

I looked at the bottle in his hand, longing for another drink. I hardly ever drank, didn’t like that I was doing it now, so I looked away from Maddox’s understanding eyes. Could this night get any more crazy?

Maddox sighed. “You can stay in Xavi’s room for the night.”

I wanted to refuse, but where else did I have to go? If my dad found me in this condition, he’d kill me. Reluctantly, I nodded.

Some life I had. My rival was the only person I could turn to? Fucking hell. I struggled to my feet, wincing in pain as I got my footing, and followed Maddox to Xavi’s door.

“Fuck, there’s someone in there. Who the hell is that?” He squinted into the room. He checked his mom’s room next, finding someone else, and cursed about being in a house full of people he wasn’t aware of. I recognized the people in the beds, though. They were from the park, and they spent a lot of time drinking with Maddox and Xavi’s mom.

“It’s fine. I’ll find somewhere.” I had nowhere. No one. I swayed.

“You can’t leave like this, asshole. Nate will kill me if you die,” he snapped at me. “Fuck, you can take my bed and I’ll sleep on the couch with...my mom.” He cringed. “I’ll sleep on the floor.”

I looked at the floor. Outside would probably be cleaner.

“Take your bloody shit off. I’ll get you clean...sweats?” Like fuck was I going to borrow a pair of his boxers.

I didn’t have the energy to argue, and to be honest, my head got too dizzy to properly think. He led me into his tiny-ass room and left me to get undressed. Never thought I’d be in his house let alone his bedroom. Fucking surreal. It was slow going, but I got my pants, shoes, and socks off, my shirt already long gone. I’d not paid any attention to him being in his boxers this whole time, but when he came back with some clothes for me, I was glad to see he’d put some on. They weren’t even clean, but whatever. Nothing about our lives was clean.

Maddox’s mom was snoring and drooling on the couch, and as pathetic as it was, I knew snoring was a blessing. Meant she was alive and he didn’t have to put his hand there to check. Been there. Done that. With a pair of grey sweatpants that didn’t really smell the best, I took my bloody boxers off and managed to get the pants on. They smelled like him. Fuck.

Maddox showed back up with the bottle of whiskey, some packets of crackers or some shit, and a glass of tap water. “I, uh, don’t think you’re

supposed to sleep long with a concussion. I'll have to wake you up every few hours."

"I'm not concussed." My head pounded and my vision pulsed.

Maddox clenched his jaw. "Look, this is awkward as fuck as is, so can you just agree to this shit until morning so Nate doesn't kill me for letting you die, and then we can go our separate ways?" He glared at me.

I knew I should be thanking him, so maybe an agreement was the best I could offer. I nodded and rolled my eyes at the same time. He pushed me onto his bed, and I slowly made my way to the far side, not sure where the fuck I was supposed to sleep in a bed that wasn't mine. His room was smaller than the bathroom, and with the two of us in it, there was barely enough air to breathe.

He handed me the water and stood there like an awkward fuck. "I'll sleep out there, but I'll come back to wake you up every hour."

I peeked out the door. There was nowhere for him to sleep. Jesus fucking Christ. "Just stay," I relented. "But don't fucking touch me."

"I'm not sleeping in a bed with you," he snapped.

"It's your fucking bed. I'll sleep on the floor out there then." I started to get up, but Maddox literally growled. At me. *Growled*.

"This is so fucked," he griped, sitting on the bed's edge.

We were big guys, and this bed was built for one medium-sized guy. We were too close for comfort, but I was too tired to put up much of a fight. I wondered if he knew he had me at a complete disadvantage. Was he enough of an asshole to use it as an opportunity to get back at me? I knew I deserved it if he did.

Maddox checked my bandages once more, then he huffed out a breath and leaned against the wall at the head of the bed. I laid down and closed

my eyes, feeling the heat of him beside me, but not having anywhere to move to create more space. Nothing about this situation was normal, and it threw me off that our dynamic had shifted so absolutely for one night. Only one night.

I should have taken a piss before I climbed in here, but I was way too lazy for that now.

“Don’t touch me,” I barked when his knee grazed mine.

“Then move the fuck over.”

I slammed myself into the wall, wishing to be anywhere but here.

“It’s four now, so I’ll wake you up at five. Do you have to be somewhere in the morning?”

My eyes closed, my head spun, and my stomach wasn’t feeling too hot. “No.” I didn’t get any work for tomorrow, which also pissed my dad off.

“I’m sure Nate and Xavi will be back in the morning, anyway,” he said.

His voice was boring as fuck and his droning was practically putting me to sleep. Just as I was about to drift off, I heard Maddox sigh and mutter under his breath.

“Fuck this town. Fuck your dad. Fuck my dad. Fuck it all.”

My sentiments exactly.



MADDOX WOKE ME UP at five, like he said, stayed awake for an hour, and then fell back asleep. I couldn’t really sleep much, and by now it was close to eight, and I was awake and uncomfortable in a tiny bed with him.

The pain in my side and the swelling in my face were throbbing so badly I couldn't block it out enough to sleep, anyway.

I knew I should get up and leave this place before Maddox woke up again; I didn't want to face him after that clusterfuck of a night. I sure as shit didn't want to have to thank him. But moving felt like torture, especially because Maddox was sleeping next to me, his knee bent and his thigh touching mine. How the fuck was I supposed to get out without tipping him off? I could barely move in this bed, let alone around his room. I'd have to straddle him to climb over and out.

The pants he was wearing were gone, and the prick just sprawled out in a light pair of boxers that showed way too many outlines. Why was I staring? I mean, mine seemed bigger, so there was that, but...I looked away.

I tried to move my leg so he was no longer touching me, but the motion made him stir. One hand stayed behind his head while the other came down to cup his junk. His dick twitched.

Fuck.

He gave himself a slow rub, his morning wood pressing into the palm of his hand. Well, this was fucking awkward. And so cringe-worthy. Every part of me cringed. Every part.

I moved my own hand, hoping my dick wasn't hard. Semi. Soft enough to justify it as morning wood. Okay, not too bad. I just needed to find a way to get the hell out of here without waking him up. There was a window beside his bed, but one, I didn't think I'd fit through it, and two, I could barely walk with all this pain, let alone climb out a window stealthily enough not to wake the bastard up.

I tilted my head to look at his face, just to make sure his eyes were closed. His dark lashes rested on his cheeks, his dark brown hair was a

bedhead mess, and his cheeks and chin were stubbled with a few days worth of growth. He looked less daunting while sleeping, but the sight of him still got me going. Everything this guy did pissed me off. He breathed—I wanted to kill him.

Maddox took a deep breath, and when he exhaled, it came out sounding like a low, sleepy moan. His hand lightly gripped his dick, drawing my attention. He rubbed it again through his boxers, and I swear to fuck it got harder...and bigger.

Why was I still looking? God!

My own dick progressed somewhat beyond a semi, and I inwardly hated myself for getting hard in Maddox Kane's bed. Staring at Maddox Kane. Listening to Maddox Kane moan in his damn sleep. I needed to get my shit together and get the fuck out.

But then the most fucked up thing happened. He groaned in his sleep, his hand simultaneously gripped and stroked his cock through the boxers, and he shifted his body as if he was enjoying himself. I watched it all happen, somewhat unaware that my hand palmed my dick too.

Okay, enough. This was enough.

But I couldn't deny the slight tug I gave myself when the light blue fabric of his boxers darkened with a small bead of precum.

What the actual fuck?

Time to fucking go. I started to lift my head, but the alarm he'd set on the phone went off and I snapped back into place, keeping my eyes hooded so he couldn't tell they were open.

"Ah, fuck," he mumbled, still half asleep as he reached for the phone. His hand moved off his dick, and I got the full outline of what was beneath those tight boxers. He shut the alarm off and lay back down, shifting until

he got comfortable. I could feel each movement, but his hand—thankfully—stayed away from his dick. I tried my best to cover my own, but I’m sure if he looked, he’d notice I was pretty hard. It was just morning wood. A reaction I couldn’t help. It’d go away as soon as I took a piss.

Shit. Shit. Shit.

Maddox straightened his leg so he was no longer touching me, and then he swore under his breath, adjusting his dick, finally noticing it was hard. Faster than I thought possible, I snapped my eyes shut as he climbed out of bed and disappeared.

Now what? What was I supposed to do? Get out? Stay here and pretend to be asleep? Try to deal with my hard-on? It’s not like I could get rid of it altogether, but I could tuck it in and hide in the borrowed pants.

That’s the option I went with. I did my best to angle my cock so it wasn’t obvious, and then I pulled the blanket up a bit and put my hand back in place as he walked back in.

“Sawyer,” he said. “Devon.” He shook the bed.

My eyes opened and I stared right at him, hopefully looking like I’d just woken up instead of having spent the past twenty watching him palm his cock. I blamed the concussion I swore I didn’t have.

“You gotta get up for a bit. It’s eight-thirty.” He wore black sweatpants now. Thank fuck.

I tried to sit up, but my head swam. Guess I wouldn’t have made a hasty escape after all. Maddox reached out a hand—the hand that had been on his cock—to help me. I swallowed, staring at it a bit too long before taking it and letting him pull me up.

Life was insane, and getting more cringey by the second. “Yeah, I should go anyway.”

“You should wait for Nate,” he said, standing there all awkward. “You can’t go home with your dad like...you should wait for Nate.”

“Why do you even care?” I snapped, my anger aimed at him even though I was pissed at myself for this whole ordeal.

I was over this nice bullshit. Yeah, he helped me when I needed it, and I was grateful, and I might have watched his hand on his dick, but so what? Now I was ready to go back to hating each other. That was comfortable. That was normal. I needed normal.

“Fuck, here we go,” he groaned, running his hand through his already fucked up hair. “Fine. Go. I don’t give a fuck.”

“Fine,” I agreed, shuffling to the edge of the bed. I stood up faster than I should have, swaying on my feet and feeling way too much like my dad. I wasn’t drunk or hungover, I reminded myself. I wasn’t like him.

Maddox reached out to steady me before I fell, and I swatted his hand away. Sitting back down seemed a better option than having him touch me.

“Fuck off.” It came out halfhearted, but it felt good to say. My head twisted and turned, my body ached all over, and my throat was so dry my voice sounded weird. Weak. It sounded weak, and I hated sounding weak in front of him.

“You’re such a dick.” He handed me the glass of water from the bedside table. “What’s your problem?”

I just got hard watching you stroke your cock. That’s what my fucking problem was. “Nothing. This isn’t...us. We don’t do this shit.”

“No shit,” he almost laughed. “So don’t be a stupid fuck and fall down. It’ll only make me have to take care of you again, and I’m sick of taking care of you.” I couldn’t tell if that was an insult or concern, but I hoped it was an insult.

“I never asked you to take care of me,” I defended. A drink helped my throat, and another eased the fire burning in the pit of my stomach. “Just give me a minute and stop hovering.”

Maddox threw his arms in the air and left me in his room. He closed the door behind him, which almost hit my knees. I hung my head in my hands, trying to get my bearings.

Yeah, he was right, even though I hated to admit it. I should wait for Nate. If I went home without him, there was a good chance my dad would be there, strung out on something, waiting to fuck me up.

How was I supposed to know he'd been relying on the first-place prize money to pay off some loan shark who'd been coming around? He was the parent! Shouldn't he have been the one handling his own debts? Like, I was twenty-five, for shit's sake. I was too old to be parented and too young to be taking care of my own parents. They weren't elderly. They were just shitty.

As soon as I had that thought, I regretted it. I'd thought it a million times before, and not once, ever, had it helped my situation. People like me didn't have the right to make wishes, hope for a better life, or think that I could come in second place and be congratulated for it. Nate was the only person in my life who gave a shit about me. How pathetic was that?

I heard Maddox talking to his mom outside the door. The walls in these trailers were cardboard thin, and the conversation made me want to hide in his room all day. What were the odds I'd be seeking refuge in Kane's closet bedroom?

The phone was still on the small dresser beside the bed, so I grabbed it and called the only number programmed in it. I didn't know if this was Maddox's phone, or if they shared it, but Xavi clearly had the other one.

“Hey, Madd,” Xavi answered.

I closed my eyes in shame. “It’s Devon again. Is Nate with you?”

“Yeah, man. Hang on.”

I waited while Xavi passed the phone to my brother. The call had that humming quality that told me they were driving. I hoped they were on their way back here because I didn’t think I could face going out there on my own. I needed my brother; I needed someone other than Maddox in my corner.

“Dev? What happened?” Nate obviously knew something was up if I was calling from this phone.

I’d never said these words in my life, but, “I’m at the Kane’s. Are you almost here?”

“Twenty-minutes. What happened, Dev?”

“I’m fine. See you soon.”

Between the beating I took last night, Maddox taking care of me, getting hard at the sight of his cock, and now hiding in his room like it was a safe place, I just needed Nate.

Real bad.

NATE WAS FUMING. HE paced along the living room floor of Andrea's trailer as she checked my wounds and Madd's job of fixing them.

Xavi was here, thank fuck, because I was in no shape to stop my brother from driving home to kill our dad. Not that I was opposed to the idea, but I wouldn't let my brother go to prison for me. Not like this.

"Calm down, Nate," Xavi tried to reason with him. "We'll come up with a plan."

"A plan to kill that fucker?" Nate shot back, his easygoing attitude gone for the morning. "Because that's all I wanna do right now!"

Andrea's finger touched my chin, turning my face towards her. "Who patched you up?" she asked.

I didn't answer because I couldn't. I couldn't admit it.

"Well, they did a good job. This one will leave a scar," she said, running the tips of her gloves over the cut Maddox filled with glue on my cheek. "Better than stitches, though. And this one on your head will need to be watched for infection. Otherwise, you look alright."

"Thanks." I tried to smile at her. I was dog-tired.

“I have some old pain meds from Kimmy’s broken ankle. You want them?”

I was in a world of pain, but said, “No. Thanks, though.”

“Take two, Dev,” Nate demanded. “You aren’t him.”

The same thing Maddox had said. Yet, I drank the whiskey he offered me and now I was agreeing to pain pills. I didn’t like it. I was liable to spiral at any moment. One day of pain meds, and no more. That’s all I’d allow myself.

“Just stay with us for the night,” Xavi suggested.

“Fuck no,” I snapped.

“Come on, Devon,” Xavi said, at least looking a little guilty for the suggestion. “You guys can’t go back home like this. Madd works tonight anyway, so he won’t even be there.”

“There’s no room there,” I pointed out. “What, are you two going to bunk together?”

Xavi raised an accusatory brow at me. “Where’d you sleep last night?”

“The floor,” I lied, and he knew it. “Nate can stay so you can stop him from killing our dad, but I’ll find somewhere else.”

Nate came to kneel in front of me while Andrea got the pain pills. “Devon, please. If I go home right now, I’ll do something I can’t take back. I’ll fuck up our lives.”

“Our lives are already fucked up.”

“Yeah, but at least we have each other. One night, and then we’ll figure this out. I’m hungover as shit, you’re all fucked up, and we both need to rest. Madd is gone. Just stay one night, yeah?”

“I’ll go to the trailer at the track,” I countered. “You stay with Xav.”

“Cops monitor the track. If you wanna go there, we’ll figure out how, but tonight, we’re staying at the Kane’s.” He leaned forward to kiss my good cheek. “One fucking night, Devon.”

Andrea handed me two pills and a glass of water. “They’ll help, hun.” She was some sort of hospital worker, but I didn’t know what kind.

Fucking hell. “Can I drink on these?” I swallowed them. If I was staying in Maddox’s house for another night, I’d need a damn drink. Nate would be there to make sure I didn’t overdo it.

Andrea laughed. “You’ll be a lightweight, but yeah.”

Perfect. I just wanted to pass out and forget about this whole day. I couldn’t believe this was happening.

My dad had beaten me before, plenty of times—that wasn’t even the first time he smashed a bottle over my head—but he’d never stabbed me. With a fucking steak knife, too.

“Mom’s at Kathy’s,” Nate said, hanging up the phone. “Her husband is there, so Dad won’t bother her.”

I sighed a long breath, glad my mom was at least taken care of for the night. “Guess we’re all fucking set then.”

“That’s the spirit!” Xavi laughed like a dipshit, and Nate joined in because the two of them together were fucking pathetic.



XAVI’S MOM WASN’T HOME. It was just me, Nate, and Xavi sitting around the living room, having a few beers and chatting. Well, they were

chatting. I was basically falling asleep with a pounding head, an aching body, and an on-again-off-again boner. I didn't want to talk about the latter.

My mind got all fucked up. I had way too many things to worry about, and I couldn't really process any of them properly at the moment.

I was supposed to work on the rigs tomorrow afternoon, but I still needed to figure out how to manage that in my current condition. I was all messed up thinking about registering for the race this weekend; I couldn't very well sit one out since I hadn't won the first place money last weekend, and we still needed more for rent. Plus, I loved motocross, and I needed something good to focus on.

I needed to figure out what to do about my dad. Was this going to be like every other time he whooped my ass, or was this time different? He took it farther than he ever had before. Hurt me so badly that I'd had to go to Maddox for help. To be fair to myself, I had been looking for my brother, but still. I ended up with Maddox, and that shit hurt. What the hell was I supposed to do about my dad now? And if I couldn't go home, where was I going to live?

On top of all that, my cock had been acting weird ever since this morning, and I wasn't sure why. I wasn't thrown that a guy turned me on; that shit had happened before. But Maddox fucking Kane? Yeah, that was the part that threw me off.

Was it just because I happened to witness him rubbing himself, or was it something to do with his body? Sometimes I got more attracted to a situation than an actual person, but never in my wildest dreams did I think that situation would include him.

Apart from the few years we were friends during childhood, I'd never felt anything more than hatred, jealousy, competitiveness, rivalry, and

frustration toward him. Attraction wasn't even on the radar, and arousal wasn't even close. Bizarre realizations were happening in my messed-up state, most of which I wanted to blame on the concussion. Again.

Like...

Why did I always go after a chick knowing he'd been with her? Why did the idea of that chick entice me more than actually being with her? Why hadn't I slept with Julie when she threw herself at me? Why hadn't I hooked up with anyone in months? Just to fuck with him? Just to show him I could take what he owned? Some other reason my brain didn't want to allow me to process?

I was a sexual person, but my dick had been broken lately. I seemed to like the idea of something more than actually doing it, yet this morning, watching Maddox and his hard dick had actually gotten me hard for the first time in a while. And it wasn't just morning wood like I wanted to believe it was. I was into it. Liked the look of it. Turned on by it.

I thought about it all damn day, which only made me resent Maddox even more. He already controlled all my actions, my mind, and my motivations, and I didn't want him to control my cock on top of all that.

"Sawyer," Maddox called.

Great. Now his stupid voice was in my head, too?

"Sawyer!"

Oh, just fucking great.

"Fuck, Devon. Wake up!"

My eyes shot open and Maddox stood over me in a filthy pair of work clothes, smelling like oil, mud, and cigarettes. "What?" I groaned. Why was he in here? Where was I?

"What're you doing in my bed?" he barked at me.

What? I was on the couch. I blinked around the dark room. Yeah, I was definitely in his closet of a bedroom, but I had no clue how I got in here. I was on the couch, dozing off, listening to Nate and Xavi talk about my dad and how sexy Andrea was, and then...nothing.

I rubbed my eyes and winced. They were both swollen and tender, and my right one was cut all to shit. My knuckles were even busted up, and they hurt, too. "Where am I?" I tried to sit up, but it was more monumental than I had the energy for.

"You're in my fucking bed," Maddox snapped at me.

"Shit, sorry." Did I seriously just apologize to him? Was it too late to take it back? I was half asleep and barely with it, completely out of sorts here. And I wasn't sorry at all.

"I'm going to shower," he said. "Be gone when I get back."

I watched him walk out, still trying to wake up enough to move. I didn't know what time it was, and the alarm clock blinked midnight at me, so the power must have gone out at some point. The only other light came from the small window, but it was half-covered by a pillowcase. I swung my legs over the side of the bed and sat there for a bit, trying to get my shit together.

Was this what it felt like to be my dad? Just fucked up, disoriented, and in pain all the time? I probably had to throw in one hell of an anger problem, but hey, with the way Maddox made me feel, I wasn't too far off.

My side was in so much pain that I started to sweat uncontrollably. The hotter I got, the more my head throbbed, my eyes squinting because the darkness was too bright. Shit, I was dizzy all of a sudden. Shaking.

How did my life come to this? I finished high school, told myself I'd help Nate save up enough money to get our mom into the right mental health place, and then we'd get the hell out of our dad's trailer. My story wasn't

that different from Maddox's, but that didn't make us kin. Everyone's story was the same around here, and there wasn't a lot of pity when anyone told it. It just *was*, and that was sad.

My life was simply one long string of bad luck and fuck-ups. Here I was, twenty-five years old, still stuck in my life, worse off than I'd ever been, and no closer to getting my mom the nursing care she needed. This moment hit hard, and it was all paired up with the sickness and the dizziness, and the sweating. There was no grand plan for me. This was the life I was destined to live, the path I was meant to follow, and the image looking back at me in the mirror was too similar to my dad. I tried so damn hard not to become him, but I had anyway. A lowlife with no purpose in life. A scumbag with no one and nothing.

The sound of the bathroom door opening snapped me back to reality. I pushed off the bed and steadied myself with a hand to the wall. Time to go.

"Jesus, Devon," Maddox groaned, appearing in the doorway. He looked at me with something like spiteful pity, and I hated him for it. I didn't want his pity, and he didn't need to feel shitty about giving it to me. "Have you showered or anything? Wounds clean? You look like shit." He stood there in nothing but a shitty yellow towel. "Did no one take care of you today?"

I had enough bite left in me to raise my middle finger, but that was about as much as I could muster.

Maddox grabbed my arm and pulled me toward the bathroom. I tried to shake him off, but my coordination was all messed up and I *was* starting to worry about an infection. Why was it so hot?

When he shoved me into the bathroom and pointed at the shower, I didn't move. There was no way I'd be able to get in there on my own, but shit, I wanted one. I didn't think I could work up the energy to undress.

I felt drugged. Drunk. High. Off-kilter and tipsy. Out of my element and out of control.

“One time, Sawyer. This will never happen again.” I didn’t know what he meant, but he took a step into the bathroom and closed the door behind him. This room was also too small for both of us; our energy filled the space with something toxic. It worsened when he pulled my shirt over my head. It was the same blood-crusted shirt I’d been wearing last night, and it damn near cracked as he got it off me.

“Don’t touch me,” I said, with no real bite. “Just...don’t—”

“Don’t what?” He tossed the shirt to the floor, jaw tight at the sight of my bruised and bloody torso. My bruises were black and blue, shades of yellow and green, and there was dried blood all over me. “Shower, so you don’t get any infections. I’ll change the bandages after and we can pretend this never happened.”

“I’m not getting naked in front of you, prick.”

“Fine. Do it yourself.” He turned around.

I tugged the borrowed sweats down, got my foot caught in the elastic ankle—who the fuck wore tight-ankle sweats?—and tumbled forward, right into his fucking back. My hands reached out to catch myself, and the shitty yellow towel slipped to the floor.

Maddox spun, grabbed my arm, and held me up, glaring at me.

“Hold. The fucking. Counter.” He put my hands on it, still glaring. So, I held the damn counter and didn’t look down, but I saw him moving, getting the towel back into place.

His arms kept brushing against mine because the space was so small, but there wasn’t much I could do about that without falling over, so I took a deep breath and dealt with it.

“Keep holding the counter,” he said, annoyed.

I listened for once, too tired to fight. He tugged one leg at a time, getting the sweats off my feet, and he hooked his hands in the waistband of my boxers but didn't pull them down. It was a question, and I was ready to answer it.

“Don't. I can do that.” I hoped my dick was soft.

He did it anyway, not in the mood to pick me up off the floor if I fell. He pulled them down my legs and I stepped out of them, looking at him in the mirror. He was doing his damndest to keep his eyes up, and I appreciated that little bit of respect for my privacy. This was even more awkward than last night or this morning.

Had I ever cringed so much in my life?

Reaching past me, he turned on the shower, his dark hair tickling my shoulder. “There's not much hot water, so hurry up. Can you stand in there?”

I hoped so. At this point, I had no dignity left, so this act became the final snap of pride I needed to hold onto. I debated asking him to get my brother, but by now, that might be more embarrassing than this was, so I thought it better to just let this prick keep helping me. It's not like he listened when I said no anyway.

“Yes,” I groaned.

He helped me get in, and then he pulled the curtain shut after making sure I held onto the wall for balance. The lukewarm water felt good, even though it stung all my cuts. I stood there doing nothing long enough for Maddox to tell me to wash and hurry up. He put soap on a sponge thing, which may or may not have been clean, and passed it through the curtain. I scrubbed what I could, losing the bandages in the process, and managed to

get some shampoo into my hair. I stopped that pretty fucking quickly when my fingers brushed over all the stitches he put there last night.

“Fuck,” I hissed at the sting of it. I broke out in a cold sweat.

“Is your body clean?” he asked, still annoyed.

“Ish,” I answered.

He turned the water off and handed me a towel. “Wrap it around your waist and sit on the edge.”

“Stop telling me what to do!”

“I’m trying to fucking help.”

“I don’t want your help.”

“Fine. I’ll get Nate.” He threw the towel at me.

“Ugh, wait,” I called him back. “Don’t wake him up. He has to work tomorrow.”

“Then cover your junk and sit on the fucking edge, yeah?”

With a desperate sigh, I got the towel wrapped around my lower half, held the wall, and practically fell into a sitting position on the edge of the tub.

Maddox didn’t say a single thing as he wet my hair, rubbed shampoo in it, and carefully avoided my stitches. It felt good, but I refused to acknowledge that, and when he used the shower head to rinse it all out, I closed my eyes so I didn’t have to see him.

“How do you know how to do all this shit?” I asked as he towel-dried half my head. I mean, sure, I knew how to tend to wounds, but he was better at it than I was, and I didn’t like that. He checked the stitches without answering me, put ointment on them, and then started on my side.

“I’ve done it for my mom all my life.”

Right. She was a bigger mess than I was most of the time.

“You should get some antibiotics from Andrea, just to make sure this isn’t infected. It feels hot.” He glanced at me before darting his eyes away, but not before I saw the flash of concern in the green of them.

“Yeah, alright,” I agreed.

Maddox smirked. “Alright? No telling me to fuck off?”

“Fuck off,” I half-laughed. “Better?”

He smirked again but kept his mouth shut. He wasn’t much of a talker, never had been. He was more the type to level me with a look rather than his words. We were opposites that way, but I couldn’t dredge up the energy to insult him too hard, and to be sorta fair, he didn’t really deserve an insult right now.

“I’ll leave tomorrow,” I said, having no idea why.

“Where?” he asked, sitting on the toilet. He grabbed a cotton pad and put something strong-smelling on it, pressing it to the cut on my cheekbone. “Home?”

I could smell the body wash over the astringent, and now I was all confused because we smelled the same. “I don’t know. I gotta work at noon. I guess I’ll figure it out after that.” If I could even manage work. I needed the money, but...

He opened his mouth to say something, shut it, and then opened it again. “Don’t go home alone. Don’t go there without your brother.” He shot me a quick glance and then avoided looking at me altogether.

“Why do you care?” I had to ask. This was so far from our usual dynamic that I was out of sorts for more than one reason.

Maddox leaned back, tossed the cotton pad in the trash, and grabbed a box of those butterfly bandages. “Because if anyone gets to kick your ass, it’s me. Alright? Can we just leave it at that?”

My lips tugged up into a crazed smirk, which hurt my jaw and cheek. “You’ve tried, Kane. It’s never worked before.”

“Bullshit,” he scoffed. “Can we not get worked up while we’re both in towels in my fucking bathroom? This shit is awkward enough.”

“As awkward as sleeping in the same bed?” I joked...sort of.

“Yeah, as awkward as that.” He stuck a few strips to my face and pressed his hand to my forehead. “You’re hot.” He straight up cringed. “Temperature hot. Feel okay?”

“I feel like shit,” I admitted. “Burning up.”

“How else?”

“Dizzy, hot, sick, like I might pass out.”

He watched me intently and came to some sort of decision. “I’m gonna put you in my bed and then run to Andrea’s. You need those antibiotics now. Come on.”

I seriously did not get this shit. Why was he tending to me like I was some damsel in distress? He hated me, probably as much or more than my dad did, yet he was here, taking care of me in the middle of the night. Again.

“What time is it?”

“One.”

He must be exhausted after a twelve-hour shift. “I can go to Andrea’s.”

“Don’t even try. Just save me the trouble of having to pick your ass up off the lawn. Towel on?”

I nodded. He pulled me to my feet, let me take a piss in private, and then got me onto his bed. I sat there while he grabbed a pair of pyjama pants and a t-shirt, and he came back a few minutes later wearing them.

“Lay down, but don’t fall asleep. I’ll be back in ten.” He pushed me back.

Once again. I found myself half-naked in Maddox Kane's bed. What the actual fuck had my life come to?

DEVON WAS PASSED OUT with his head against the wall when I got back from Andrea's. She told me to keep an eye on him, make sure he didn't run a temp too high, and to make sure he had plenty of fluids. She also asked me what the hell was going on that made the two of us work together. I hadn't really had an answer for that. She knew about what their dad did because she saw him today, but there was no good excuse for my involvement in it, so I left without answering. Just shouted thanks and promised to keep her in the loop.

The towel was still around his waist, but it was barely hanging on, so I grabbed a thin blanket from the couch and tossed it over his legs. It smelled like spilled wine, but he was too messed up to care. While he dozed and remained docile, I shoved a thermometer under his tongue, pressed his jaw closed, and waited for it to beep. Too hot. I panicked a bit.

"Wake the fuck up. You gotta take these." I shook his leg.

"What?" he grumped, trying to blink his eyes into focus.

He looked like shit. I could tell he was exhausted, barely holding onto reality, dozing in and out of whatever fever was burning him up. His body

was fighting against itself, wanting to heal but getting infected, and as much as I loathed the guy, I hoped the healing won. I didn't want him dying on my watch, especially if it wasn't by my hand. I wanted him to live to spite his dad.

I grabbed his hand, put the pills in his palm, and held out the glass of water. "Swallow."

I shivered for a second, not even sure why. I'd made that same command to a chick a time or two, and it didn't feel right in this context.

Devon popped the pills into his mouth, swallowed them and half the water, and then his head thunked against the wall. "You didn't just poison me, did you?"

Thought about it. "I gave you whatever Andrea gave me. Antibiotics and something for the fever. For once, I'm trying to save you. Don't get used to it."

He laughed. It wasn't the mocking, cruel sort of laugh I was used to from him, but I still didn't know what to make of it. It was a tired sound, weak and honest, and I resented it for changing my image of him. I never knew he was capable of a laugh that wasn't condescending.

"I'm so fucking tired," he said. "I can sleep on the couch." His eyes were closed and his words were slurred.

Now I was afraid of leaving him alone. If this fucker died in my bed, I'd never forgive him...or be able to sleep here again. "Just stay. I'll...keep an eye." I pushed him down and put the blanket over his lower half. He didn't fight me, mostly because he didn't have the strength, and I huffed my ass onto the bed and tried to ignore him.

This was so messed up. He was half out of it. If I stayed, would he wake up in the middle of the night all freaked out that I was there? Did he even

know I was beside him?

“Stay,” he whispered. I didn’t know what to make of that. “Maddox?” It was barely a whisper this time, and he wasn’t even fully lucid. I barely moved, not wanting to hear whatever he was about to say. “Thanks.”

Oh, fuck him.



THE SOUND OF MY mom’s voice woke me up enough to listen, but not enough to open my eyes.

“They’re sleeping together!” she whispered loud enough for the neighbours to hear. “What world did I wake up in? I swear I didn’t drink that much.”

“Shh,” Xavi shushed her. “Leave them be. Devon’s all fucked up, and Madd worked a twelve last night.”

“Yeah, but they’re in bed together!” Mom shrieked.

I heard my bedroom door close, Xavi dragging her away. Nate was laughing, so it couldn’t have been too late if he hadn’t left for work yet.

Great, now my mom and our brothers knew we spent the night in the same bed. I didn’t know what this would do to our reputation as enemies, but I’d make sure the rumours were squashed and that we very much still hated each other.

Turning on my back, I opened my eyes to blink at the ceiling, the morning sun too bright, shedding light on our dire and pathetic situation. Devon was beside me in the exact same position I left him in last night. So

much for checking on him every now and then; I passed out and didn't even shift until now.

It was Tuesday morning, and I didn't have to work today, but that didn't mean I had a free day. I'd have to get my bike ready for the weekend, make sure my mom was all sorted, and head to the docks to see if they had any shifts they needed to fill next week. I'd take whatever work I could get, no matter the shift. Full-time jobs were hard to come by around here.

The blanket I draped over Devon was pitched, his morning wood standing proud. Jesus. I should get up and let him deal with that.

Wait. What the actual fuck? I wasn't going to let him jerk off in my bed, and I couldn't even believe that thought had flitted through my mind. I gave my head a shake, thanking whatever dumb stroke of luck kept him asleep yesterday morning when I found my hand on my hard cock...while he was in the bed with me. He'd never let me live it down if he saw that shit.

"Are they friends now?" Mom's voice startled me, loud and clear.

Loud enough to wake Devon. "Fuck," he groaned, getting his bearings.

This was awkward enough as it was, so there was no point in pretending to be asleep. "Feel better?" I asked, my voice raspy from sleep.

He cleared his throat and shifted the blanket, trying to cover himself up. "Uh, yeah."

I looked over at him. He had a bit more colour in his cheeks, even though the purple and bluish-black bruises looked harsh. He wasn't sweating, didn't look overly pale, and his blue eyes had a bit more life to them. His dark blond hair was a clusterfuck, but it wasn't anything different from his usual look.

"Good." I sat up. "You ever tell anyone about this shit, I'll kill you."

“I don’t know what they are,” Nate said to my mom—I assumed it was her. “But it’s a good step.”

Devon huffed a breath at that. “Just so we’re clear, I still hate you.”

I nodded. “Good.” I climbed out of bed, made sure my dick was sorted, and looked back at him. “I’ll, uh, let you...” What? Jesus. I walked out of my room and closed the door behind me, ready for whatever verbal assault I was about to get from the rest of them.

I gave my mom, Nate, and Xavi the finger on my way to the bathroom, their taunts and jibes following me all the way there. I was in no mood to field their questions, so they could fuck off and wait. Hopefully Devon got up and took the brunt of it, so I didn’t have to deal with any of it. I took a piss, brushed my teeth, and stared at the shower, wondering if I even wanted one. Devon had been naked in there last night.

He was getting better, so there was no reason left for him to sleep in my bed a third night. More than that, there weren’t any reasons left for me to sleep in my bed *with* him. This shit ended now. We’d go back to our hate feud, life would go back to normal, and this two-night adventure would fade from our memories. I was a little worried about him going back home, but that was Nate’s department, not mine. My job taking care of Devon was over, and I wasn’t taking any more shifts. Nate could get him more antibiotics and handle their living arrangements. Not. My. Job.

When I came out of the bathroom, I headed for the coffee pot, stealing the last of it.

“Morning, baby,” Mom said, more chipper than usual. I knew enough to appreciate it while it lasted, but not to get hopeful about it meaning anything. Xavi had taught me that when we were young. Just because she

was temporarily sober didn't mean it would last. She'd be drunk or high soon enough.

"Morning," I grumbled, drinking the coffee black because no one thought to buy milk. We probably couldn't afford it anyway. Sometimes we had that powder whitener shit, and it was fine in a pinch, but black was easy so that's what I drank.

"So? What's up with you and Devon?" Mom pressed.

"Nothing. He got fucked up. I helped a bit. It's done now."

Nate cut in before Mom could ask anything else. "How is he?"

"He's fucked, Nate," I admitted. "And I'm not his goddamn babysitter."

"Madd," Xavi scolded.

"No. I'm sick of him in my space. I'm sick of watching out for him. That's your job from now on."

"Alright," Nate conceded. "I was here last night. You could have got me."

Yeah, should have. "His clothes are in the bathroom. Might wanna bring them to him before he comes out here naked."

Nate raised a brow. "You slept together naked?"

"Fuck you." I took my coffee to the front porch to get away from them all.

Now that the crisis was over, everything hit me hard. Why had I even taken care of someone who started and ended every day by ruining my life? He was a dick to me, fucked with me on the regular, and went well out of his way to piss me off. And I'd just spent two whole nights taking care of him? Why? What was wrong with me? I should have pawned him off on Nate and thrown him on the living room floor to sleep. That's what he

would have done for me, and yet, here I was, fucking *bathing* him. Pushover. That's what I felt like.

I needed Devon out of my house, my bed, my mind, and my life. I needed him to get back to despising me so I could go back to hating him. I was tired of feeling bad for him. Yeah, no one deserved to get stabbed by their fuck-up of a dad, so I pitied the guy for that, but nothing else. Every other shitty thing that came his way was well deserved.

Xavi came out with a mug of fresh coffee, pissing me off that he was patient enough to wait for the fresh pot while I drank this sludge in a hurry. He pulled up a plastic chair next to me and didn't say a word. Everything felt so...off. The day after I got into a brawl with Devon, I was sleeping in the same bed as him. How did shit like that even happen?

"Maddox..."

"Don't," I warned my brother.

"Things are allowed to change," he said.

"Nothing has changed," I snapped. "Nothing! He's still the same person who fucks up my life and makes everything harder for me. He's the same asshole who stole my job, my girlfriend, and my sport. He's still the same person who goes out of his way to ruin everything good in my life." My blood started to burn, and the red was creeping into the corners of my vision. "Nothing has changed. Nothing *will* change."

"And you're so innocent?" he asked. "Maybe this is the start of something better for once."

"It's not." Because it couldn't be. The only constant thing in my life was my feud with Devon, and to be honest, I'd gotten pretty comfortable in it. Mom waned and wavered in her sobriety, jobs came and went, Dad rotated through different personalities, and girlfriends never lasted. Devon was the

most stable thing in my life, and I didn't know how to cope with it changing, so I refused to let it. Sure, I messed with him too, but he was the root of it, and I had no problem placing that blame on him.

"You two are idiots," Xavi huffed. "You get off on pissing each other off. Why?"

"I don't get off on it, Xav. I hate it. It's just all I know with him."

"Then change it! If you hated him so much, you wouldn't have helped him the past two days. Why'd you do it?"

"Because he would have died if I didn't! His dad came here looking to kill him, and I figured it'd fuck up your friendship with Nate if I let that happen."

Xavi laughed. "Oh? So you did this all for me and Nate? Bullshit, Madd. You give a fuck, and that's okay."

I glared at my brother. "The only thing I give a fuck about in all this is that no one should have to take a beating like that from their dad. That's it." And that's all I'd ever let it be.

"So, help him." Xavi shrugged. "Just because he's starting to feel better doesn't mean this shit with his dad is over. What's he going to do now, huh?"

"That's not my problem. He's not my friend or my responsibility. He has Nate for that."

"Yeah, and Nate is my best friend, so I'm going to help them. I'd like to think I can count on my brother to help me out with this." Fuck him for pulling that card.

"You're a prick, Xavi."

"I know," he laughed. "I know you don't believe it, but they'd do the same for us."

“Nate would,” I agreed. “Devon wouldn’t give a shit.”

“You’re wrong, but even if you are right, be the better person.”

Why? Why was I always having to be the better person? My dad took advantage of us, and yet I gave him my winnings from motocross. My mom, although unintentionally, used me, abused my care, and never changed her ways. Yet here I was, providing her a safe place to do that in, stepping up to take care of her, cleaning her up and picking her up from places she shouldn’t be. Devon ragged on me about absolutely everything, yet I helped him get a job on the rigs. He didn’t know that, but I’d done it anyway because I knew what it was like to be poor, and I knew what it was like to be under the pressure of a brutal dad.

Why was I always the one who had to step up? Why did I have to be the better person? I was sick of it. I was sick of being a pushover.

“I’m not a better person, Xav.” I shook my head.

“You’re the best person I know. Stop selling yourself short just because you get all the bad luck in life. They need our help, man. They have bad luck, too.”

I’ve been helping! More than anyone else. Has no one noticed?

“Nate got his shift covered, we’re both off today, and there’s no way Devon can work like that. We’re going to help them set up at the track camp,” he demanded.

“If Devon’s getting rid of his shift, I should take it. We need the money.”

“We do,” he agreed. “But we don’t need it as bad as they need our help. Jim tried to kill Devon, Madd.”

“I fucking know that. I was here, remember?”

And it hurt. I saw him beaten, bruised, and bloody, but worse, I saw him scared and weak. The one person who I always relied on to be invincible,

powerful, and stronger than anyone I knew was crippled and vulnerable. He was my equal match, and to see him like that hadn't felt good. The way this all sat on my shoulders wasn't vibing right. I should have been smug about it; it should have made me happy to see him knocked off his high horse.

It didn't. It pissed me off and scared me, to be honest.

"We're helping them," Xavi said again.

"Fine. But don't expect anything to change. I still hate that fucker."

Xavi smirked. "Tension isn't all about hate, Madd."

What the fuck did that mean?

6

—DEVON—

THINGS WENT SOMEWHAT BACK to normal. We'd been living in our shitty trailer at the track camp for a week now, and although it wasn't anything nice, it felt good to be away from my dad. It damn near broke my heart to skip last weekend's race since I still had the stitches in my head, but I found myself noticing different components of the race as a spectator. Like watching Maddox. I had no actual idea he was that skilled because I'd never had the chance to just watch him before. He won, obviously, but it made me less embarrassed that I lost to him so often.

Our dad was still trying to get to us, but Nate and Xavi made a deal with one of the track guards. He gave us a key to the back gate, let us come and go as much as we wanted, and kept my dad out. I knew he'd get to me sooner or later, but for now, my body needed the time to get better before I took him on again.

I'd had a lot of time to think about how to deal with him, but nothing felt right. I wasn't going to kill my own dad, but I needed a way to get him out of our lives for good. I'd been living under his control, his beatings, his bullshit, and his manipulations for twenty-five years, and while I knew that

wasn't much different from a lot of people here, it was still time to get out. I just had no idea how to do that.

And what about my mom? She'd need care, and care cost money. Would my brother come with me if I left? Would we even leave Garron, or could we find a way to flip the power switch and take control of our lives if we stayed here?

I managed to work a few shifts this week—one on the rigs and one at the golf course, which was by no means a nice place. I cut the grass, trimmed some bushes, cleaned the gutters, and did regular lawn maintenance, but whatever, it paid alright.

"Here." Nate handed me a bowl of food. It looked like half-cooked pasta with grated cheese and salt and pepper. Decent. "How you feeling?"

I took a bite. It actually wasn't bad, and the pasta really was only half-cooked. I leaned back in the lawn chair and looked out at the forest at the edge of the camp. "I'm fine, Nate."

"Physically, you're looking better," Nate said. "But your head is all messed up or something. What's up?"

"What's up?" I echoed sarcastically. "We're living at the track because we can't go home. That's what's up."

Nate flinched, looking guilty like this was somehow his fault. I knew he felt responsible for me because he was the older brother; he figured it was his job to protect me. But fuck that. I was a grown man, and I was fully capable of taking care of myself. When I wasn't bleeding from wounds and half-delirious with a fever. I just needed my brother in my corner. I didn't need him to parent me, but if we were on the same side of things, always had each other's backs, and kept track of one another, everything would be fine. Somehow.

“It’s not your fault, man. Stop looking guilty.” I took another bite and shoved the pasta around the bowl.

“If I hadn’t gone out that night, maybe none of—”

“Stop. You can literally apply the what-if method to every goddamn day of our lives. Don’t go there. He did it, not you.”

Nate sighed. “Do you know if he managed to pay that loan collector guy? For all we know, Dad could be dead in a ditch somewhere for being late on his payment.”

Wouldn’t that be something? Would save me from having to finish him myself. “No idea, man. Andrea said he’d been coming around a bit, asking about us, but she never told him anything.”

Nate nodded. “Xavi said...” he trailed off, glancing at me. “Never mind.”

“What?”

“Don’t get all high and mighty, okay? But Xavi said Dad showed up at the docks a few days ago. Xavi wasn’t there, but Madd was. Dad was being a dick, threatening anyone who might know where you are, so...”

“So...what?”

“I guess Maddox laid him out. Broke his knuckle in the process, but knocked him out and didn’t say a single word to him or anyone else about it. Typical Maddox style. Dock owner told Xav, asking what was up, but Xavi told him to just stay out of it.”

That didn’t make me feel anything concrete. It confused me, actually. Why would Maddox break his hand for me? Was he even doing it for me, or was my dad just there while he was having a shitty day? What was his deal? He’d gone back to hating me, ignoring me, or treating me like shit if we bumped into each other, which was fine. No more doctor bullshit. No more concern in those angry green eyes, and no more sleeping under the same

roof or in the same bed. Yeah, he and Xavi helped us get set up here at the track camp, but he ghosted after that, and he'd been avoiding me ever since.

"When are you two gonna get over your shit?" Nate asked.

"What shit? This is just how it is. There's no reason."

"There's always a reason, Dev." He gave me a look that said he knew something I didn't. "Think about it."

"No. I don't want to fucking think about it."

He went on anyway. "You go out of your way to fuck with him. Everything you do is about one-upping him, pissing him off, or competing with him. You know what all those things have in common?"

"Enlighten me, asshole." This was bound to be good. I was over this chat already.

"You're always finding ways to be around each other. You claim to hate one another, you piss each other off, and everyone sees it and knows about it, but it's like you two are addicted to each other. You have to be around him, even if you're just fucking with him, or you get all moody and twatty."

"Twatty?" I scoffed. "And no. You're wrong. I'd be happier if he was out of my life for good, and I'm sure he feels the same way."

"Then why don't you just leave each other alone?"

I gritted my teeth, not having a good answer for that. Because maybe fighting with Maddox was the one thing in life that gave me any confidence. We were good at it, and even if it was an angry thing, it still felt good to be good at something.

"You know what, man?" Nate set his bowl down, leaning forward in his chair. "You're going to hate me for saying this, so I'm gonna run like a little bitch as soon as it comes out of my mouth, but..." Oh, here we fucking go. "Did you ever stop to think that you're using this fucked up

competitiveness as an excuse? That you feel shit so strongly for him that you don't know how to cope with it, so you turn it into hate?" He got up and backed away.

My face burned as hot as my temper. "What the fuck are you saying, Nate?"

He grabbed the truck keys and backed off the patio mat. "I'm saying that you've got a fucking thing for Maddox, and since you don't know how to process it, you find all these other ways to handle it."

I stood up, ready to knock him out for that messed-up declaration. "Fuck that!"

"Maybe, instead of fucking with him, you should be fucking him!" Nate shouted while laughing. And backing away. And hopping into the truck in fear. I ran after him, but he started the ignition, backed out, and added, "Just think about it, Devon!"

Goddammit! I watched the taillights get farther away, disappearing down the path. That prick! Why'd he have to say that shit? Because the problem was...ever since that morning in Maddox's bed, with his hand on his cock and his fucking boner in my line of sight, I *had* been thinking about it.

Much to my outright refusal to believe I could be attracted to the one person I hated almost as much as I hated my dad. It was impossible. There was no reality where my dislike got mixed up with arousal, and there sure as shit wasn't a chance he'd think the same. He wasn't even into guys.

Maddox fucking Kane! Fuck him. *Fuck him?*

God.

7

—MADDOX—

IT WAS JUST ANOTHER Saturday night at the track. The long enduro race took place today, rather than Sunday like it usually did, so we were left to party and enjoy the rest of the weekend without any commitments. Mostly, we just got to have fun and get fucked up before going back to our shitty lives on Monday.

I came in second place today, which felt pretty damn good, but there was still a part of me that was pissed off with myself. Did I let him win, or did he actually beat me? My head was all clouded with the memory of him beat to shit after he came in second place two weekends ago and his dad got a hold of him. Did I let that influence my race? Was I worried about him or some shit? I hated to even think about it, because I hated that he was, once again, in my head. This time, he hadn't even fucked with me to put himself there. This was all on me.

I finished the beer in my hand and got up for another one, not afraid to drink tonight. A bunch of buddies were already half-pissed, securing their hook-ups for the night. They weren't really my friends, but we hung out sometimes at the track. Chicks loved a motocross guy, and random one-

night stands were common around here. I'd always been more of a relationship-type guy because next month, half these girls would find out their drunken hookup led to a fucking baby, and no thanks on that one, please.

Plus, it was always a battle for attention on nights like this. Some girl showed an interest in me, and then it was a fight to keep her attention while Devon tried to steal it. I hated how often he won. I bet he didn't even want her; he just wanted to show me he could do it like the asshole he was.

I didn't like to think too long and hard about it, but Nate and Xavi ran a strong hookup game together. I didn't know how they convinced so many girls to bang them both, trade, swap, or fuck around like it was one big group fuck, but they ran it strong and they ran it proud. So wherever they were right now, I knew they'd both be balls deep in whatever fun they'd planned for tonight. Which left me to get drunk on my own with a bunch of shady acquaintances and a bad mood.

Devon was here somewhere, but I'd been avoiding him like he was a death sentence. It was different than before. I used to avoid him just because I didn't want to deal with him, but if we ran into each other, I'd have no problem stepping up. Now, I was avoiding him because I was trying but failing to get back to that mentality. Yeah, I still fucking hated the guy, but now I hated him for not only the shit he did to me, but for how he was confusing the hell out of my head.

Like...I couldn't get him out of my head.

He was in there, rattling around among all my dirty thoughts, pissed-off rage, and concerns. I used to only associate him with anger and hatred, maybe a bit of jealousy and envy, but never this. Never confusion.

Since the moment we became enemies when we were ten, I've known exactly how I felt about him. Our dads pitted us against one another, brought us into their bullshit, drew the lines in the sand, and that was that. We fell into that hatred pretty easily and without much coercion. Now, after one fucked up situation, seeing him all vulnerable and afraid, sharing a bed with him, and seeing his boner, I was...what? Thinking about it? Thinking about his body? Thinking about why he never actually hooked up with the girls he stole from me? I didn't know, but I was beyond messed up in the head about it. About all of it.

"Madd!" A buddy wrapped his arm around my shoulder. "Shots!" He handed me a solo cup with some sort of shot in the bottom.

Fuck it. I took it, took another, and took a third for good measure. "I gotta piss," I said to no one. I shoved away from the crowd and headed into the woods.

I was usually always up for a bit of a party at the track. I wasn't much of a shit-talker or a social butterfly, but it felt good to sit around a fire, drinking and shooting the shit, listening to all their banter. My mind wasn't in it tonight. I wasn't drinking for fun—I was drinking to settle the whirlwind of thoughts in my head, and as much as I hated to admit it, I was one wrong move from joining my mom in her wine dependency.

I should have just gone to the beach for a swim to drown my thoughts in water instead of booze. Maybe the currents and the waves would have washed my thoughts away to get lost at sea, never to hinder me again.

I took a piss against a tree and then stared at the path. Left led me to the water, but right took me back to the party.

I'd go back for one more drink and then head to the beach. I could always leave sooner if Devon showed up. As I started walking, I heard the

voices of people around the fire, but one voice was closer.

“Did you hook up with him?”

“Fuck, no,” Devon scoffed. My interest piqued.

“But you fucked around, right?” this other guy laughed.

I didn’t hear Devon’s response, but I saw the two of them as I rounded a bend in the trail. Devon was drinking a beer, facing this guy who looked like he was from the city a few towns over. Fancy jeans and a shirt and shit like that.

“He talks about you all the time,” this guy said. “He’s jealous that I’ve been with you. He’s gay as shit, good-looking, and could get any guy he wants, but fuck, he’s hooked on your—”

I didn’t know what I was doing or why, but some tether inside me snapped. I closed the distance between me and them and punched this guy right in his smug fucking face.

“Maddox!” Devon shouted while my knuckles stung and the prick fell to the forest floor. “What the fuck are you doing?”

I didn’t know, but I kept going. I hit him again, knocking him to his back and trying to climb on top of him to really get a good beating in.

Devon wrapped his arms around my waist, pulling me back. “What the fuck, Maddox?” he hissed in my ear.

“He’s gay bashing!” I snapped, kicking dirt at this guy because...my thoughts were bordering on gay, and apparently, I was sensitive to it now. “He said—”

“He’s not gay bashing. My god. He’s gay!” Devon shouted right beside my ear, still holding me back.

“What?” I relaxed a bit. “I heard him say gay and shit...” No idea what he said, but I hadn’t liked the vibe of it, so I acted first and planned to ask

questions after.

Devon groaned, cursing at me too fast for my mind to catch them all. “You should go, Kent. He misunderstood.”

I took a good long look at this Kent prick. He was a bit rugged looking, but he wore nicer clothes than I could afford. He even looked like he had one of those haircuts you had to go to a real barber and pay for. His jeans were definitely name-brand, and I hated that for whatever reason made sense in my drunk head. Wiping blood from his nose, he gave me a dirty look and left before I broke free of Devon’s grip. Still didn’t like the fucker. I recognized him, which made me hate him even more.

Whoops.

“What’s your damn problem, Kane?” Devon shoved me away, spinning me to face him at the same time.

Those three shots hit my bloodstream about now, but when I looked at Devon, the pissed-off look on his face sobered me up a bit. “I was just trying to help.” With what? No idea.

“Help with what?” Devon threw his arms in the air. “If I’d had a problem with that guy, I would have handled it myself!”

“I thought he was attacking you!” I yelled at him, which was completely contradictory to how I would have reacted before. If some guy was attacking Devon, I’d just walk on by and fist-bump the guy for good luck. What was I doing?

“Stop trying to fight all my battles for me, Kane!” His words hit me a second before his fist did. He landed a hard hit on my jaw, making me bite the inside of my cheek. “He’s just some guy I—”

“Fucked?” I shouted, pissed off and unsure why. Probably because I was fishing for confirmation that Devon was...bi or something. I shoved him

against a tree and swung my fist at his still-healing face. There wasn't much force behind it, but it landed.

Devon rubbed his cheek. "I didn't fuck him," he snarled, grabbing my wrists and spinning me so my back was against the tree. "What's the damn problem here, Maddox? Why are you hitting me?"

"Because you piss me off!"

"What else is new?"

I tried to shove him off, but he pinned me there, clearly more sober than me. His chest pressed against mine, making sure I couldn't move, and then his hand wrapped around my throat when I tried to hit him again. My blood tasted bitter in my mouth, but it had nothing on the bitterness in my heart.

I blurted out the first logical reason that came to me. "I thought he was talking shit about gay people."

"He is gay."

"You'd know," I snipped. Would he? *Would he know?* My body got hot, my head was more confused than ever, and Devon's damn chest panted with laboured breaths against mine. I leaned in, trying to hypnotize him into taking that bait. *Tell me! Tell me if you're gay!*

"Who's gay bashing now?" He shook his head, tightening his hold on my throat. "I didn't fuck him, so stop being a dick about it, yeah?"

"But you did something with him?" I asked, needing to know.

Devon's blue eyes held no fucking fear as he looked right into my soul. "He sucked my dick. Got a problem with that?"

I swallowed the blood in my mouth, my jaw clenching. "*That guy?*" I scoffed. "That fucking guy?" Where was my head going? What was I doing?

Devon's fingers drummed against the side of my neck, and for some messed up reason, I didn't hate it. "You got a problem with *that* guy?"

I honestly had no idea what was even happening anymore. My motivations had seemed so clear, but now everything turned all murky again. "No." I shoved him away, hard enough that he lost his grip on my throat.

"Maddox..."

"Actually, you know what?" I snapped, shoving him again. His back hit a different tree and I got right up in his face because now I remembered why that guy looked familiar. "I do have a problem with that guy. That asshole cheated on Frank Galello." Which meant that somewhere in my drunken state, I knew he was gay and wasn't bashing. "So yeah, fuck him, fuck his name-brand jeans, and fuck his—"

"I didn't know until after," Devon cut in. "Which is why I came out here to avoid him. He followed me. So...whatever. Have a problem with him all you want, but he wasn't bashing."

I squinted my eyes at him. "What? He sucked your dick tonight?"

"No. A long time ago. Not that it's any of your business." Devon tried to move me, but I was immovable now.

I wanted it to be my business. I glared at him, not sure if I was mad at him, mad at myself, or mad at the name-brand jeans guy. He looked at me with all the fires of hell, and I looked at him like...like I saw his boner that morning and hadn't been able to get it out of my head since.

"You fucked with my head," I blurted, completely unaware I was going to confess all my shit to him in the middle of a forest. "You got all beat up and vulnerable, and I'd never seen you like that before..." What was I doing? "And then you slept in my bed, twice! And I felt you there, okay? I

felt you, and I saw some shit that I shouldn't have, and I goddamn showered you! And now my head's all fucked up and I don't know what to do about it!" *Shut up, Maddox.*

Devon's eyes widened in shock. "Oh," he half-laughed like a cocky idiot. "So, you're jealous of that guy?"

Rage. Pure, untethered, animalistic rage. "Fuck you!" I punched him right in the gut and turned away, unable to be around him for another second. I needed to get the hell out of here.

I lurched forward as he pushed me from behind, stumbling a few steps. I turned to take him on, and we threw punches like it was a regular Saturday night. Honestly, it felt good. I knocked him down and pinned him beneath me, hitting him in the side where I knew he was still healing. When he bucked his hips, he threw me off and gained top position. He hooked his legs around mine, pinning me down with his body, and locking me in place. His right hand gripped my throat again, so I grabbed at his forearm, trying to get him to ease off.

"Would you have slept in the same bed as me if you knew?" he spit the question at me.

I wheezed. "I don't give a shit who you're into," I rasped. "It'll never happen again because of who you are, not who you fuck."

His hand eased on my throat, and I took advantage of it. I kneed him in the ass, bucked him off, and got to my feet.

"Fuck you, Devon! Whatever truce bullshit we had going on is over now." I walked away. I just confessed a roundabout secret to him, and he threw it in my face like the asshole he's always been.

"I saw you jerk off in your sleep!" he shouted at my back, making me halt mid-step. "You fucked up my head too, asshole!"

Jerk off in my sleep? No. *No!* Had I really done that? I was too much of a coward to face him, embarrassment flooding my body. My feet wanted to run, to get the hell out while I still had a scrap of tainted dignity. Just as my mind decided to flee and my feet were preparing for takeoff, Devon grabbed my shoulder and turned me around.

“And it made my cock hard. I’ve been trying to come to terms with that for two fucking weeks.” He huffed out a crazed breath. “I fucking hate you, Maddox, but I want to—”

“Don’t,” I groaned. I was desperate for him to say it. I was desperate for him *not* to say it. I wanted to go back in time twenty minutes and never punch that prick in the face. I wanted to go back in time and never come out here to take a piss. I wanted to fast-forward time and get out of this awkward situation. I wanted to pause time and never leave this fucked up moment. So conflicted.

Devon’s eyes shifted to my mouth. I panicked. I slammed my hands against his chest and kept on going until his back crashed against the tree we were originally fighting at. The moon spotlighted this entire mess, and my anger got all churned up with my confusion.

“Don’t!” I shouted this time. “Don’t!”

“Don’t what?” he asked, breathless. I felt the erratic beat of his heart under my hand, the rise and fall of his ragged breathing, and the heat of his body so close to mine. His blue eyes were wide open, even if they were muddled with frustration and a level of confusion that matched mine. He knew what he was about to say, and he was just as ashamed of it as I was for thinking it.

“Don’t fuck with my head even more,” I pleaded.

“Then walk away, Maddox. Walk the fuck away and pretend this never happened. That’s what you want, right?”

Yes. No. I didn’t know.

Could I pretend this never happened? Could I ignore the fact he told me I made his cock hard? Could I move past the truth that it felt infuriatingly good to have him in my bed? Did I still hate him? Yes. But my traitorous dick wasn’t getting that memo.

“I don’t know what I want,” I admitted. I looked at his eyes, his lips, his eyes, his mouth again. What did I want? Why did he light a fire inside me and what did the flames mean?

His bruises were green, yellow, and blue now, and he was covered in so many cuts in different phases of healing that he looked like a mess. He was trailer trash in its finest form, so why the hell did I find it so hot? Why was it so exciting to be this close to him? Why was my body pressing into his, wanting to be closer, trying to feel more of him? Where did hate end and desire begin? Why were they merging? Mingling?

Devon wet his lips, drawing my attention. “Your body is allowed to feel something your heart doesn’t,” he said like some bullshit philosopher.

My heart wanted to hurt him. My head wanted to hate him. My body just straight-up wanted him.

“Fuck you, Devon.” I breathed hard, leaning forward, touching my forehead to his. With his hair against my temple and his breaths hitting my lips, my ears rushed with blood flow and my body grew tingly with nerves. “Fuck you,” I repeated, touching my lips to his, hating how good and volatile it felt at the same time. I was too much of a coward to kiss him, doing nothing more than touching my mouth to his at this point. I hesitated, then chickened the fuck out, inwardly cursing myself for not doing this and

doing this simultaneously. We shared breath and space—that was about it. Did I want more?

“Fucking hell,” Devon snapped. For the third time, he grabbed my throat, slammed my back into the tree, and crushed his mouth to mine.

THE FIRST TIME I consciously jizzed, it felt like a whole new world opened up to me. This world I didn't even know existed, where pleasure was allowed and readily available. It was this life-altering experience because, not only did it feel incredible, but it was entirely foreign and new. Like a level I'd unlocked and got to enjoy in private. It was the best feeling I'd ever experienced, and I knew I'd be seeking it out over and over again.

That's how I felt when Devon kissed me.

Another entirely new world opened before me as his lips met mine with force. It wasn't gentle, subtle, or polite. He gave me everything he had in that kiss, and in return, I gave it everything I could.

He gave me his fury, his rage, and his frustration. He showed me his wildness and his chaos. His lips were harsh against mine, his tongue greedy in my mouth, and his breaths all ragged and choppy against my face. I had too much of him, but I wanted more. Needed more.

This new world was a vortex of basic needs, primal energy, and unrequited temptations that were reciprocated even if we didn't understand them. I'd always known there'd been tension between us, but I never knew

how fierce it was until he called my bluff and kissed me, creating the explosion that opened the portal to this new world.

I didn't know what to do with my hands. I wanted to pull him closer, but these fists had never been good for anything but punching him. So instead, I pushed my fingers into his hair and tugged him against me. Our breaths clashed together as desperation grew, swallowing each other's sounds and consuming this new sensation. Consuming him. His need, his energy, his greed. Confusion swirled, but it wasn't the focal point.

"Ah, fuck," he groaned against my lips, his voice husky and harsh, just like he was.

I knew this new world was going to eat me alive; Devon was going to swallow me and trap me, and I wasn't sure I was ready for that. If my mind was fucked before, I didn't even know what it would be now. My dick was hard, his dick was hard, and I wasn't in a place to even consider what to do about that. I'd never been with a guy before, and the logistics of it were overwhelming my sense of pleasure.

I pulled back, panting, with my forehead against his. This rush was worth everything; I'd pay all the money in the world to feel it again. My fingers loosened in his hair and fell down his shoulders and arms until I was gripping his wrists and pushing his hands away from me.

I needed to think. I needed to understand what this meant and what I wanted to do about it.

"Maddox..." he breathed my name with a bit of guilt and a lot of concern. "I'm..."

I pulled away to meet his eyes, staring at him with just as much hostility as I always had, but there was something else added in there now, too.

Communicating with words had never been our strong suit, so our eyes did the talking, despite how unclear the conversation was.

I liked it. Fuck, I more than liked it. Now it was time to process. I tried to convey that with a look, and I hoped he got the message. It was such a strange thing to loathe and lust after him equally. How was I supposed to make sense of that? Especially when it came out of nowhere.

I knew if I stayed here, things would go farther than I was ready for, and I didn't want that to be yet another burden between us. We already had enough shit between us, so when, and if, we decided to take things to a level we'd never considered before, I wanted to do it without any hesitations, second-guesses, or confusion.

He got my drift. He shoved his hands against my chest, my back hitting the tree again. With a small, singular nod, he smirked and backed away from me.

"Still hate you, Kane," he shouted as he left, giving me time to process.

I almost smiled as I sagged against the tree.

Holy fucking shit. Did that really just happen? I touched my lips, making sure it was real.

It was. That shit happened.



WHAT A BRUTAL DAY. I'd already worked an eight-hour shift at the docks, and now I was in the final hour of a twelve on the rigs.

Garron did the whole oil rig thing weirdly. There were full-time workers out on the rigs in the ocean, but when they were short on guys, had an

injury, or someone didn't show up for a shift, they called in the locals and brought us out by boat or helicopter. The full-timers got treated like royalty with their rooms, hot meals, and showers, but us part-timers weren't treated with the same care. We got a hot meal on shift, but otherwise, we were there to work. No showers, barely any breaks, no coffee. I didn't mind it so much because it made the shift go by fast, and I needed the money, but it would have been so much better if I could get full-time hours.

"What's up your ass lately, Madd?" Xavi asked as we sat and waited for the boat to take us back to shore.

"Nothing, just tired." I rubbed my eyes. Twenty-hour days did that to a guy.

"What else? You've been acting weird for days."

Yeah, because I kissed Devon goddamn Sawyer and didn't know what to do with that information. I couldn't stop thinking about it even when I tried. How good it felt, how hard it made me, and how badly I wanted to do it again. But whenever I started thinking about two cocks and no pussy, my mind got all twisted up with what went where and who did what. In a male/female pairing, the roles were kinda assumed. Well, for the most part. Not so much with two dicks in the mix. I'd never had to think about it before.

"Vent or whatever." Xavi leaned back. "I can tell something is up."

"Nothing." I couldn't tell him about this. Not yet. Not until I knew what it meant. He'd mock the shit out of me—everyone would. Devon was my nemesis, and now I was kissing him. If people around Garron found out about this, they'd lose their shit.

"I'm your brother, Madd. You ain't gonna get a better option." He smirked. "I'm the only one who will put up with your shit, give you

whatever advice I can, and not judge the fuck out of you for being a pussy.”

I knew he was right, but still felt weird about telling him the truth. “It’s about Devon,” I admitted, hoping I could beat around the bush. “He did something, and now I’m all messed up about it, and I don’t know how to cope.”

We did something. We. But Xavi didn’t need to know that. Putting the blame on Devon was one of my better qualities, so I’d stick with that.

“What’d he do? He fuck with you?” Xavi sat up straighter, turning into the protective brother he loved to play.

Yeah, he fucked with me alright. “Not like that. He just...” My fucking god. How was I supposed to broach this completely unexpected subject? I rubbed my hands down my face. “It was like a good thing, I guess. It pissed me off and made me feel...I don’t fucking know, Xavi.”

Xavi laughed. “Unless you want me to think he fucked you, you’re going to have to give me more than that.”

“Never mind, alright? Just fuck off about it.”

Xavi dropped it after that. He didn’t bring it up as we rode back to shore. He didn’t push it on the drive home, or even when we got home. I jerked off without thinking of Devon—mostly—then went to bed. In the morning, I left before he got up, taking the bike to the practice track to burn off some of this frustration. The loud sound of the engine was the best medicine for an overthinking mind, so I focused on the rev and nothing else. My busted knuckle gave me a bit of trouble, but it wasn’t so bad anymore.

Until Xavi showed up to push all my buttons.

I ripped my helmet off and took the beer he offered me, sitting down on a dirt ridge at the edge of the track.

“Alright, what’d he do? You’ve had time to get your shit together, so vent, Madd.”

I took a long drink, looked at my brother, and then looked away. With my dirt bike as my focal point, I said, “He slept in my bed, turned me on, and then kissed me at the track last weekend.”

There. It was out there now. Too late to take it back.

I didn’t look at Xavi, already regretting telling him. He didn’t say shit for a long time, just sat there in shocked silence. Yeah, shocked me too, so I gave him time to get *his* shit together.

It wasn’t even about Devon being a guy. It was about him being my rival, my enemy, and the source of most of the bad shit in my life. Well, some. It put me off that we’d always been anchored in angry competition, and now we were making out in forests like crazed lunatics? At first, I wanted to believe it was the heat of the moment, like a fault in my judgement for one night. But I couldn’t really believe that when two days later, I still wanted to do it again.

After too long, I looked at Xavi with a raised brow. “Not what you were expecting?”

Xavi let out a strange laugh, rubbing the back of his neck. “I mean, I’m not gonna lie. No, that was not what I’d been expecting. But...I’m not really that surprised either.”

“What?”

“Yeah, I mean, Nate and I have talked about you two a lot. You’ve got all this crazy tension, and I dunno...we’ve just wondered if there was more to it than all the hate and the fighting. We figured maybe you guys didn’t know how else to show it...or something. Don’t kill me.” He flinched.

“Show what? What the fuck are you talking about? This shit just happened. It’s not like it’s been happening for a long time.”

“You’re damn near addicted to each other, Madd. Yeah, you fight all the time, but that’s still an addiction. Obsession, maybe, I dunno. I’m just saying that I’m not really that surprised that you guys have chemistry.”

What the hell? “I never said shit about chemistry,” I snapped at him. Fuck him and his chemistry.

“So, it wasn’t good?” Xavi asked, accusing me of lying. “Making out with him didn’t get your dick hard?”

Yeah, it did. “No.”

“Liar,” he laughed. “You’ve got a chub just sitting here talking about it.”

I covered my dick. “Fuck you.”

He grinned, passing me another beer. “So, what’s the problem?”

The problem? Everything. “He’s a dick, Xavi. That’s the problem. I really do hate him. That’s not just a front. I don’t want to have a chub sitting here talking about him. This shit is so fucked up, no?” I looked at him, hoping he’d side with me.

He shrugged. “They don’t say hate sex is the best sex for nothing.”

Now he had to go and bring sex into it? I shook my head. “I never said anything about sex.”

“You’re not thinking about it?” he accused. “You’re sitting here with a semi, *not* thinking about sex?”

“No, I can’t.” I sighed, chugging the beer and rubbing my eyes again. “I can’t think about sex because then I get all caught up on the logistics, and then I get frustrated and hate him even more.”

My brother laughed again, but this time, he didn’t stop. He buckled over, clutching his side like this was the funniest shit in the world. I decked him.

“Hey!” he laughed, gripping his jaw. “It’s just funny that you wanna fuck him, but you’re too stubborn to think about whose dick goes where!”

I shoved him. “I’m not too stubborn to think about it. That’s all I’ve fucking thought about! And it’s pissing me off because I don’t want to think about it anymore. I’m sick of thinking about this shit. Jesus.”

“So, you’re not denying you wanna hook up with him?” Xavi cracked a fresh beer.

Floodgates were opening. “I don’t know, Xavi! I’ve never hooked up with a guy before, let alone Devon fucking Sawyer. I don’t know how any of this works, alright? I don’t know what goes where and what I want in my...I don’t know what I’m doing, okay? And I don’t want it to be him, but...fuck.” I sighed.

“But he gets your dick hard,” Xavi filled in. “Try shit out. Experiment.” He shrugged.

Like it was so easy. “Yeah, we aren’t the best at working together.”

“How’d you end up kissing? Seems like you worked together alright for that.”

“I punched some asshole in the face and then Devon fought me. The next thing I knew, my back was pressed to a tree and Devon’s tongue was in my mouth.”

“Hawt.” Xavi nodded. “Seems like your style.”

“So, I’m just supposed to beat the shit out of him and see if my dick trips up his ass?” I snarked. “I don’t think it works like that.”

“It works however it works,” Xavi said. “You think he’s talked to Nate about this? Can I tell Nate?”

“Fuck no. This is my shit. Don’t spill it.”

“Well,” Xavi leaned back, “the way you two roll, you’ll end up getting arrested together and fucking in the jail cell they throw you in. I think you gotta get outta your head or you’re going to overthink it all and get desperate.” He sat up straighter. “On second thought, desperation might be your best bet. Just get so hot and horny that you can’t keep your hands off him. See where it ends up.”

“See where his cock ends up?” I scoffed.

“Or yours. What’s freaking you out? The fact that it’s Devon or that you don’t know if you wanna get a cock up the ass?”

“Both!” I shouted. “Mostly that it’s Devon. That prick is eternally fucking with me, even about this.”

“Hate to break it to ya, Madd, but I’d say you’re fucking with yourself about this one.” He offered a tight smile. “And you’ll be fucking yourself forever if you don’t stand up and handle this shit with Dev.”

Yeah, but now I was getting all insecure. Devon had been with guys before, and I was like a cock virgin. Sure, I banged a chick in the ass once—liked it—but I’d never even touched a guy before. I didn’t know how to touch a cock that wasn’t my own, and I sure as shit had no idea how to suck one. This was all new territory for me.

So new that I hadn’t even considered this a part of my sexuality. But if my cock was a compass, it was pointing straight at that fucker.

Fuck him for that.

9

-DEVON-

MY BACK WAS UP straight, my jaw clenched, and my brother stood protectively in front of me. I didn't want him fighting my battles, but fuck, maybe he was more level-headed than me.

"You ever lay a fucking finger on him again, I'll kill you myself, old man," Nate snarled.

Okay, maybe he wasn't more level-headed.

My dad spouted off his usual bullshit about being under so much pressure from the loan collectors, not being able to hold down a steady job, and letting the stress of it all get to him. He said he snapped because he was counting on me winning that race to get us out of trouble, and I'd let him down when we were most dire.

Yeah, but he fucking stabbed me, for shit's sake. And his money problems weren't *our* problem. It wasn't my job to get him out of trouble. Again, I resented that thought. Reality sucked sometimes. Most times.

"Our money isn't up for grabs," Nate warned him. "We'll help with the house shit, but the rest of this debt is on you. You can get yourself out of it from now on."

“Then you ungrateful little fucks can go find somewhere else to live,” Dad hissed. “You think I’m gonna let you live under my roof with that attitude?”

“We pay for that fucking roof!” I shouted. Even if it was falling down, leaked, and the ceiling was stained tobacco-beige.

“Not anymore,” Nate said more calmly. “Enjoy the trailer, Dad. Mom’s going somewhere else, and we’re out.”

Dad laughed like it was all a joke. “Good luck.” He waved us off, flopping on the couch. “You’ll be back.”

I hated when he dismissed us like we were good for nothing and couldn’t take care of ourselves without his help. It was the other way around, but he’d always been good at gaslighting us. I took a step forward, ready to knock him out and be done with him, but Nate grabbed my shoulder and shook his head. I let him pull me out of there, and I lit a smoke as he drove us across the trailer park to where Mom was staying.

He didn’t even apologize or offer any sort of remorse for what he did to me. Beating me, stabbing me, smashing a bottle over my head, haunting the neighbourhood in the middle of the night to find me. He didn’t even thank me for the second-place prize money I’d given him that weekend. Nothing. And I was the ungrateful one?

I was nothing but a bank, a burden, and a bitch to my dad. He never wanted me; he wanted his one perfect kid, and that was it. But Nate had stood by my side too many times, which made Dad hate him almost as much as he hated me.

Other than Nate, I had no one in this world. No real friends. No real parents. No partner. Nothing and no one. How fucking sad was that?

It's not like I deserved anyone, anyway. I was a piece of shit trailer trash redneck who worked part-time on the rigs and cut grass at a shitty golf course. I had no redeeming qualities, nothing to offer, and a bad attitude on top of all that. Give me a few years and I'd probably have a drug dependency, alcoholism, and a needy kid or two with a chick who hated my guts.

I was stuck here, destined to live in Garron for life, struggling alongside everyone else who tried but failed to get the hell out of here. This place wasn't all shit, but it didn't have much to offer, and more often than not, kids fell into the lifestyle of their parents. By those odds, I was about to become either a junkie with a gambling problem or a mentally unstable, bipolar mess of a person with no means to get the right help.

Yeah, real bright future I had on the horizon.

My stomach tightened into dread-filled knots as we passed the Kane trailer and Xavi and Maddox were sitting on the front step. Maddox looked at the truck and found me looking at him. His gaze trailed us as we drove by, but there was no expression on his face.

He'd never give in to whatever this was. Fuck, even he knew I had nothing to offer him except headaches and hardships. He might be a poor lowlife, just like me, but at least he tried to be a decent sort of person. I'd treated him like shit my whole life, mostly because I was envious of him and my dad told me to, so it's not like I even deserved his attention.

He didn't smile, smirk, nod, or even acknowledge our eye contact as we kept driving. He just watched me and I watched him until we drove too far and I couldn't see him anymore.

Mary, a widow who lived in the park, was more than happy to have our mom stay with her. She was a lonely older woman, and she enjoyed helping

my mom out. We gave her what little money we could, and told her we'd be by with whatever groceries or supplies we could afford, and that we'd come visit Mom every day.

"Now what?" I asked Nate, pulling out of the lot. "We gonna stay at the track camp until we can find a place? I don't want to drag you down with me, Nate. You can go back home."

"Fuck off with that shit, Devon." Nate lit his own smoke. "We're in this shit together. Always have been. Always will be."

I noticed he took a different route out of the park so we didn't have to drive by the Kane's again. Fine by me. The sight of Maddox just reminded me of all the shit I'd fucked up in my life—the shit I'd always want but would never have, and the reminder that he'd always be better than me.

"You wanna get burgers from Mel's?" he asked.

"We can't afford Mel's."

"Shay is working." Nate smirked. "She'll give us whatever we want."

I wouldn't pass up a free burger.

"I gotta talk to ya about something," he said.

"What?"

"Food first."



AFTER EATING ONE OF the best meals I'd had in a long time, Nate handed me a cold beer from the cooler as we sat on the tailgate of the truck. Nate knew I didn't like to drink much, so I raised a brow at him.

He opened his own beer and looked at the ocean. We were parked on an old docking pier that wasn't used anymore, so people came out here to park and fuck and shit like that. "I need you to drop your guards and get drunk tonight, bud."

"What? Why?"

"Because first, we're going to talk about something that's going to get you heated, and then I'm going to force you to do something you won't want to," Nate laughed, being vague.

"What the fuck does that mean?"

Nate sighed. "Let's talk about Madd."

I shook my head and opened the beer. "No. There's nothing to talk about."

"No?" Nate asked sarcastically. "Then why did he go to Xavi all confused about his feelings?"

Deny it. Deny. Deny. Deny. "What feelings? I don't know what you're talking about."

"Devon..."

"No, fuck this shit, Nate. Stay out of my business, yeah? Nothing happened, nothing will happen, so there's nothing to say about it."

"Nothing to say about the kiss at the track?"

I slammed the entire beer, swallowing hard. "Maddox needs to shut his damn mouth." I grabbed a second one.

Nate grinned. "So, you're into him?"

"What? No! Hell no. My cock's into him. That's it."

"Mhm," Nate scoffed.

"And that was just a one-night thing. It was a weak moment, that's all. I still hate the bastard." I chugged the second beer, swallowing the contents

of the can to chase down my lies.

“You aren’t interested in him then?”

“Nope.” I cracked a third can.

“Alright.” He shrugged. “Forget about what I said before. You wanna go to the pit and shoot skeets?”

“Alright,” I agreed, hoping that was the end of the conversation.

The pit was an old gravel pit, and it was completely gated off. There was only one gate in, and Nate had the key because he used to work there. The rest of the place was fenced in with high barbed wire fencing to keep people from sneaking onto the property to use the cabin. No one really went out there anymore since they added all the extra fences, so it was nice that Nate had a key. If we got caught there, it might be shitty, but we hadn’t yet.

I had another beer on the drive but got suspicious when the cabin lights were already on and the gate was unlocked.

“Who else did you invite?” I asked.

“Just Xavi. Dropped him off out here earlier ‘cause he needed to get outta the park for a bit.” He pointed up ahead. “Can you move that cone out of the way?”

“It better just be Xavi.” I hopped out of the truck to move the pylon.

The engine revved, and then Xavi was running out to lock the gate.

“I’m sorry, Dev! I love you! Don’t kill each other!” Nate shouted, laughing and scared at the same time. “We’ll be back in the morning to get you!” Xavi hopped in the truck and gave me a wicked grin. They sped away, the gate locked, their laughter not seeming the least bit funny to me.

I could only fucking guess as to what this setup was. And as soon as I turned around and saw the trademark scowl and green eyes that belonged to Maddox, I knew we were in for one hell of a terrible night.

10

—MADDOX—

“YOU RAN YOUR MOUTH?” Devon snapped at me as soon as Nate and Xavi pulled away.

Oh, here we fucking go. This was going to be a great night. I should have been more suspicious when Xavi told me to stay there while he went out to take a piss. Had I known he was going to bolt with Nate, I’d have knocked him out before he could.

I rattled the gate just to double-check if it was really locked. We were so far out of town that we wouldn’t make it back on foot, and no part of me wanted to try to climb this death trap. I’d be shredded to bits.

I knew Xavi would fuck this up for me. I told him not to talk to Nate about it, but clearly, those fuckwits gossiped enough to plan this colossal dumpster fire of a scheme. The only thing that would come out of a night trapped in a gravel pit with Devon was a fistfight.

“Maddox!” Devon shouted at me. “Why the fuck did you tell him our shit?”

I shoved him away, not in the mood for his accusations. “Because I’m all messed up about it!” I yelled at him. I needed a damn drink.

I walked back to the cabin, checking the cooler Xavi had left outside the door. There were snacks, beers, and a bottle of whiskey. Sold on the whiskey. I took a swig, then another, and watched Devon from the corner of my eye.

He wore a pair of ripped—not on purpose—jeans, a pair of scuffed-up work boots, and a plain white t-shirt, the kind that came in bags of five for ten bucks. Not far off from the hand-me-down shirt I was wearing that said my brother's name on it and had the logo of some landscaping company he used to work for.

I took another few swigs and cradled the bottle between my palms, sitting on the rock wall that lined the firepit area.

“I’m not babysitting your ass if you get fucked up,” Devon warned, eyeing the bottle of whiskey.

“Then don’t.” I took another drink. “Do you have a phone on you?”

Devon reached into the cooler and pulled out a beer, managing to give me a dirty look while he did it. “What do you think?”

The bite to his voice made my fists clench. “Why can’t you just say no? You don’t have to be a dick about it.”

“Yeah, I do,” he sighed, sitting down on the other end of the rock wall.

I didn’t want to spend the night fighting with him, and I knew better than to hope our brothers would come back for us. Those pricks set us up and left us here to either give in to it or fight about it. I didn’t know which way this thing was going to go, but the more I drank, the more both options seemed likely. Fighting was our default, but there was a new kind of energy mixed in with our anger now.

Fine. Once again, I’d suck it up and be the bigger man. “How’d it go with your dad?”

“Like shit,” he snapped. “We’re...homeless, I guess. Kicked us out.”

I nodded, pretty much expecting that. “You can stay—” What the fuck was I about to say?

Devon shook his head and scoffed.

“What?” I snapped.

“Oh, nothing,” he said, acting like a dick. “Are you sure we can talk about this shit, or are you going to spout all my business to the whole goddamn town?”

I wanted to hit him. So badly. “Fuck you, Devon. I talked to my brother, that’s it! What did you expect me to do?”

“Talk to me,” he mumbled.

Yeah, right. “We aren’t very good at talking.” I motioned between us. “As you can see.”

He nodded, sipping his beer.

“This whole thing just has me...confused. Don’t shit on me for going to Xav.”

“Then let’s just forget about it,” he said, shrugging, like forgetting about it was possible for him. Maybe it was. Maybe I was the only one who couldn’t get that kiss off my mind. Maybe it was normal for him, the same as kissing any other guy, no better than the prick with the name-brand jeans.

Jealousy filled up my body, clouded my mind, and put me right back on that precipice of volatile anger. “Yeah. Good idea.” I got up, taking the bottle of whiskey with me. I left him out there so he could *forget about it* and slammed the cabin door behind me. This whole night would go a lot better if we simply avoided one another.

Why did that hurt so much? Why did it bother me that he could forget about it like it never happened? Like fuck, he was the first and only guy I’d

ever kissed. How was I supposed to forget that? Actually, he was the first *person* I'd ever kissed and...felt all that with.

I know I tried to talk myself into getting past this. I truly did want to put it behind me and get things back to how they used to be—hate, fights, and competitiveness. That's what I could handle, not this fucked up bullshit where all my thoughts were jumbled, my cock was involved, and my chest sometimes forgot to breathe. But it didn't work. No matter how hard I tried to push it out of my mind, his face kept showing up every time I closed my eyes. I'd been lying in bed just last night with a hard dick, stroking myself off while I tried really hard not to think about him.

Which was pathetic because Julie had shown up, and I'd been horny enough to let her give me a handie. Sure, my cock got hard once I thought about Devon, but I couldn't carry on with it because I felt like such a trashy asshole for using her like that. She got pissed at me anyway, stormed out of my room with a dramatic door slam, and I continued to give myself that hand job, thinking about the guy who messed up my life.

Still didn't know what was wrong with me, and I was getting sick of asking myself that question over and over again.

The door banged open and Devon stormed in. "Look, asshole. Let's just hash this shit out and move on. I'm not sitting around here all night like a little bitch. Say your piece, I'll say mine, end of story." He slammed the door shut.

I sank into the couch. "I don't have a piece to say."

"Tell me why you're confused," he demanded with an annoyed clip to his voice. "Just spit it the fuck out, Maddox."

"Fine. I don't even know why we're talking about this. It's not like anything is gonna come from it anyway, right? It was a one-off, and I'm

sure you've got regular hookups or whatever." Deflection, while not the best method, was the only one I had right now. I took a pull from the bottle. If we were going to hash this out, I needed to be more buzzed.

"A one-off?" he scoffed, blue eyes boring into mine.

I looked away. Cowardly. "Yeah. It was just the fight and the..."

"Don't even think about saying the heat of the moment," he complained. I was going to say that but paused at the last second. "Alright, fine. You wanna be a pussy? Go for it. Here's my fucked up truth." He finished his beer, tossed the can, and snatched the bottle of whiskey right from my hand. When he took two gulps, I frowned, unsure how I felt about that. He wasn't usually a drinker. "I woke up before you that morning."

"What morning?"

"The first morning. And I...there wasn't a blanket, okay? So I saw...you. All of you. And you were...and it made me...it..."

"Jesus fuck, just say it!" I shouted. This was awkward enough without him being a mumbling idiot.

"You were rubbing yourself in your sleep, making all these hot sounds, and...fuck! It turned me on, okay? I watched you for way longer than I should have, and when you woke up, I pretended to be sleeping. I felt like a creep about it. Still do." He turned his back to me. "And it really fucked me off because you were being so good to me, and I didn't know how to handle any of it. We aren't nice to each other, and I wasn't used to looking at you like that."

Deep breath. "Like what?"

"Like I was grateful for you. Like I wanted you. Really fucking wanted you." He turned back around with a glare. "Happy? I admitted it." He slammed the bottle down.

A whole pack of wolves howled in my chest. “Yeah, but you’re over it now, right?”

“Are you?”

I shrugged. “Yeah.”

Hurt registered on his face, but he hid it and nodded. “Alright, good.” He nodded a second time and reached for the door.

“Fuck, wait,” I called him back, running my hands through my hair. I spoke to his back when I said, “I’m not over it. But that doesn’t mean I like it.”

He slowly turned around, leaning against the doorframe, close to the exit. He flicked the tab of a second beer and waited for me to say something else.

Well, I admitted that much. Might as well keep going.

“It messed me up because I literally hate you. And now I’m thinking of you in this new way that makes no goddamn sense. I mean, I knew you were...open, or whatever you label yourself as, but I didn’t know that shit about myself until...then.” I felt like a fool. “So, now I’m sitting here all confused and angry about it, overthinking the logistics of how things work, feeling like a douchebag because you’ve probably been with all sorts of guys, and I’m just...me.”

It took me a hot minute, but I built up the courage to look at him. He still had that smug look on his face, but it was mingled with a bit of trepidation and nervousness. His blond hair wasn’t long, but it stuck up in weird places, probably because his brother cut it out on the front lawn while drunk.

“Just you?” he finally asked. “*Just you?*” He took a step into the cabin, but not too far. “Nate thinks we’ve always fucked with each other because we’re addicted to each other.”

I rolled my eyes at that, but it wasn't far off from what Xavi said. I *was* half-ass addicted to him—fucking with him, pissing him off, competing with him. He was the focal point of my life in a negative way, and now that things were changing, it...I still wanted to fight with him, even if I also wanted him.

“Did you like it? The other night at the track...did you like it?”

I made some non-committal motion with my head, like I had too much pride to admit I liked it. Devon waited with a patient-at-first-then-impatient look on his face.

“Yeah. I liked it.” More than liked it. My cock twitched at the memory of it, so I took another drink. New strategy: can't get hard with whiskey-dick. “Did...did you?” I've reverted to acting like a thirteen-year-old.

Devon ran his hands down his face. “Yep.” He groaned. “Way too much.” I fucking preened like a peacock, and then Devon came over and set down his beer, grabbing the bottle again instead. He flopped onto the other end of the couch and took a drink. “Trust me, Kane. I know this shit is beyond fucked up.”

“Yeah,” I agreed. “Why're you drinking?”

He gave me an incredulous look and motioned between us like that was the best answer he could give. I mean, I got it. That's why I was drinking, but I didn't spend all my time trying not to turn into my dad like he did.

“Just don't start doing it all the time or anything,” I said like I had any right.

“Fuck you, Maddox. I can handle my shit.”

I rubbed my temples. We weren't fighting, so that was a win, but if this level of tension kept up, we'd both be dead by midnight. Bled out in some mutual fight to the death.

Devon kicked his boots off and rested his sock feet on the table in front of the couch. There were holes in the bottoms of both of his socks, but mine probably looked the same.

The cabin was basically one room with a half kitchen, a bed, a couch, and a fireplace. It wasn't big or fancy, but it was private, and that was something, I guessed. If we were forced to have this conversation, this might have been the best place for it. And if he pissed me off enough, there were plenty of places to bury his body.

I'd been avoiding him since that night at the track, and I wasn't that surprised that it felt good to be close to him again. Even when we were causing trouble in each other's lives, we always found a reason to be near one another. Maybe Nate was right in his theory about us being sorta addicted to each other.

Devon cleared his throat, breaking the silence. "Last year, I banged Julie just to fuck with you," he said. *Great start.* "But if I had to analyze it or some shit, I'd probably admit that maybe I did it because it felt like...like getting a part of you. In a way."

That was so crazy, it made me laugh. "That's fucked up." Had he thought of me like that a year ago, or was this just a part of our weird obsession?

He smirked, looking at his hands as he nodded. "I know."

I guessed if we were confessing pathetic truths... "I jerked off thinking about you last night." Kill me now.

He was still smirking as he sort of looked at me out of the corner of his eye. We were just two useless idiots, sitting on a couch in the middle of nowhere, trying not to look at each other while we confessed our darkest secrets.

"Did you come?" he asked.

I snatched the bottle from him. “Yeah.” This was so weird. Were we goddamn flirting? I took a sip. “Weirdly enough, Julie showed up to jerk me off, but...”

“But?”

“But it wasn’t doing it for me.” I kicked my shoes off and leaned back on the couch. “What’re we doing?”

“Talking,” he laughed. “Fucking weird.”

“First time for everything.” I took another drink and handed it back to him. “What do you want from me, Devon? What happens now?”

His green eyes met mine. “Good fucking question.”

//

—DEVON—

YOU COULDN'T CUT THE awkward tension in here with a knife that shit was so thick. But as much as I wanted to throttle my brother for trapping us here, I was secretly grateful for it.

For a trailer park guy, Maddox looked damn good. Yeah, he was wearing his brother's old work shirt, his jeans were worn and dirty, and his fingernails were bitten down and jagged, but all that shit made him sexier. He had that gruff look about him—the kind that showed he lived through some shit. He was one of those tall, dark, and dangerous types, but the poor version with added circles under his eyes, cuts and scars, and a general weariness to him that proved there was no rest for the wicked.

Maddox was a hard worker. I wasn't sure if he had a good work ethic or if he just had to work hard because he had no other choice in life. Whatever it was, it made me respect him for all the extra effort he put into fucking with me over the years. This guy barely had time to take a proper shower, yet he always found the time to rise up to our challenges.

Maybe I'd done the same thing. Maybe, despite everything else I had going on, I always found the time to measure up to him. And maybe—just

fucking maybe—I could admit it had been more of a highlight to my life, knowing I had shit with him to look forward to all those years. We pissed each other off to no end, but neither one of us ever stopped. Was this why? Were we always leading here?

He asked me what I wanted from him. What happened now? Wasn't that the question of the damn month? I knew what I wanted; I just didn't know how to get there.

“Are you and Julie done?” I asked instead.

He barked a short laugh. “Uh, yeah. You fucked that up months ago, and according to what you just said, she cheated on me last year anyway.”

There was a hint of a smug smile on my lips. Old habits die hard and all that.

“Are you...with someone?” he asked.

“No.” I took the whiskey from him and drank a small sip. I was getting a bit of a buzz, but I didn't want to take it too far.

Maddox sighed and closed his eyes, his head leaning back on the couch. “I've never fucked around with a guy before,” he admitted. “It...I don't know anything.” I could practically taste his embarrassment.

“Do you want to? Fuck around with a guy, I mean.”

“Isn't that the whole reason we're in this mess? Yeah, I...you.” He covered his face with his arm. Shit, those words felt good. “Even though I hate it.” I knew he'd ruin it.

I took one more sip and then moved closer to him, turning my body to face his. There was only one lamp across the room, but it offered enough light to see him by. Tentatively, I reached for his arm, pulling it away from his face. It was strange. There weren't many times I'd touched him without the intent to harm. Even the kiss at the track had been fuelled by aggression.

“Take a drink.” I held up the bottle. Maddox sat up and took a sip, then I set the bottle on the table, and demanded, “Stop thinking.”

“I can’t.”

“Tell me what you want, Madd.” I put my hand on his thigh.

His eyes watched it happen, and my eyes watched his throat hitch. He looked from my hand to my face, the green of his eyes reflecting the blue of mine at me. He licked his lips, glanced at mine, and said, “Not to be a coward again.”

And then he slowly leaned forward, second-guessing himself for only a second before sliding his hand behind my neck and pulling me in until our lips met.

Fuck. Yes.

When Maddox kissed me, the tingles shot a straight path to my dick with an offshoot towards my heart I was trying to ignore. His lips were softer than I expected them to be, which made me slightly self-conscious about the rough cut on my bottom lip. He didn’t seem to mind. The stubble of his jaw scratched against my own, and the sensation of it was goddamn delicious.

I was losing control already. I wanted to take this slow for him, ease him into it, give him time to adjust or whatever, but when a low moan escaped his throat, it took every ounce of self-restraint I had not to jump him.

That moan pissed me off and turned me on together; everything I felt for this bastard was conflicted with an opposing emotion. I wanted him so bad, but I wanted to punch him in the face for *making* me want him this badly. What the hell were we doing getting attracted to each other? I never saw this shit in the cards.

“Devon,” he groaned my name with a bit of annoyance. “Fuck.” He pushed on my chest, backing away a bit. “We can’t do this,” he said, sounding defeated.

I backed away. Fuck his defeat and fuck him. “What? Now you’re all freaked out? You started this!” Oh shit, here came my anger again. Aggression wouldn’t be far behind.

I stood up, not wanting to be on the same couch as him. How could he make me feel so damn good and so damn furious within three seconds?

“What do you think is going to come of this? We going to walk around town holding hands and shit? We’re fucking rivals, Sawyer! The whole park knows we hate each other!”

Now I was Sawyer again. I finger-combed my hair and scoffed out my frustration. “You afraid to be seen with a guy, Kane? You worried your reputation will be—”

“It has nothing to do with you being a guy,” he shouted, standing up to match my height. “It has everything to do with it being you! We fight and start shit all the time, and the whole park pays for our wars. We hate each other, Devon. And now we want to...” he paused; I waited. *Say it, motherfucker.* “You know what? Fuck you, Devon!” He fully snapped, in a tantrum now. “Fuck you for messing me up my whole life! And fuck you for making me want you!” He stopped, a little shocked that he admitted that out loud. “I want you,” he admitted, slightly calmer, but not by much. “I fucking want you.” He looked like he wanted to kill me.

If looks could kill, I’d already be in hell. Maddox clenched his jaw so hard, I had no idea how he wasn’t cracking teeth. He wasn’t usually much of a shit-talker; he let me weave that web all on my own, but I could tell he

wasn't done. He wanted me, and that made me so eager I was barely containing myself. But I needed to let him get this out.

"I can't cope with this shit," he went on, so I leaned against the wall to enjoy the show. "You're standing there looking all...and it confuses my head because my cock is hard, but my fists are ready to punch. How? How is that even possible?"

I bit my lip to hold back a smirk, but you better believe my eyes dropped to the bulge in his pants. When I noticed he really was hard, my smirk wanted to turn into a demand for him to get the hell over here.

"And I hate you even more because you've done this shit before, and I hate when we aren't on an equal playing field! You fucked that fancy jeans guy, right? Fuck, I hate him." He was asking, but I wasn't going to answer. "And I'm new to all this. Like, do you do the fucking? Do you get fucked? How do you handle the...logistics and the positions of things?"

Oh, he was full-on freaking out now. I loved every minute of it. Spazzy Maddox didn't come out often, but I was smugly proud for getting him this worked up.

"And why the hell am I even thinking this shit? Why do I even want you?" He finally looked at me.

Looked like I was going to have to take the reins on this one. Maddox was going to trap himself in his head forever if I didn't do something about it. So, without knowing if he'd like it or knock me out for it, I pushed off the wall and got in his face.

"Your dick hard right now, Maddox?" I pushed.

He clenched his jaw and seethed at me.

I kept pushing him back without even touching him until his back hit the cabinets in the kitchenette.

“You want me to go outside so you can jerk off?” I goaded him. “Or do you want to get over your shit, stop worrying about fucking, and let me do something about it?”

His lips parted, but his eyes never stopped glaring. I was going to have to be even pushier with this asshole, and I hated to admit it, but I’d never really paid much attention to his signals. I didn’t know where his limits were, what his signs of discomfort meant, or if he was telling me no without using words, so I’d just have to be aggressive but aware.

I put one hand on his throat and the other against his chest. He stared at me, pissed off, angry, and a little afraid, but also turned on, apprehensive, and excited. Using my thumb, I pressed under his chin so he couldn’t look down at the hand I was trailing down his chest, abs, and past his belt. He swallowed against my palm, but kept his eyes on mine. When I rubbed his cock through his jeans, he licked his lips.

Maddox groaned, low in his throat, the sound bringing my dick to life. Slowly, I massaged his cock through his pants, wanting him to get worked up, but hoping I was giving his head enough time to catch up with his libido. He was tense beneath my hand, his throat bobbing but not speaking. His chest was rising and falling with shallow breaths, and his eyes were still on mine as he processed everything.

Taking a chance, I started to undo his belt.

Both of Madd’s hands wrapped around my neck, forcing mine to fall from his.

“Tell me to stop,” I demanded, knowing this was a control tactic and nothing more. “Say it if you want me to.”

He glared, squeezing my neck. Shit, this was confusing and hot.

“Fucking say it, Maddox!” I shouted in his face, my throat pressing against his hold and my hand still working his belt open.

He wouldn’t say it. Couldn’t. So I had to take that as some fucked up version of consent. I let him grip my neck for whatever comfort it was giving him as I used one hand to undo his fly. Rubbing him through his boxers, I just fucking went for it. I reached down his jeans and boxers and gripped his hard cock.

Holy. Shit. My whole body burned to touch him like this.

“Fuck,” he hissed quietly, both his hands loosening a bit on my neck. His eyes fluttered closed and his head fell back against the cabinets.

“Okay?” I asked.

“Fuck you,” he whispered.

Good enough. I pulled his cock from his pants, shoved them down just a little, and looked down. Of course, he had to have a nice dick, but I guess I already knew that from the first morning. Maddox didn’t say anything, but his breathing picked up and his cheeks flushed when I started jerking him off.

He opened his eyes to look at me, and I swear to fucking God, that look was enough to get me off. The Maddox I knew was here. Primal, aggressive, struggling to submit to this, and so turned on it wasn’t even a question anymore.

Fuck it. I was taking charge. I gave his cock a squeeze and leaned in until our mouths collided and Maddox woke up. His hands shifted from my neck to my hair, tugging violently as he kissed me. His tongue wasn’t shy this time. He licked my lips, clashed our teeth together, and moaned into my mouth low enough to make me desperate.

“Fuck, Maddox,” I groaned.

He bit my lower lip, dragging another moan from my throat. “What the fuck are you doing to me?” he panted.

More. I was going to do more. Because this asshole needed to rid himself of his reservations, stop thinking about things so analytically and learn to get lost in the moment. But in order to do that, I had to kneel below him, which was something I told myself I’d never do.

I was breaking all sorts of promises I made to myself.

I pushed his head back against the cabinet and met his eyes. “Don’t freak out, Maddox.”

I sank to my knees.

12

—MADDOX—

DON'T FREAK OUT. DON'T freak out. Don't freak out.

Devon goddamn Sawyer was on his knees in front of me with my cock in his hand, and I wasn't supposed to freak out?

I was freaking out!

“Devon,” I pleaded, not sure if I wanted him to stop or start. *Do something. Anything. Put me out of my misery. Make this less awkward and force me to forget to be ashamed.*

“Just shut the fuck up, Maddox,” he snapped at me like his usual self.

Then his hand was running down my shaft from tip to base and his tongue was licking the precum from my slit.

“Holy fuck.” I straight up moaned. Couldn't even deny it. Or hide it. My hands gripped the edge of the counter, holding myself up against this hot and completely unexpected turn of sexy events. I thought some making out might happen, but I never expected this.

I never even considered Devon would suck my cock.

And it was the best feeling I'd ever felt. There was nothing monotonous or boring about it. It wasn't like when Julie did it because...because it was

Devon, and even though his mouth was wet and warm, the same as hers, he brought a level of volatility and aggression to the experience that had my eyes shutting in bliss. His tongue swirled around the head of my cock before he opened wider and took me deeper. As hard as I was trying not to, I panted like a junkyard dog.

“Fuck. Fuck,” I cursed him and his skilled mouth. How’d he know how to suck a dick so good? Clearly he’d done it before, but I didn’t want to think about that right now.

Then I looked down, making the biggest mistake of my life. I stopped breathing, my lungs paused, holding air and forgetting to let it out. Not only was this the best feeling, but it was the hottest thing I’d ever seen. Devon on his knees with my cock down his throat was going in the spank bank, and my god, how did I not know I was into this before?

He looked up at me with his blue eyes, still healing from random black bruises, my cock in his hand as he popped my dick from his mouth. There was an evil smirk on his lips that called forth my riotous side, but I kept my hands clamped to the counter instead of forcing his head. “Don’t worry, Madd,” he said, languidly jerking me off. “I’ll bring you to your knees, too.”

Cocky bastard.

The fact that he was being an asshole put me at ease enough to let my true self out. I gripped his hair in a power move—because that’s what we were all about—and pushed him back where I wanted him. He laughed and smacked my hands away, doing it on his own. When he sucked me slowly, my knees shook, and when he looked up at me, swallowing my whole fucking cock, I damn near fell to my knees like he promised I would.

My hands ended up in his hair again, but this time, it was more to keep myself standing than anything. My arms moved with the bob of his head, synching my entire body to the rhythm he set. When my hips started moving on their own, following that pattern, I breathed harder.

“Stop holding back, Maddox,” Devon ordered, right as my balls were about ready to bust.

But this was the part that my overactive mind wanted to focus on. Where was I supposed to come? Was he going to swallow it? Would I be expected to reciprocate that?

“Maddox, look at me,” Devon commanded. I looked down at him, so close to losing control. His eyes were clear and open, not at all ashamed. “I’m not afraid of this. Stop being afraid for me.”

Right. Cum didn’t freak him out. I was the one doing the freaking out when I should have been enjoying every second of this. Fuck off, head. We’re doing this.

I couldn’t believe I was about to ask this, but, “You sure?” *Because I’m so fucking close.*

Devon grinned. “Please,” he scoffed. “As if you could hold back.”

Of course, he had to make it into a challenge. And he was goddamn winning. As his lips wrapped around my shaft, my head hit the cabinets. When he found the perfect rhythm, my legs shook even harder. When he reached back and played with my balls, I cursed his fucking name and lost all control of myself.

“Fuck, Devon,” I groaned, holding his hair and looking down at him as I came in his mouth. “Fuuuck.”

My stomach clenched, my body tensed, and my mind blanked. Pleasure wasn’t just running through me, it was being forced into every dark nook

and cranny of my soul, damn near rendering me stupid. Pleasure from Devon Sawyer. *Devon fucking Sawyer!*

He sucked me through the length of the orgasm, slowed his tongue, and worked me through the come-down phase. I was half mad and slightly insane, but tremors shook me, shocks and tingles of bliss forked down my spine, and my ab muscles were already sore from clenching so hard. But when this prick licked the last bit of cum from my cock, running his tongue over the slit in the end, it weakened my already shaky legs, and I fell to my knees involuntarily. He caught my shoulders with a smug laugh.

“Told you,” he bragged.

“Fuck you,” I wheezed, completely spent. I rarely felt the need to talk, but my mouth wouldn’t stop running. “That was...I’m fucking...just...fuck you.”

Devon laughed again, lifting my chin. “I think you mean thank you.” He grinned, drawing my attention to his glistening lips, staring at the evidence of my pleasure on his mouth. He noticed. “Curious?” he asked, baiting me.

Yeah, I was curious, but I didn’t want to admit that.

“I dare you,” he taunted. I hated that he knew me so well. Well enough to entice me into doing something because of a dare and my unwillingness to lose to him.

Fuck it. We’d already come this far, and he already had a stomach full of my cum, so what was one small taste? The curiosity wasn’t going away, so I leaned forward, called him an asshole, and kissed his cum-coated lips.

The kiss started out exploratory, but as soon as I got a taste of him mixed with the taste of me, I got amped. Energy rushed back into my body, and I lifted onto my knees, pushing my chest against his, licking his lips like it’d get me drunker than the whiskey.

“See?” Devon spoke, lips moving against mine. “You taste good.”

That was fucked up and way too sexy coming from him, so I told him to shut up. I got greedy—maybe needy—and leaned into him as hard as I could. I needed more of him, us mixed together, the taste of desperation and the burst of flavour that came with something new and exciting—something different from mundane and normal. I didn’t even hate myself too much for wanting it.

“Devon,” I breathed, gripping the front of his shirt to keep him there, “I want to...I...”

“I’m good,” he laughed, kissing me one more time before pushing me away. “I’m good.”

But I wanted to. The vibe was right. I was already embarrassed that I came down my rival’s throat, and this hum of life it gave me buzzed in my blood, replacing my usual anger. The problem was, I had no idea what I wanted to do to him or how to go about doing it. Shit, I needed to watch more gay porn and get the lay of the land here. I mean, I’d jerked myself off enough, so surely I could jerk him off. A dick was a dick, no? Maybe the blowie would have to wait until I did a bit more research and learned if I had a gag reflex or not, but I could manage a handjob. Kind of wanted to know what it felt like, anyway.

High from the head he gave me, feeling brave, and not wanting him to have something over me, I reached for his belt. The prick grabbed my wrists and stopped me.

“As much as I want that, no.” He looked at me, tightening his hold on my wrists.

“I can tell how hard you are from here. Let me try,” I snapped.

He grinned. “You just had your first gay experience, with your enemy, might I add? Slow your roll, Maddox.”

I got pissed and shoved him in the chest. As he fell back on his ass, I got to my feet, hating him for thinking he controlled this show now. I stuffed my softening dick back into my pants, shaking my head at him. “Now you wanna be all noble and shit? Fuck you, Devon.”

He rolled his eyes and stood up. “You’re such a dick sometimes, you know that?” Yeah, I knew that. “I don’t want to push you!”

“Why do you even care about pushing me?”

“Because!” he shouted, getting angry again and throwing his arms out in exasperation. “Because I don’t want to freak you out. Because I don’t want you to do more than your slow-as-fuck brain can catch up with. Because I don’t want you to run!” He looked shocked at that last bit. “Fuck, because I don’t want this to be the only time this shit happens.” His face was red, and he had this weird combination of expressions on his face—vulnerable, pissed off, scared. “Because as much as I fucking hate you, Maddox, I fucking like you, too. Okay?”

“Okay,” I barked back, unsure what else to say. “Jesus.” Was I just supposed to hang out with him for the next few hours, trying to ignore the boner he was packing? Impossible. It was shouting at me, taunting me as much as he did, making my night hell because he was denying me something I wanted to try. “Get yourself off then.” I shrugged, not even sure if I meant to leave for it or stay and watch.

This night was a mess. A hot, sexy, frustrating and confusing mess.

Devon tilted his head at me. “You get your cock sucked by a guy and suddenly you’re all ballsy and shit?”

I gave him the finger and swiped the whiskey off the table. “I got my cock sucked by my *enemy*,” I corrected. “And I’m always ballsy.”

Devon laughed. “I’ll give you that. You have always been ballsy.”

“Are you?” I challenged. “Because it seems to me like you’re backing out.”

“Backing out of jerking off in front of you?” he clarified, a slight smirk on his still-angry face.

I shrugged. “I can leave for a bit if you need the privacy, but I can’t be around you while you’ve got all that going on.” I motioned to the general vicinity of his dick.

“Why not?” he pushed me. “Afraid you can’t keep your shit together?”

I pressed the bottle of whiskey to his chest and shook my head at him. “I already offered to lose my shit, but you’re some sensitive prick and wouldn’t let me. So fuck off and do it yourself, or let me try.”

While his hands were busy holding the bottle, I reached for his belt and tugged him closer. This fucker had always been able to get me all sorts of riled up. Even though the type of tension had changed for tonight, it was still a competition, and I was already amped to eleven. Time to get him there.

“Maddox,” he groaned as I undid his belt and fly.

I wasn’t going to pussy out of this. Yeah, I had no idea what I was doing with someone else’s cock, but maybe I could learn on the fly and figure it out as I went. At the very least, I had to pretend I wasn’t completely naïve.

“I’m not running, Devon.” I opened his fly and tugged his pants down just below his hips. “For whatever fucked up reason, you started making my dick hard a few weeks ago, and it hasn’t stopped.” I nodded at the bottle in

his hands, and Devon took a sip. “So let me learn how to jerk a dick that isn’t mine,” I laughed a little. “So that I can be better at it than you.”

Devon shook his head at me, but at least he was grinning. He set the bottle on the table and pulled me towards the couch. Sitting down, he forced me to sit beside him. “Let me show you,” he said, pulling his cock free from his boxers.

Oh, holy hell. The sight of him hard and glistening threatened to make me hard again. Actually, it was doing more than threatening; I straight up stiffened in my pants again.

“Give me your hand,” he orchestrated this shit show.

Okay, I was doing this. I wanted to do this. I hated that he was teaching me something, but I’d endure the lesson until I got the hang of it, and then I’d do it even better.

He took my hand and wrapped both our fingers around the smooth, hard, thick length of him. My teeth chattered together when my exhale turned shaky. To feel him in my hand, aroused and fired up, was almost better than facing him in a fight. My eyes were glued to his cock and the way it fit in our hands, the tip already shiny with precum. He slowly moved our hands and I was mesmerized.

“I don’t even care, Maddox,” he said with a low groan. “Fast, hard, slow, soft, uncoordinated, it doesn’t matter. It’s you that turns me on. The motion just adds friction.”

This smooth prick. No wonder he was always the loudmouth; he knew what to say. But his confession gave me the confidence I needed. I leaned into him, kissing him while moving my hand and setting my own tempo. It wasn’t smooth or sexy in any way, and the kiss was a bit erratic and wild if I was being honest, but he kissed me back and moaned against my lips.

Forcing his hand off mine, I took charge, jerking him off on my own. After a minute, it was easy to tell what he liked and didn't like based on how he breathed against my lips, held his breath, or let out sounds that were trying not to be moans.

I ran my hand from base to tip and back again, running my thumb over the tip, which made him buck his hips up and choke against my mouth. His free hand gripped the arm of the couch, and his other was on my thigh, squeezing so hard it'd leave a bruise tomorrow. I focused on the top half of his cock, quickening my pace a bit, loving the way his body reacted.

"Ah, fuck, Maddox," he groaned. His eyes were closed and his lips were touching mine, but we weren't kissing. "So fucking good," he breathed harder.

His head tilted down so he could watch, and as soon as he took in the sight of my hand jerking him off, he hardened even further. I mean, I couldn't blame him—I had a sexy hand.

"I wanna see," I told him, pushing him back a bit so I could watch. "I want to watch you come."

He turned his face to mine, kissed me sloppily, and then looked down again. "Keep doing that," he begged, pumping up my ego. Never had him beg me before, and I could definitely get used to it.

I kept doing that. I stroked him with a firm hold, focusing on the underside of his cock and sweeping my thumb over the tip on every upstroke until he was all raspy and tense.

"I'm gonna come. Oh, fuck."

Well, fuck me if those sounds weren't the hottest thing I'd heard in all my life. Or so I thought. When Devon's cock pulsed in my hand and his cum

spurted from the tip, he let out a half-groan, half-moan thing that sounded a lot like my name, and my body surged with a rush of power.

“Mmmm.” He was barely breathing. “Madd-ox.”

There was cum dripping down my hand, and I didn’t give three shits about it as I kept pumping him, slowing my pace like I knew I liked, lightening up my touch a bit. I didn’t stop until Devon struggled for an inhale and leaned his forehead against mine, trying to catch his breath.

“Okay,” he panted, “you didn’t run. You proved your point.”

Damn right I did. I laughed a little.

“Here.” He pulled something out of his pocket and handed it to me. It was a rag from fuck knows where, but I used it to wipe his cum off my hand, and then he took it from me.

“Who the hell keeps rags in their pockets?” I asked him, watching him clean his dick.

“People who work on lawnmowers that break down all the time,” he said, shrugging. “You good?” His blue eyes looked at me like I was going to bolt.

“Fuck you.” I leaned back on the couch, feeling pretty good about myself.

Devon grinned again, tossed the rag somewhere, and put his dick away. “Fuck you, too.”

And that’s how we stayed for the rest of the night. Fighting and fucking with each other until we fell asleep on opposite ends of the couch.

High-tension situations seemed to be our forte, but these bullshit chill moments weren’t really our strong suit. Maybe it just took practice.

But holy shit! I got my dick sucked by Devon Sawyer and came in his mouth! Won’t ever forget that, no matter how this thing turned out.

13

—DEVON—

NATE AND XAVI DIDN'T know what to think when they showed up at the cabin and found us both sleeping on the couch with our feet on the coffee table. When I opened my eyes, I realized it could look like two things. One, we fucked, or two, we fought all night and relented to sleeping on the only couch.

So, naturally, we fucked with them.

We didn't act any different, and to be honest, it wasn't really an act. I still wanted to throttle Maddox for being a prick, and he still glared at me like I was the worst part of his life. But yeah, the dynamic had shifted a bit. Nate and Xavi didn't know that, though.

"You guys good?" Nate asked, looking at me with concern.

"Can we fucking go now?" Maddox snapped at him, as impatient as ever.

"Shit," Xavi groaned under his breath, realizing their master plan had been a failure. Sucked a dick, so not that big of a failure.

Xavi got behind the wheel, and Maddox went to get in the passenger seat, but Nate beat him to it. He glared at my brother, threatening to kill him—I'd received that look countless times from Maddox, so I knew how heavy

it was—but Nate didn't back down. Maddox climbed into the back seat with me, and we left the gravel pits.

I found myself looking back at the cabin fondly. Yeah, we fought a bit, yelled at each other like we normally did, but we'd also given into temptation and managed to do it without ending the whole night bloody. That had to be some sort of a win.

"So, what'd you two do last night?" Xavi asked, trying to break the tension in the truck.

Maddox caught my eye and grinned just a little. "I gotta work at noon. Drive faster," he snapped at his brother.

"Jesus fuck," Nate scoffed. "You still hate each other?"

"Yep," we answered at the same time, not even lying. I could hate him and want to fuck him in unison. I liked to think of myself as a man capable of many layers.

"Well, tough shit," Xavi shouted at us. "Because Nate and Dev are staying with us for a bit, Madd. You got a problem with that?"

Maddox clenched his jaw, but his knee brushed against mine in the back seat. "He fucks with every other part of my life, why not my home life, too?" He shrugged.

Dick. "Why can't we just stay at the track?" I asked Nate.

"Because Leon got in shit and can't let us back in until the heat settles a bit," Nate said. "So unless you wanna go home to Dad, you can either live in the fucking truck or come to the Kane's."

"Where are they even gonna sleep, Xav?" Maddox scoffed the question. "You and Nate gonna cuddle up together?"

"Fuck yeah, we are," Nate laughed. "No shame in our cuddle game."

I rolled my eyes, totally believing that. Those two were close as shit, and while I knew they wouldn't actually cuddle, they'd have no problem sharing a tiny ass bed.

"We thought locking you two away and forcing you to face your shit might make this easier." Xavi softened his tone, looking hopeful.

"What'd you think was gonna happen, Xav? You think he was gonna suck my dick, and then I'd jerk him off, and we'd be all horny and happy?"

I covered my mouth with the back of my hand, hiding my grin.

"We thought you'd at least talk about it!" Nate tried.

"Talking ain't our strong suit," I reminded my brother. "I gotta work at noon, too. Fucking step on it, Xavi."

End of conversation.

Maddox closed his eyes for the rest of the drive, and I stared out the window, trying not to get hard at the memory of last night. But also trying not to get angry the closer we got to Garron Park. I didn't want to face my dad again. Not yet.

Maddox took a shower once we got back to their trailer, and then he grabbed his shit and headed for the door.

"Guess I'll see you later?" I asked as he walked by me.

He glared at me and smirked. "Fuck you, Devon."



I MET MY BROTHER at Mary's place after work. We spent a little time chatting with Mom, who didn't seem like she was paying attention. She didn't speak much anymore, and half the time, she wasn't very present

either. Mary had set her up with some art supplies, which was kind as hell because Mom loved to draw. She had some skill in it too. Some. Not a lot.

I thought Mary liked having our mom around. Her husband had died a few years ago, all her kids moved out, and even though my mom wasn't the best company, at least she was a companion and someone for Mary to be maternal over. I wasn't too afraid to admit we were taking advantage of Mary's motherly instincts. She could do what we couldn't.

Nate handed me a lit smoke as we walked through Garron Park on our way to the Kane's.

"So, what really happened last night?" he asked. "I mean, something must have happened because you were both still alive when we got there."

I avoided his question. "Why would you do that to me, Nate? That was a low blow, and you know it. Locking me somewhere with Maddox? Dick move." I smoked the cigarette even though I hated the things and couldn't afford them. If Nate wanted to pass them over, I'd smoke them, but I never bought my own packs.

"Sorry," he said, bowing his head a bit. "I honestly thought it would help."

"Help what? You tipped Maddox off that you talked to Xavi about what happened, and then you trapped him in a cabin with his enemy and left us there with a bottle of whiskey. What did you think that was helping?"

It did help, but fuck him for doing that.

"We thought it would force you guys to face it, or at least talk about it."

I inhaled cheap tobacco and rubbed my still-healing cheek. "He's never been into a guy before, you know? You can't pressure someone to act on an impulse that's completely new to them. He's fucked up in the head, Nate."

“And you aren’t?” Nate asked. “I know you’ve experimented a bit, but I also know you’ve never actually fucked a guy.”

Never sucked a guy’s dick until last night, either. Had my cock sucked by a few guys, but that was my first time swallowing one. I think I nailed it.

“At least I’m used to the fact that I’m attracted to guys. Madd isn’t.”

Nate shook his head. “Xavi doesn’t even think he’s hung up on that part. Yeah, the *whose dick goes where* question is floating around his head, but he’s more put off that it’s *you*.”

“I’m aware,” I muttered.

“So you did talk?”

I ignored him again. “Just stop trapping us in shit we aren’t ready to handle, Nate. Got it?”

“Alright,” Nate relented. “Sorry. But can I ask you one thing?”

“What?” I knew I was going to regret this.

Nate looked a bit nervous. “Do you like him, Devon, or are you just thinking with your dick?”

I wasn’t ready to answer that question. I didn’t know the full answer. I understood why he’d be concerned about it, though. Xavi was his best friend, and if I hurt Maddox in a way that we hadn’t agreed upon over the course of our competitive lives, things could go to shit really fast. I didn’t know if Maddox had feelings invested in this thing or not, but if one or both of us got our hearts broken, things between our brothers would change.

“Dev?” Nate prompted.

“It’s too early for all that. We haven’t even talked about it.”

“Then talk about it!”

I took a drag and tossed the smoke. “Things aren’t that black and white between us. We don’t talk. We fight shit out until a resolution is forced, and

then we fight over the outcome. Always have, probably always will.”

Nate laughed. “Then I’ll build you a fucking boxing ring.”

“Why are you so invested in this shit?”

Nate got serious for a minute. “Don’t hate me,” he warned. “Because I see the way you look at him. I’m not claiming to know what it means, but fuck, Devon, those kinds of looks are rare as hell and don’t come around twice.”

I wanted to punch him.

“And you know what?” he went on. “He looks at you like that, too.”

Well, way to fuck up my mind. Again.

14

—MADDOX—

I CAME HOME FROM work tired as hell, but it was impossible to sleep with the noise coming from the living room. Mom was out somewhere, and Nate and Xavi had a few people over to party. The walls in this piece of shit trailer were thinner than cardboard, so I could hear everything they were doing, and it wasn't helping with my hard dick situation.

I threw on a pair of sweats and a t-shirt and left my room. Xavi and Nate were sitting beside each other on the couch, a girl on each of their laps. I grabbed my hat and headed for the front door, but Xavi called me back.

“Where you going, Madd?”

“Out.”

“Dev's at the beach,” Nate said.

I didn't acknowledge that as I left. Fuck him for thinking I gave a shit about Devon and his whereabouts. I told myself I wanted a swim as an excuse to head to the damn beach. I felt whipped. Cock-whipped, or some shit like that.

My anger grew the closer I got to the beach because I hated that I cared where he was. I also hated that I got forced from my own bed by my

brother, but it was more about Nate telling me where Devon was, like he assumed I might go looking for the prick. Well, I was looking for him! And now I hated that I was chasing after him like some horn dog after thinking about him all day. I thought I'd be able to sleep and shut off my head, but here we were, on the damn path to the beach.

Why was I letting Devon Sawyer control me? Why was I even going to him in the middle of the night? Why did I hate him and want him at the same time? This shit was so confusing that I didn't even know how to go about thinking about it.

My anger peaked to a high point when I got to the beach and saw Devon...with that fucking brand-name jeans guy. I stopped where I was, unsure what to do. It's not like I had any sort of claim on him, but shit, why did it hurt that he was already with someone else? My mind had been on him all day, but it seemed he didn't suffer the same thoughts. He moved on like none of it had ever happened.

Devon undressed on the beach, which drew my eye, despite my attempts to look away. Jeans Guy was pulling his shirt over his head too, eye-fucking Devon like he wanted to eat him.

I should've walked away. Gone home. Gone for a walk. Gone anywhere other than here. Devon got what he wanted from me, which was a victory he'd forever hold over me. He threw me to my knees, lorded his power over me, took the win, and carried on with his asshole life. I should have known it was nothing more than that. Not that I wanted it to be. Did I? Shit, I didn't know.

"Oh, shit!" Jeans Guy squeaked, noticing me. Internally, I panicked, but outwardly, I stood there like I had a backbone. I was pleased to hear a bit of

fear in his tone when he saw me. That's right, you smug, fancy prick. I punched you in the face last weekend.

Devon turned to look at me, and as soon as he saw me standing there, he grinned. What was that about? "Better go before he knocks you out again," Devon laughed, talking to Jeans Guy.

"He didn't knock me out," he defended himself. "I thought you said it was just a misunderstanding?"

"Yeah, but he's dumb as shit and doesn't drop grudges. Better go before he decides to take his bad mood out on you." Of course he'd insult me as a way to get rid of this guy.

Wait. Was he trying to get rid of this guy?

"Then he'll just take it out on you," the guy said.

Devon grinned again, but this time, the expression was a taunt. "I can handle it. Fuck off now."

He grabbed his name-brand jeans off the sand, gave Devon one more hopeful look, which wasn't returned, and then gave me a wide berth as he left. A part of me wanted to follow just to fuck with him, but my body wasn't letting me turn away from the half-naked asshole on the beach.

"Swim?" he asked. He walked into the water, wearing only his boxers, without giving me the chance to answer.

Yeah, I wanted to swim! But not because he was out there...almost naked, looking hot as fuck, taunting me after being on my mind all day. I only wanted to swim because I was hot and sweaty after a long day. *Right.*

By the time I undressed down to my boxers, Devon wasn't anywhere in sight. I waded into the water, knowing exactly where he'd gone.

The muffled silence of being underwater was freeing. My mind stopped spinning, the confusion that filled my body gave me a break, and the

flushed feeling I'd had all day finally cooled. Sweet relief.

I took my time swimming out to the floating platform someone had put there when we were kids. The water was dark, and there was a tiny part of me that hated when my feet touched something I couldn't see, but I still swam slowly to give myself time to prepare for...him. It occurred to me that I'd always needed to prepare for Devon. When I was getting ready to face off against him, rise up to some bait he dropped, or compete against him in motocross, I always gave myself a hot minute to handle him. Devon wasn't the type of guy I could just face on a whim—not unless I wanted to lose control and fly off the fucking handle. Which happened more than I cared to admit.

He sat on the edge of the floating dock as I swam up. His legs were dangling in the water, his bare chest glistened under the moonlight, and the fading bruises that still covered his body were visible and stark against his paler skin.

“Is that as fast as you can swim, Kane? I should have challenged you to a swimming race a long time ago. Surefire win.”

Fuck him. I grabbed the platform but didn't climb up, needing the water to keep cooling my heated skin. “Didn't mean to ruin your hookup.” Shit, I did not mean to sound so bitter about it.

“That guy sucked me off like two years ago. Get over it,” he sassed at me.

“You weren't about to hook up with him now?” I asked, not sure I actually wanted the answer.

“Fuck no,” he said, looking up at the moon. “He saw me heading here and followed. He always fucking follows me. Was at some party by Andrea's place.” He took a deep breath. “Why? You want a shot with him?”

Fuck him again. I submerged underwater to tune him out. Yeah, I'd wanted to be close to him, but shutting him up was never a bad thing. Devon was a talker, and pretty much everything that came out of his mouth was purposefully meant to rattle or rile me. It usually worked.

I let the water muffle my hearing while I ran my fingers through my hair in an attempt to half-ass wash it. The docks had been busy tonight, and then I stayed late to help the owner work on a few boats. It was a bit more money, but it also kept me away from home for a few more hours.

When I resurfaced, Devon was looking right at me. "You racing this weekend?"

I nodded.

"Me too," he said for no apparent reason. "This changes nothing, Madd. I'm not easing off for you, and you better not ease up for me."

"I won't," I promised. I couldn't. I was incapable of backing out of a challenge with him.

"Good." He pushed himself off the dock and disappeared under the water.

I trod water until he resurfaced, watching him shake out his dark blond hair. This was sort of awkward again. We were both just treading water, clearly alone, but unsure of what to do with the silence. We didn't spend much time in silence until recently, and even this silence was charged with something deafening. It was comfortably uncomfortable.

"I remember you used to be scared of the water at night," Devon said. "When we were kids."

Leave it to him to remember one of my fears from before we hated each other. He probably had a whole catalogue of them.

“It’s not the water I’m afraid of. It just puts me off when something touches my legs and I can’t see it.”

He laughed before disappearing again. I knew he was going to fuck with me—call it instinct—so I tried to swim back to the dock before he could. He grabbed my leg and yanked.

I held my breath as he tugged me under, but he let go pretty quickly, and we broke the surface at the same time.

“Fuck you, Devon,” I snapped, wiping water from my eyes and pushing my hair back. “Like you don’t have any fears.”

He laughed, treading water right in front of me. Our arms brushed sometimes, and my feet touched his. “Being homeless is pretty fucking terrifying,” he admitted.

I should have known that. Xavi and I were homeless for a bit when we were in our young teens. Dad lost the deed to the trailer in a betting ring and some big burly men came to take it from us. It was a few months before Xavi and I could save up enough to pay the rent on a new trailer, even though it was shit. It was still better than being homeless, and it was the one we still lived in today. Mom helped out a bit now; she got government checks every month, and she worked when she could drag her ass there, but we still carried the bulk of the living expenses. Lot fees and utilities were the most expensive.

“You know you guys can stay with us as long as you need,” I tried to lessen the blow. “We’ll probably try to kill each other after a while, but you can stay.”

“Aren’t we already trying to kill each other?” He moved a little closer to me.

I felt my cheeks blushing, so I gripped the edge of the floating dock to steady myself and hide from the shaft of moonlight. “Not actively,” I answered. “Soon, though.”

“Soon,” he promised, swimming over to me. He gripped the dock behind me and got right in my personal space. Our chests brushed together and he was close enough I could see the water dripping from his hair. “Your mind all fucked up about last night?” he asked. His biceps trapped my head in place, and the water suddenly didn’t feel so cool against my skin.

It was hard to focus when he was this close. “Yeah, a bit.”

“What part?” He pressed closer.

“All...” My goddamn words got jumbled when his legs brushed mine. “All of it, I guess.” I breathed in and out, trying to hold on to my resolve.

“Did you confess to Xavi?”

I shook my head.

He stared at me, too close to be clear. One part of me wanted to shove him away, and the other part of me wanted to wrap my legs around him.

Where did this attraction come from? I’d known this guy all my life and never once did I feel like this around him. Was it because my view of him changed when he was vulnerable in front of me? Did it start when I saw his hard-on through his boxers in my bed that morning? Was that all it took? One hard dick from this guy and I was a goner, lost to a sexuality that had never been obvious to me?

“Because you’re ashamed?” he asked. “You regret it?”

“Because I didn’t want them to know they won. They locked us at the gravel pits, hoping we’d do something about it, and we did.”

Devon nodded in understanding. “Yeah, but...are you ashamed of this?”

Okay, he was pissing me off.

“What fucking part, Devon? Are you gonna ask me if I’m put off that you’re a guy? Because no, I’m not. But if you wanna know if it freaks me out that I’ve known you forever and never felt like this...but now I am, then yeah. That scares me a bit. It doesn’t make sense to me that I suddenly want to fuck the one person I’ve always hated most. That shit puts me off.” I shoved him back and let go of the dock. “I’m not ashamed of it, but it’s confusing as fuck, no? You still had a black eye from my fist when we...kissed.”

“You want to fuck me?” That’s the slip-up he fixated on? Jesus.

“Yeah!” I shouted. “I’m thinking about it, okay?” I pulled myself up onto the dock and tried to get my thoughts to make sense.

“What’s holding you back?” Devon asked, sitting on the edge.

He made no sense. Last night, he told me not to try anything because he didn’t want me to run, and now he was asking me sex questions. What the fuck? I guess there was no better time to voice my biggest logistical question again.

“Do you do the fucking or you get fucked?” I looked right at him, unwilling to shy away.

He grinned, which made me want to knock him from the dock, and then he shrugged. “I don’t know. Never fucked a guy before.”

My jaw hit the bottom of the damn ocean. “What? I thought you hooked up with that jeans guy?”

“Jeans guy?” he laughed. “And no. You just assumed that. I told you he just sucked me off.”

I sat upright. “So, all this time, you’ve been pussyfooting around me, trying not to scare me off, yet you’re just as inexperienced as me?”

“I thought you were struggling with the gay thing. Or bi, whatever you are. I’ve at least had years to come to terms with that part.” He looked at me, a bit shyly for the first time. “I was trying to give you time to process it.”

“I’m not struggling with that part!” I shouted at him, unsure if I was relieved or angry. “Well, the dicks in asses logistics, sure, but not the sexuality part. Not really. Stop making assumptions about me. You don’t fucking know me.”

He stood up and looked down at me. Well, no. I couldn’t handle that, so I stood up to match his height. He had a shitty skull tattoo on his pec, but my eyes were glued to his, unwilling to lose this eye war.

“I know you,” he snarled in my face. “I know how to beat you, how to get in your head, how to piss you off, and how to knock you down. Don’t doubt me, Kane.”

“Or what? Huh, Devon? You gonna use all this shit against me? Tell everyone that you tricked me into wanting you and out me to the whole town?”

The dock swayed under our feet as we glared at each other. The moon perfectly spotlighted our midnight fight, and honestly, with the tension radiating between our bodies, I didn’t know if we were going to start punching or start making out.

“Devon!”

We each took a step back, our heads snapping toward the bodies swimming our way. Nate and Xavi were heading out to our dock, followed by whoever else had been at the trailer. Worst fucking timing.

“I’d never out you to the town, Maddox. Never.” He dove into the water and left me in the moonlight.

15

—DEVON—

EVERYTHING WAS GOING TO shit so fast I didn't even know how to handle it. I had just gotten back to Garron Park after a shift on the rigs. It was nearly midnight, and I was dead tired, but my fucking dad finally found the opportunity to ambush me.

"I know you have money, you little prick," he snarled in my face, his hands tight around my throat. "I need it more than you do! I've done everything for you all your miserable life! Do this one thing for me."

I tried to pry his hands away, but his fingers dug into my neck hard enough to crush. My head was starting to spin with a combination of panic and suffocation, and anger wasn't enough to save me this time.

"Where is it?" he demanded. "Tell me where the fuck you've been staying!"

This was it. This was how I died. My dad was going to kill me at the entrance to Garron Park over the thirty-six dollars I had to my name. My life was going to end without any kind of hope or future, and everything that I'd lived through would be for nothing. I'd never get free. I'd never get what I wanted, what I strived for, what I wanted to believe I deserved. None

of it was going to come true. I'd never see the rest of the country, the world, or the other ocean. I wouldn't get to do something that made me proud, and I'd never get to feel hope for a measly future that might have happened with Maddox.

Worst of all, I wouldn't get to say goodbye to Nate. I'd never get to ensure he was okay, to make sure he knew none of this was his fault, and to warn him not to feel guilty for the death that had been coming for me since the moment I started breathing.

"Devon! Tell me where you keep your money! They're coming for me, and I need it now!"

My sight started to blur, going dark at the edges. Maddox and his smug face swam behind my blackening vision. I'd never get to experience him, know him how I wanted to, show him how much he got to me. The kiss at the track and the night at the cabin were all the stars wrote for us, and I'd take them with me to whatever eternal resting place I landed in.

"Hey!"

I tried to turn my head, but even my hands were loosening their grip on my dad's fingers. I was passing out. Starting the trip to death. Sinking into nothingness.

"Get the fuck off him!"

My dad was shoved from the side and I crashed to the gravel lot, gasping for air and coughing up my lungs. Nate was there, shouting at my dad, but I couldn't hear his words. Xavi tried to lift me off the ground, but my legs were being cunts and didn't want to cooperate. Even my lungs were still on their way to death, not getting the memo that they were allowed to breathe again.

“Devon.” My name sounded muffled, distant. “Devon, get up!” It was Xavi, but I couldn’t focus on him. I was too busy trying to make it over to my brother. “We have to get out of here, man. Get up.” Xavi tugged on my arm.

“Nate,” I croaked, coughing even more.

Dad shoved Nate to the ground, kicking him in the ribs hard enough to have him crying out in pain. Xavi cursed, dropping me to go help Nate. He threw my dad off my brother as I stumbled to my feet, clenching my fists. I didn’t want to be the one to kill my dad, but if I got the chance while he was beating on Nate, I’d do it.

I was too weak. Dad threw me off with one shove, my head still spinning from oxygen deprivation.

“I don’t have any money!” I screamed at him.

“You worked today,” Dad snarled.

“I don’t get paid until next week.” Okay, so maybe I did want to kill him. It wasn’t just a wayward thought this time. I felt my hands doing it, watched it happen with my eyes, could almost feel the life going out of him, severing him from my life forever. Freedom. The fantasy of it was too good to be true. “And I’m not your fucking bank! Get fucking help for your gambling addiction!”

Dad swung at me with something in his hand. I ducked, ramming my fist into his gut. He buckled over, but something sharp swiped at my leg, slicing me across the top of my knee. I backed up a step, completely shocked that he once again had a knife.

And then there was a hand on my shoulder and I was being yanked back so hard I tripped over my feet. Maddox shoved me back and squared off against my dad.

“You touch him again, I’ll fucking kill you.” Chills spread over my skin. The tone of his voice was ice cold, demonic, dangerous, and etched with something that told me he wasn’t making idle threats. The look in his eyes must have conveyed all that, because my dad hesitated, backing up a step.

I got to my feet at the same time Nate and Xavi did. My dad hesitated long enough for me to get to Maddox. I gripped his arm to pull him back, but he shrugged me off, completely lethal right now.

“What is this shit?” Dad asked, crazed. “You work together now?”

Maddox literally growled.

“Just get the hell out of here!” I shouted at my dad, hoping he’d listen before Maddox really did end up killing him. Truthfully, the worst outcome would be Maddox going to prison, not my dad dying. Nate screamed at our dad, cursing him out, and telling him to go, but Dad was only looking at Maddox. The biggest threat.

“Madd...” I tried to rein him in. I didn’t really give a shit if he offed my dad, but I also didn’t want him to kill for me. That wasn’t the kind of love we’d have.

Dad tried his hand at Maddox. He lashed out with the knife, slicing Maddox’s wrist as he put up his hands to stop the attack. Madd grabbed my dad’s wrist and banged the knife free while I kicked it away and punched my fist into his face. Nate kicked him in the side, and Xavi tried to pull us all back.

“Get the fuck out of here, Jim!” Nate shouted.

Dad ignored him, looking at Maddox. He wasn’t usually one for many words, but when he spoke, the temperature in the air dropped. “Touch him again,” he warned. “See what happens.”

Maddox looked one wrong move away from losing himself entirely. I'd never seen him like this before, not even when we fought. He was unmoored, floating out in the dark sea, ready to drag my dad to the darkest part of the ocean just to get him out of my life.

"Madd." I pulled him back, but he didn't even register me touching him. His eyes were glued to my dad's body, and nothing, not even me, could distract him.

Dad got the memo. He knew he was losing, and he wasn't willing to risk facing Maddox like this. He scrambled back until he was out of reach, and then he took off running toward his truck.

Nate was trying to get my attention, Xavi was trying to check on Madd's wrist, and I was focused on Maddox and only Maddox. He went dark. Completely shut off. No humanity, morals, and no fucking shame about it. My heart beat out of control, unsure which event to focus on. I needed to snap him out of this.

I stepped in front of him, putting my hands on the side of his head to force his eyes on me. "He's gone."

Maddox heard me, but he looked in the direction my dad had gone, so I forced him to look at me again.

"Look at me." He didn't. "Maddox!"

When his green eyes met mine, I saw a world of hurt in them. He was worried, scared, full of hate, and shaking with fear. He was afraid *for* me, worried *about* me, and hurting *for* me. I looked at him without saying anything, trying to convey to him it was safe to come back now. I was here for him, just like he'd been here for me, and I'd wait with him for as long as it took for him to find himself again.

I didn't know what kind of demons Maddox fought against right then, but I made sure he knew he didn't have to fight alone. I wouldn't let him struggle alone. We stood like that, him and me, for a long time. I knew Xavi and Nate were watching, but I didn't care. Maddox didn't even blink; he just stared into my eyes so intensely that a tear dripped down his cheek.

I nodded, telling him I saw him. Understood him. Was here for him. And then I touched his eyelids, forcing him to blink away those demons. When he opened them again, his body sagged free of the tension, and his humanity came back.

"I'll kill him," he said, low and quiet.

"I know." I nodded. "Let's go."

He let out a long breath and then nodded. When we turned around, Xavi and Nate looked completely uncertain and awed. Neither of them said anything, but Nate handed me his long-sleeved shirt, nodding at Madd's wrist.

Blood streamed down his hand and dripped off the tips of his fingers, getting all over his jeans. I took his arm and wrapped the shirt around it as we walked. He didn't even stop to look at what I was doing, and I wondered if he even felt the pain of it yet. I held the fabric in place until we got back to their trailer, and then I let him go inside alone for a minute.

"Devon, wait," Nate stopped me from following him. "Tell me what happened. Are you okay?"

"The same shit as always happened." I shrugged, looking at the door, wanting to check on Maddox.

"Is he okay?" Xavi asked, concerned for his brother. "What is going on, Dev? Why'd he go so...dark?"

I didn't know the answer to that, so I looked at the door again.

“Go,” Xavi said. “But you’re telling us what happened tomorrow. Make sure my brother is okay.”

I nodded as a promise.

Maddox had his bedroom door shut, so I grabbed a bottle of water, a bottle of whiskey, the first aid kit he’d used on me, and a few towels. I knocked, but didn’t wait for an answer. He was on his back, his good arm draped over his face, fully clothed, and stoically silent. I didn’t know what kind of pain he was hurting from—physical or emotional.

“Sit up,” I demanded. He didn’t. “Maddox, sit the fuck up.” I shoved his leg.

He groaned, but he sat up and leaned against the wall at the head of his bed. The light in here was shit, but I could work with it.

“Water or whiskey?” I sat down, facing him.

He grabbed the whiskey and spun the top off with one hand, taking a long drink. That cheap brand probably wasn’t far off rubbing alcohol, but if it worked, it worked. I grabbed his other hand and started removing the shirt wrapped around it. It was still bleeding a bit, so I held a fresh piece of gauze to the slice up the side of his wrist. At least it missed the vein.

“What happened back there?” I tempted the question, not sure if he wanted to talk about it or not. He hated talking, so probably not.

“This whiskey is old. Mom doesn’t even drink it anymore. There’s just a bunch of it left over from when my dad lived here.”

“Okay?” Was he just talking to test his voice before he answered my question?

Maddox took another drink without looking at me. “He’s not gonna stop, you know? He’s gonna keep coming for you, and one of these days, he’s going to succeed.” In killing me.

It was true. I knew it, Maddox knew it, my brother knew it, and the entirety of Garron Park knew it. But what was I supposed to do about it? This place was so messed up that if I turned in my dad for some crime against me, twelve of his shit-bag friends would come after me, and that wouldn't leave me in any better of a position.

"It scared me," Maddox admitted.

I looked into his eyes, seeing the demons still lurking in them. "I won't let you fuck up your life because of me, Kane. He's my problem. My dad. I'll handle him."

"How? How are you gonna handle him, Devon? He'll kill you over money you don't have, and I'll be left here with..."

"With what?" I grinned, trying to lighten the mood. "A broken heart?"

He didn't bite.

"I'll figure something out. Stop fighting my battles for me." I removed the gauze and held his wrist up to the light. "You should talk to Xavi. He's worried about you." The cut wasn't as deep as I thought it was, just a bleeder. I fished around in the kit for some bandages, but Maddox nodded at some cream first, showing me what to do.

"Good thing you were the one hurt that night and not me," he finally joked, a small smile appearing around the lip of the whiskey bottle.

"Fuck off. I'm trying." I put the ointment on and then covered the whole thing with a bandage, wrapping medical tape around it way too tightly. "I never thanked you for that night."

He met my eyes. "You gonna thank me now or just mention that you never did?"

"Did you check me out when you showered me?" I asked instead.

He licked his lips. "I tried not to."

Which meant he did. My ego swelled. “Want me to get Xavi?”

He nodded and then sighed. “Devon?” I waited, watching him. “Just... don’t try to take him on by yourself, okay? I know you’re a tough bastard, but don’t.”

Was I blushing? God. “Your concern is cute, Kane.”

“Don’t call me cute.”

I laughed, leaning forward to kiss him like it was the most natural thing in the world. Fuck. Maybe I shouldn’t have done that.

I pulled away, but Maddox leaned in, kissing me lightly on the lips. “I’d thank you for helping me, but we don’t do that shit.” He smirked.

I shoved him in the chest and climbed off his bed. “Come on. Put Xavi out of his misery so he knows you’re alright.” I opened his door and left it open for him.

My dad needed to go.

16

—MADDOX—

XAVI GAVE ME HIS version of a heart-to-heart. He told me not to be an idiot like that, and I told him to fuck off. He glared; I glared right back. It was a good chat. When he tried to ask what had gotten into me, I didn't really know what to say.

Devon. Devon got into me. He flashed before my goddamn eyes and made me realize I hadn't gotten the chance to even really get to know him yet. Not the way I wanted to. I was finally coming to terms with this whole wanting more with him thing, and I wasn't about to lose him to his deadbeat dad before I got a shot at him.

I saw the look on Jim's face, knew he wasn't going to stop, and I just... snapped. My vision went redder than it did when I fought with Devon. It went so red that my warpath presented itself to me, and I got locked in this zone that scared me. There was a very real possibility I would have killed Jim right then and there, and I didn't like how dark that made me.

I wasn't sure how to tell Xavi that, so I sighed and told him I was just sick of this lifestyle and didn't want their dad getting away with that shit. It was true, but it wasn't the whole truth. He bought it for now, which was

good enough for me. After that chat, I sunk down on the couch beside Devon, not considering how it would look to Nate and Xavi. I just kind of needed to be near him or some shit. Pathetic.

“Alright!” Nate snapped, tossing his hands up. “Something changed! Spill it.”

Devon scoffed. “Nothing changed.”

I grinned at that. Xavi noticed.

“What the fuck, Madd? Why are you smiling?”

I bent my knee up on the couch and didn’t move it when it touched Devon’s leg. “I’m not smiling.” I scowled, just to prove my point.

Our brothers shared a confused look. It was fun to fuck with them after all this time, and it served them right for locking us at the pits for a whole goddamn night. Great night, though.

Devon stretched his legs out, butting them up against me even tighter. I knew he did it to fuck with them, but it felt pretty good, too. It scared me how much I was learning to crave a less violent touch from him.

“What is going...?” Nate trailed off.

“Maybe we need to lock these two in a room together for a night,” Devon suggested. “See how they manage.”

“Yeah,” I agreed. “Give ‘em Molly first and see if they end up fucking.”

“We didn’t do that!” Xavi snapped.

Might as well have. Our fucked up sex drives were worse than Molly.

“We left you there with your sexual tension,” Xavi voiced my thoughts, but fuck him for it. “We didn’t need to drug your horny asses.”

“Maybe we should have,” Nate laughed. His eyes scanned the two of us, settling on the place where our legs touched. So, just to fuck with him even

more, I lifted my leg and set it right on Devon's lap. He slid his hand up my thigh without even balking.

"I..." Nate didn't know what to say. Finally, we were on the winning side. Together, which was weird. "I fucking knew it!" He jumped up, shouting, thinking he caught us in something. "You two fucked, didn't you?"

"Hell no," we said at the same time. "I hate that prick," I added, because it was still a little true.

"Can't stand him," Devon agreed, hand still sliding up my leg.

"I'm so confused right now." Xavi rubbed his temples. "What's actually going on?" He motioned between us.

I looked at Devon and shrugged. "I'm going to bed." I stood up, feeling better than I had earlier. Messing with our brothers was good for morale; my dark mood from Jim was nearly gone. "Night, assholes." I walked to my door and then turned back to look at Devon. "Coming?"

He grinned, loving that we were fucking with someone other than each other for once. "I will be," he laughed.

I shook my head and went into my room before I could laugh at that lame one-liner. Nate and Xavi were gossiping so loud that even Devon closing my door behind him didn't block their bullshit out.

"It will never not be fun to fuck with them," he said, rubbing the back of his neck. "You really want me to stay in here or are you just messing with them?"

I pulled my shirt off and stepped out of my sweats. "We've slept together before."

"Yeah, before all this shit started." He looked at me, at the floor, and back at me. "There's pressure on it now."

“Get undressed and get in,” I snapped, not in the mood for him to be shy tonight.

I turned on the fan at the end of the bed because it was hot as balls in this tiny sweat shack, and then I climbed into bed. I didn’t try to hide my eyes this time; I watched Devon undress and didn’t feel a lick of shame about it. He was muscular from working grunt jobs, had that shitty skull tattoo, and his skin was flecked with scars and bruises, but damn. “Your knee is bloody.”

He looked down with a frown. “Shit, my dad...”

Don’t get angry again. I looked away as Devon got the kit and started to wipe the blood off. At this rate, we’d always have to keep a first aid kit under the bed. *Always?* Jesus. I fucked with the edges of my bandages, thanking whatever had been looking out for me tonight. Jim managed to slice me, but it could have been a hell of a lot worse.

“It’s not bleeding anymore,” Devon said. “Just a cut. All good.” He set everything aside, catching me staring at his cut knee. “Madd...you pissed?”

“Yeah, I’m fucking pissed,” I hissed at him. Shit, I needed to calm down again. The threat was over for now. I lay on my back and put my arm over my eyes, getting my head right.

“Well, get un-pissed,” Devon snapped right back, not cowed by my attitude. He climbed on my bed and then right on top of me, straddling my hips and settling his weight over me. My arm shot off my face, looking my fill. Black boxers and bruised skin were all he wore, and a mess of dark blond hair and blue eyes topped the look off. How had I never realized how hot he was before?

Rough and tough, beat up, deep eye contact, and a strong body built from hard labour and rigging, lean muscle that never had the chance to bulk

because he didn't eat right, and a terribly done tattoo. Goddamn. Gaining a bit of bravery, I reached up and let my hand actually feel him for the first time. His skin was warm and hairless, not really any chest hair or anything. My fingers ran over the ridges of the stab wound that started this whole thing, and then I looked up to meet his eyes.

He sat there, right on top of me, letting me touch him while he looked down at me like he owned me. "You wanna talk about this shit?" he asked.

"No."

"Sick of talking?"

I nodded, biting my lip.

"Still freaked out by all this?"

"Yep." Less now, though. I was getting used to it. I wanted him, and no matter how many times I tried to tell myself it was a bad idea, my mind, my cock, and my heart didn't agree. "You tired?" I asked, knowing he worked a twelve and then once again almost died at his dad's hand.

Devon nodded. "I wanna make sure you aren't gonna do anything stupid, though."

"Like what?" This was weirdly comfortable. We were just sitting in my bed, touching and trying to flirt with our bodies, talking about shit without fighting about it.

"Like sneak out of here and go kill my dad," he answered honestly. "Don't even fucking think about it, Maddox. He's my problem."

I wanted to argue that. Yeah, he was Devon's dad, but he didn't have to take him on alone. I'd warned him not to go at it alone a few times now, so he better be smart enough to listen.

"I mostly wanna kill you," I laughed. "But I'm too tired to put any real effort into it right now." That made Devon grin, but he looked down to hide

it, watching his fingertips explore my abs. “Just...come here.” I pulled him down.

He buckled forward and pressed his forehead against mine. “Are we gonna cuddle, Madd?”

I tilted my head and kissed him. “Maybe,” I whispered against his lips. “For like ten minutes until I get sick of you. Then I’ll kick you the fuck off so I can sleep.”

He laughed against my neck, his hair tickling my cheeks and his breath a nice balm against my skin. “Ten minutes,” he agreed. He kissed me once more and then climbed off me, settling down beside me.

We didn’t really know how to cuddle. He lay beside me, our shoulders touched, our legs were kind of bent together, and our fingers kept playing. Good enough.

I liked it so much that I didn’t notice when the ten minutes were up. I fell asleep, and the next time I woke up, my door was open, my mom was standing in it, and Devon was gone.

“Morning, hun. We gonna talk about your boyfriend?”

I covered my face with a pillow. “He’s not my fucking boyfriend.”

He was still my enemy, even if we did have some sort of truce. All this nicey-nice bullshit didn’t erase the past, and sooner or later, we’d have to deal with it. How the hell was I supposed to date Devon Sawyer with a world of hurtful history between us?

Fuck him? Yeah, maybe I could picture that shit now. But date him? Hard no. It’d be impossible.

17

—DEVON—

SWEAT DRIPPED DOWN MY forehead, stinging my eyes and blurring my vision. My body was taut, tense, and exhausted, but it was also brimming with adrenaline and buzzing with energy. Every part of me was attuned to the sight in front of me, the steps I'd need to take to get there, and the path of least resistance.

I may want to fuck Maddox Kane, but I wanted to fucking annihilate him on this course even more.

I revved my bike, gripping the throttle, shifting into third as I kicked my leg out to round a tight corner. Maddox was right in front of me, and like fuck was I going to let him get this win today. It was my damn turn, and fighting him for the finish line was just as thrilling as fighting him with fists.

“Come on, you cocksucker,” I grunted to myself inside my helmet. I mean, technically, I was the cocksucker, but semantics. I needed him to fuck up just once. Round a corner too wide or ease up on the throttle. Anything to give me an edge.

I pushed my bike as hard as it would go. The final stretch was just around this bend, and then I'd overtake Maddox on the last kilometre and leave him in my dust. For once, I wanted to look down at him on the podium. Fuck him.

My lips twitched into a smile. There was a new sort of vibrancy to the race because, for the first time pretty much ever, I wanted to win for me and only me. I wasn't thinking about my dad, the prize money, or the consequences of not winning. I was thinking about gloating rights, the thrill of the victory I'd get to lord over Maddox's head, and the competitiveness that always fuelled us. I wanted to win just to fucking win, and it was such a new sensation that I found myself having one of the best races of my life.

The final stretch opened up before me. Maddox was the only thing between me and the gold medal. I dropped back into third, then fourth, then fifth, and picked up as much speed as I could. We were neck and neck. I came up right beside him and I swear to fuck I could see him grinning under his helmet. He looked at me, and I looked at him, and a moment of challenge suspended us on the track. Yeah, we weren't going to go easy on each other just because we were thinking about fucking.

He kicked out in front of me. I won that inch back. I pushed out in front of him, and he earned that inch back. I felt the rush of the last seconds of the race, seeing the checkered flag up ahead. Leaning forward, I put my head down, twisted the throttle as far as it would go, and gunned it over the finish line.

We were so close, the front tires of our bikes so in line that it was impossible to know who won. But the fight wasn't over. We both shut off our bikes, throwing off our helmets to add a verbal spar to this race.

"My tire crossed first!" he shouted at both me and the official.

“Like fuck it did!” I shouted back, shoving him out of the way. “My entire front end was across before his!” Lie. I had no real idea, but I swear I was first, and keeping my mouth shut had never been my forte.

Maddox shoved me in the shoulder. “You fucking wish, Sawyer.” He glared at me and I loved it. Ah, this was what life was all about. A lifelong competition with Maddox Kane.

“Fuck you, Kane! Take the loss like a man,” I yelled, drawing a crowd, not giving a single shit that we were bickering in front of everyone. This was normal.

“Me?” he scoffed. “I clearly fucking won.”

“Boys!” the announcer shouted to shut us up.

As the rest of the bikes crossed the line, we paid them no attention. All we wanted to know was who won out of the two of us. I was pretty sure that even if we’d come in last place, we’d be fighting over who came second last. It was just the way.

“The officials say,” the announcer started, dragging this thing out and making my blood burn. He turned, double-checking with the rest of the guys up on the platform. *Get the fuck on with it!* “By no more than an inch...Sawyer wins!”

“Fuck yes!” I shouted right in Maddox’s face, fist-pumping the air and gloating like I wanted to. “Fuck you, Kane! Better luck next time.” I shoved him.

He shoved me right back, glaring at me in true Maddox fashion. All death and agony and the promise of something dark and twisted to come. “You’re such a prick.”

Hell yeah, I was! Proud of it. I stood at the centre of the podium, not feeling the least bit guilty about my win. When Maddox looked up at me

from his lower, second-place position, he shook his head, but there was the faintest hint of a smirk on his lips.

Damn, it felt good to beat him.



NATE WAS PRETTY DRUNK, which was the only reason I felt comfortable giving him a few of the details he'd been begging for since that night at the cabin. We were sitting at our trailer off to the edge of the track camp, shooting the shit, avoiding the bonfire down the lane, and just enjoying our time together.

"So, you two did fuck?" Nate asked, with a bit too much excitement for my liking.

"No," I said for the third time. "No fucking. We fucked around a bit. That's all." Maddox had a point; I didn't want to admit to them that their stupid-as-shit plan worked, but I'd also been itching to talk to someone about what was going on between Maddox and me. Since Nate was really the only person I had in my life, he was my only option.

"What do you mean by fucked around?" He grinned at me, wanting all the details. I still didn't understand why he and Xavi were so invested in this thing, but whatever.

"I got him off. He got me off. That's it."

"How, you dumb fuck? Tell me!"

I shrugged, picking at the fraying threads of the falling-apart lawn chair. "I sucked his dick, and he jerked me off." My mouth moved into a lame

smile. “Which he told you about that morning in the truck, but you didn’t listen.”

“No shit?” Nate jumped up. “Yeah? Was it hot? How’d it start?” He pressed me for details, then added, “I fucking knew it.”

“Well, first of all, fuck you again for leaving us there. And second... thanks for leaving us there,” I laughed, feeling pretty good for the time being. It’d been a great day. “We fought for most of the night, got fed up with fighting, and then just started admitting shit, I guess. That just made us fight some more, so I dunno. It just happened, I guess. Easier to get him to do something when you make it a dare.”

Nate laughed at our tactics. “Have you done anything since?” He sat back down.

I shook my head. “Kissed a bit, but no. The time hasn’t really been right, and every time we get to be alone, we end up fighting...or Dad tries to kill me.”

“Fuck Dad. We aren’t even talking about that asshole tonight. This is your day. Look around, Devon. We’re at the track, we don’t have to go anywhere, Dad ain’t here and Mom’s taken care of. You’ve got all the time in the world right now. Go find Madd and fuck around a bit. Stop hesitating.”

He had a point, but... “Why do you want this so bad?”

“I just want you to have something good.”

“And Maddox is that thing? You realize he’s always been the ‘something bad’ in my life, right?”

“Has he?” Nate questioned. Yeah, no, not really. He’d been the only *constant* in my life, even if it was hatred and contempt. I could always rely

on Maddox rising up to me, and maybe that's what we were doing now, too. Rising up to match each other in a new dynamic.

Maddox and Xavi chose that exact moment to walk up. Maddox still wore his motocross gear, and fuck did he look good in it. He was dirty, dark, brooding over his loss, and dangerous looking. My dick straight-up jumped at the sight of him. I used to get a different sort of thrill whenever I saw this moody bastard. He'd set me off, amp me up, and ignite a fire within me, but now that fire burned with two different kinds of heat. I still wanted to compete with him, throttle him, knock him off his high horse, and punch that smug look right off his damn face, but I also wanted to bring him to his knees in pleasure, wrap my hand around his throat, and make him beg for what he really wanted. Conflicted, to say the least, but there had to be a way to merge those two wants. I was so flawed.

I'd come to terms with the fact that I both loathed and lusted after him. Had he? I mean, we'd goddam cuddled in his bed the other night, or at least, tried to. He hadn't run off yet, so there must be some level of acceptance going on in that thick skull of his. Either that, or he had nowhere else to run.

I could tell Nate was about to start some bullshit by calling us out on our situation and bragging with Xavi about their diabolical plan working, so I stood and faced Maddox.

"I need to talk to you," I barked at him and started walking away.

Nate called after me, and Xavi laughed, but Maddox didn't say a single word. Like usual. I knew he'd follow me, though. He was my dog on a leash, but I wasn't stupid enough to think it'd last.

Without mentioning it, I walked in the direction of their camper. I knew it'd be empty, and with a camp this full, it was the best place for us to hash

some shit out without an audience. I was sick of beating around the bush. It's not like we were dating or even friends, but we wanted to fool around with each other, so it was time to get the fuck on with it. My dick was in a constant state of hardness, which was infuriating and distracting, and I was ready to push Maddox into something else.

He walked behind me a few paces, keeping to his usual silence. How he managed to keep his mouth shut and piss me off without words was beyond me.

The night was hot and humid, which only added to the heat rushing through my body from anger and arousal. The sound of twigs snapping beneath our feet grated on my nerves, and the stubbornness within me prevented me from looking back at him when all I really wanted to do was stare at his damn body. Look my fill. Take what I wanted.

I was supposed to be happy, gloating in my victory, rubbing it in his face, and enjoying the thrill of the win. Instead, I simmered in sexual frustration, a bit of confusion, and a slight lack of confidence. What if he didn't feel the same way?

Was his cock always hard like mine was? Was he going crazy with the restraint we'd shown? Was he over this whole thing and ready to get back to fucking chicks like Julie? Shit, he was probably over it. It's not like I was anything special. I'd barely consider myself good-looking because I...I was just a piece of filthy, trailer park trash, a welfare recipient who lived in a... nowhere. I had no home. Who was I to think Maddox Kane would want something more with me? What did I even want? Just to fuck him, or something else?

And why was I so in my head about this?

As soon as the path opened and his trailer came into view, I lost my shit. Spinning around, unable to control whatever rage was burning me up, I shoved him in the chest. He had his hands in the pockets of his motocross pants all casual-like, and I hated that even more. He didn't even take them out when I pushed him.

"What's your problem now, Devon?" he asked like I was ridiculous. "Walking piss you off?"

"You piss me off!" I snarled at him, unsure exactly where all this anger was coming from.

"I didn't say shit," he defended, trying to walk past me.

I followed. Great. Now I was the dog on *his* leash. "Exactly!" I shouted after him, hating that he was walking away when I was trying to be confrontational. "You never say shit! I'm over here ready to fucking snap, and you look like you couldn't be bothered to give two shits about anything."

Maddox stopped by the trailer, removed his hands from his pockets, and faced me with a look of pure hatred on his face. "What am I supposed to give two shits about, Devon? I lost today. To you. I'm allowed to be a moody fuck."

He didn't lose; he came in second, but I understood the sentiment. Yeah, he fucking lost to me, and I was damn proud of that.

"What the hell is this?" I asked him, waving my hand between the two of us. "What are we?"

"You want a label?" he mocked.

"I wanna know what this is!" Okay, I was fully losing my shit now, and I still didn't know why. "Things keep happening, and then they don't happen,

and then new shit happens, and I don't fucking get it!" Not very clear, but whatever. "Where is this going?"

"This?" he sneered the word with a sick smirk. "*This?* You think we're... something?"

Oh, I wanted to kill him now. That one hurt. Bad. "Fuck you, Maddox."

I was done. Out. This was over. I didn't know if it ever even started, but I was done letting Maddox fuck with my head, my feelings, and my dick. I shook my head at him, for once, not having anything else to say. He wasn't worth more of a response than that, anyway. I took a step back, ready to bolt. I didn't want him to witness how badly he just hurt me.

Maddox stepped forward to match my step back. His fists clenched, his eyes burned, and his body tensed, but his mouth opened and closed three times before he finally spoke.

"Alright. Let's hash it out, Devon."

I tried to back up even more, but my feet were glued to the spot right outside his trailer. Would I want to hear whatever bullshit he was about to say, or would it hurt even more?

"*This* is fucked up. *This* is a fucking mess. *This* is so far out of my comfort zone, I don't even know how to think about it. My mind is a mess because of you. I want to hate you, and I do, but I don't even know if I'm thinking with my head anymore. You fucked with my...heart. You fucked with my heart, Devon!"

Oh shit, he was getting deep. I squared my shoulders and readied myself for his assault.

"Now I find myself giving a shit about you! I don't want your dad to hurt you, I don't want him to take you away from me, and I don't even want him anywhere near you. I don't want him tearing you down and fucking with

you because I don't want you feeling like shit about yourself. Which makes no fucking sense, because all I've ever wanted was to make you feel like shit!"

I scoffed, even though his words burned holes in my heart. These were the most words I'd ever heard from him, and they were...hitting hard. "So, you think you're the only one with the right to make me hate myself?"

"Yeah!" he shouted as if that made sense. "Yes. If anyone is going to fuck with you, it's me. I want that role." He took a few more steps, getting closer to me, absolutely brimming with rage. "And the fucked up part is, I want to protect you from everyone else."

I swallowed, loving this and hating it at the same time. This thing was a mess, he was right about that, but maybe messy was what worked for us.

"So, no, Devon, I don't know what the fuck *this* is," he sneered. "But I wanna tear you down while lifting you up. I wanna protect you and kill you at the same time. I want to resent you for how you make me feel, but then I want to resent myself even more for letting you affect me." He reached forward and grabbed my hand. "And I want to be confused about the fact that fighting with you does this to me." He put my hand on his hard cock. "So don't fucking push me to know what label to slap on *this*. I don't know the damn answer. I just want to hate you, have you, fuck you, and fight with you. That's it. That's what *this* is for me."

God-fucking-dammit.

18

—DEVON—

MY HAND STILL PRESSED against Maddox's cock. His eyes continued to glare at me, his jaw was still clenched, and his perfect fucking words were still trapped in the tense air between us.

I just want to hate you, have you, fuck you, and fight with you. That's it.

Well, wasn't that the fucking sweetest thing? My chest burned with emotion, but this time, the anger I felt towards Maddox shifted into something different—something more like need.

"That answer your question, Sawyer?" he snarled, backing away.

My hand fell from his pants, but I wasn't going to let this prick escape the intoxicating, infuriating, and conflicting array of emotions he just churned up inside me.

Calmness had never been my strength, but I exhaled slowly and stepped up to him. "Get inside," I demanded, barely holding onto that calmness. "Now."

"Fuck you."

"Get. The fuck. Inside." I shoved him in the chest, his back hitting the door of the trailer. He simply glared at me, defying my orders, so I pulled

the handle and pushed him through the door. He fell on his ass with a look of fury on his face, cursing me out and calling me every name under the sun. Good. Get angry, Maddox.

“What’s your fucking deal?” He climbed to his feet.

The trailer was small, hot, and dark, but I didn’t give a shit. This was about to become our own hotbox of fucked up desire, anger, and feelings we didn’t know how to cope with. Bring it on.

“My deal?” I scoffed, advancing on him. He at least looked a little uneasy. “My deal, Maddox, is that I’m done waiting on this shit. You said you wanna have me, fight with me, or fuck me. So what’s it going to be?”

He shook his head. “I didn’t say or. I want *all* those things.” He swallowed, looking uncomfortable and pissed off about it.

“Fine.” I lunged at him. His hands shot out to stop me, but I got to him first. I grabbed him by his damn throat and slammed his head against the built-in fridge. He swore at me, wedging his hands between our bodies to push on my chest. “All at once?”

“Fuck, Devon,” he groaned.

“Fuck, Devon, what?” I pushed. “You think you get to stand there and spout all that bullshit without me reacting to it?”

“You fucking asked!” he growled in my face. “You wanted to know what this was? Well, that’s my answer!”

Time to shut him up. I tightened my grip on his throat and used my thumb to push his chin up. His green eyes were volatile, and I was ready to make his body equally as dangerous. I kept my eyes on him as I undid the ties and the velcro of his motocross pants. His fingers clawed into my shirt, and his chest started to heave, but that’s exactly what I wanted. Him to react.

“What’re you doing?” he asked, panicked and breathless, a little uncertain, but over-eager, too.

“I’m taking what I want,” I said, shoving my hand down his pants and wrapping my fingers around his thick, hard cock. Maddox groaned low in his throat, his head falling back to hit the fridge.

“No,” he rasped, pushing on my chest again. “No.”

Don’t fucking tell me, no! He knocked my hand away and twisted my wrist so hard, I lost my grip on his throat.

“I’m done being a pussy,” he said, backing me up.

Wait a damn minute. I was supposed to be the dominant one right now. “Maddox, just let me—”

“Fuck you, Devon.” He shoved me so hard that the backs of my legs hit the one and only bed. I stumbled back on it, looking up at him with confusion and...fucking lust. “I said I wanted to fuck you—to have you. So let me.”

Jesus. “You’re just down to fuck right now?” I sat up and moved to the edge of the bed.

And then he did the most unexpected, fucked up thing I could have imagined. He knelt on the floor between my legs, submitting to me. He put himself below me on purpose, and holy shit, that simple act was everything. His fingers shook a bit as he undid my pants, and the sound of the velcro ripping rang out in the small space.

“Lift,” he demanded.

Shit. Okay. I lifted my ass and let him tug my pants and boxers down in one swift motion. My cock sprung free at the same time I kicked off my shoes, and Maddox removed my pants entirely.

“Maddox, fuck. You don’t have to.”

He just went for it. He leaned forward, gripped my cock in one hand, and suctioned his lips around me.

“Ah, fuck,” I groaned already. I knew he’d never done this before, but I didn’t think that mattered. I wanted him so badly that any shitty blowjob would do if it was coming from him. “Holy shit.”

But it wasn’t shitty. He used his hands and his mouth in tandem and showed no fear as he got used to it. I fell back onto my elbows, resting on them so I could watch him. My eyes kept wanting to flutter closed, but I didn’t want to miss a second of this. Maddox Kane had his mouth around my cock, and it was the hottest thing I’d ever seen.

My breathing turned to panting, my eyes were hooded but focused, and my hips fought the urge to thrust upward. More gently than I thought myself capable, I ran one hand through his dark hair to encourage him. His eyes looked up at me quickly, and the green in them was so bright I got caught staring for a second. He might not know exactly what he was doing, but he was acting on complete instinct, and it was fucking working for him. I was close already. Embarrassingly so.

Maddox lowered his mouth so far down my shaft that he practically took all of me. A long, low groan resonated in my chest and escaped my throat. It intensified when I heard him choke.

“Maddox,” I moaned. “I...holy fuck this is good. I want...” I knew exactly what I wanted. It had been teasing me for weeks, but I’d been too much of a coward to tell him. If he could act on instinct, so could I. “Maddox,” I started again. “I want...I want you to fuck me.”

Maddox stopped. He licked his lips as he looked at me, searching for any doubts. At this point, I didn’t have any. He still had my cock in his hand, but that dangerous look in his eyes turned hungry as fuck. Hungry for me.

“Don’t...don’t say shit unless you mean it,” he said without too much bite.

I sat forward, tugged on his messy hair, and crushed our mouths together. And I think this was the first time neither one of us held anything back. Maddox grabbed my hips and pulled me closer to his kneeling body. I bit his lip and yanked on his hair, adding a level of aggression to this thing to make it more comfortable. He matched my energy with his own, and we fought a lusty battle that, for once, might result in both of us winning.

“I meant it,” I said against his lips. “I want it. I want you.”

Maddox squeezed my hips; I didn’t know if it was intentional, or if he was trying to contain himself, but he pulled back and looked at me. “Say it,” he demanded in a low, dominant tone that made me want to comply and roll my eyes. “Say you want me to fuck you.”

What a prick. Why was that so hot?

“Maddox.” I tugged on his hair and grabbed his throat again. I forced his eyes on mine and controlled him as much as he controlled the words about to come out of my mouth. “I want you to fuck me.”

He released a breath that sounded like a growl. Hot fucking damn. He’d always been aggressive with me, but the look in his eyes, the tension in his body, and the need radiating from him at that moment almost scared the living shit out of me.

I breathed out, watching his chest rise and fall.

I was about to get fucked by Maddox Kane.

19

—MADDOX—

I THOUGHT I KNEW what it felt like to be sexually frustrated. I thought I knew what desire was, and what it felt like to be tempted to my breaking point. But no. With those six words from Devon's mouth, in his rough tone, with that absolute certainty behind them, I was on the precipice of total damnation.

Julie played a game with me once. She wound me up, got me so close to coming so many times, but backed off every time. It was thrilling and infuriating, edging on that line between reality and delusion.

This chick named Krystal once gave me Molly and told me the sex would be incredible. It was, don't get me wrong. Every brush of her fingers, touch of her lips, and tickle of her hair against my skin felt euphoric.

But nothing—nothing!—compared to how I felt right now. Devon had been torturing me with the same game Julie had played without even meaning to. When Devon touched me, I didn't need a drug to make it feel euphoric. His touch sent the most intense pleasure waves through every inch of my skin, down to my nerves, and straight to my dick. The bliss he

brought me was mingling with the anger he usually evoked, creating the most epic concoction of want.

Hearing him say he wanted me to fuck him? Yeah, that was the hottest thing I'd ever heard. I'd been hesitating before, telling myself I needed to sort out the logistics and come to terms with the idea of hooking up with my worst enemy. But that was all a load of bullshit. There was never any chance the two of us were going to be able to avoid this outcome. Once we gave into temptation that very first time, the night we kissed at the track, it was all set in motion from there. Yeah, our minds and our bullshit got in the way, but I knew, deep down, that this was where we'd end up.

I just thought the roles would be reversed. I'd come here this weekend intending to tell him I was ready. More like forcing him, but that was beside the point. I'd even brought lube, after doing research and watching way too much gay porn, to prepare for what I wanted. I had planned on forcing Devon into this trailer, sucking his cock for the first time, and then asking him to fuck me. Telling him to fuck me.

But like always, it was a goddamn competition, and he beat me to it. Probably because I was brooding a bit in my loss and he was soaring high from his win, which made him ballsy tonight. So, was I going to one-up him and change the roles by doubling down on his demand and flipping it around so he was the one fucking me? Not gonna lie, it crossed my mind. But once he'd said it, told me to fuck him, and admitted he wanted it, I knew it was what I wanted, too.

I wanted to fuck Devon Sawyer. So. Fucking. Bad.

And I wasn't feeling very calm about it.

"Get up," I demanded, not even giving him the opportunity to comply. I pulled on the front of his shirt and brought him to his feet in a frantic need

to get him naked. He ripped my shirt over my head and our arms got all tangled up when I tried to pull his off at the same time.

“Slow the fuck down,” he warned me.

I couldn't. I got his shirt off and...and I fucking stood there admiring his body like it was the first time I was seeing it. The messed up part was, I was looking at bruises I'd given him, scars that were caused by our fights, and muscles that were earned by warring against each other. The skull on his chest, although done in a cheap trailer without a permit to tattoo, suddenly looked really damn good against his slightly tanned skin. I even liked the dirtiness of us. Grimy with dust from the track, even though we'd swum in the ocean to wash off, and glistening with new sweat from how hot it was in here.

But then I noticed the stab wound on his side, the faint red scars of stitches I'd put there, and the look of his vulnerable eyes from that night flashed in my memory. My fists clenched.

“Maddox,” Devon said, tilting my chin and pulling my gaze away from his side. “Don't think about him. Not right now.”

“You been fucked in the ass before?” Jesus. What a change of topic. Not the most subtle way to ask, but fuck him; I needed to know.

Devon smirked, shaking his head. “No. Still want to?”

Even more now. “Yes.” I pulled him in for another kiss, trying to wash the remnants of his dad from my mind.

Kicking my shoes off while he tugged my pants down, our mouths connected in a sloppy, rushed kiss. I knew enough from watching porn that I needed to work him up to this, so being the goddamn gentleman that I was, I trailed my hand down his abs and distracted him by grabbing his cock.

Devon moaned into my mouth, damn near collapsing already. I fucked with his balls and let my fingers trail back to his ass. He sucked in a harsh breath when I touched him there, but his other hand tightened in my hair, and his eyes met mine. I knew he liked it.

Fully naked and looking sexy as hell, I laid him on the bed and spread his legs wide. No time for hesitations now. I took another moment to admire him spread out before me, his cock standing proud, his chest rising and falling, and his eyes burning holes in my head. I knew he wanted to touch me, but I pressed his hands to the mattress and hovered over his body.

There was a smug part of me that was pleased to see him on his back for me, but for some reason, the satisfaction of it had nothing to do with our competitiveness and more to do with...well, our dicks.

“Let me do this,” I ordered. “Let me—”

“Then fucking do it!” he cut me off, ripping one hand free and pushing on the back of my head, forcing me down his body.

I tried to hide my grin, but I liked it when he got pushy. I kissed that shitty skull tattoo, his abs, and his thighs, teasing him a bit before running my tongue up the underside of his cock.

“Fuck,” he muttered.

Grabbing my bag off the floor, I tried not to let him see what I was doing, but the fucker tracked my movement. Full of embarrassment, I pulled out a bottle of lube and scowled at him when he let out a gruff laugh.

“You brought lube?” he asked, trying not to laugh.

“Fuck off.”

“You planned this?” he kept going as I squeezed way too much into my palm. “You romantic fuck!”

“Devon,” I barked, stroking my hand up and down his shaft and trailing my other hand back, letting my lubed fingers touch his tight hole. “Shut the fuck up.”

He didn’t shut up. He moaned and he groaned, and he let out the sexiest sounds I’d ever heard as my fingers got him ready. He was damn near begging for it, and I wasn’t too proud to admit that it stroked my ego a bit. A lot.

“Mmm,” he moaned, writhing beneath me. “Fuck, hurry up. Jesus, Maddox, just fuck me!”

Weirdly, I wanted to hurt him most of the time, but not now. “Are you sure?”

Devon shot upright, grabbed my throat again, and snarled in my face. “If you ask me if I’m sure one more fucking time, I’ll flip you over and fuck you. I’m turned on, ready to go, and now I need you to buck the fuck up and do this.”

Natural instinct had me wanting to drag this out just because he demanded it to be fast. Delaying his gratification sounded fun in theory, but I didn’t have the self-restraint for that. Not right now. I was as needy as he was greedy, and if he said he was ready, I was more than ready. I pushed my palm on his chest and forced him back.

Kneeling between his legs, I stroked my cock a few times to lube it up. I was as hard as a pipe wrench, so ready for this, and too horny to let myself be nervous. I pushed his legs back and lined myself up, already enjoying the feel of his tight ass against my dick.

Devon’s hands gripped my hips and he tried to pull me forward. “Slow the fuck down,” I used his words against him.

“Maddox, come on,” he groaned his impatience.

I leaned back to watch my cock, and when I slid the tip between his cheeks, feeling tightness and resistance, I held my breath and pushed in a bit more.

“Fuck,” he groaned. I stopped, looking at him to gauge his reaction. “Don’t fucking stop.”

Was it always this hot in this damn trailer? Sweat beaded on my forehead and lower back, but I couldn’t tell if I was horny hot or temperature hot. It didn’t matter; I was hot and bothered either way because...I was fucking Devon Sawyer.

I pushed forward, inching inside him at an agonizingly slow pace. My mouth gaped open with each tiny thrust, and his fingers dug into my hips, both pushing me away and pulling me closer.

He was tight as fuck. The tightest thing I’d ever stuck my dick inside, and if I didn’t tense all my muscles and hold my breath, I’d come before I got fully inside him.

“Fuck,” I cursed at how good it felt, dropping my head to try and gather my stamina. “You good?”

He rambled a bunch of nonsense before adding, “Keep going.”

His ass gripped my cock like a vice, so hard I was forced to slow down even more. I didn’t want to come yet. Partially because I didn’t want Devon to have a reason to mock me, but mostly because I didn’t want this to end without him getting off. I wanted him to like it—to love it—because I didn’t want it to be a one-time thing.

“Maddox,” he complained. “More.”

I looked away from my cock in his ass, not needing the visual to push me over the edge. Instead, I watched his face, which wasn’t providing much

relief. His eyes were all sexy and his lips were all glistening, and his fucking mouth kept making sounds that drove me nuts.

I pushed into him another inch, watching his teeth latch onto his bottom lip. When I went deeper, his eyes closed. Goddammit, now I needed to stare at the wall or something. I rocked into him until he relaxed and let me in entirely. My thighs hit his ass and my world changed.

“Shit, you feel good,” I groaned, not knowing if I needed to stop to cool down or fuck him hard and fast to sate my hunger for him.

“Is that it?” he asked, breathless. “Are you all the way in?”

“Fuck you,” I rasped. It was killing me to stay still. “Can I move? I’m fucking dying here.”

“You’re such a pansy.” He met my eyes, the blue of his bright in the dim trailer. “Yes. Move. Stop worrying.”

Fine.

I pulled almost completely out and slammed back into him. We both cursed, and my body sagged forward with the overwhelming surge of pleasure that shot through me. Devon’s legs spread wider and our chests bumped together as I fucked him missionary-style.

“Mm,” he hummed. “Yeah. Fuck yeah.”

He made all sorts of hot sounds as we learned about each other in a completely new way. Our bodies were damp with sweat but hot to the touch, and my hair was sticking to my forehead to make me hotter. Devon’s cheeks were flushed, and his hands still gripped my hips, but now he used his hold to try to run this show.

“Feel good?” I rasped, needing to hear him say it.

He nodded, humming his agreement through his bit lip. “At the risk of sounding like a total chick,” he laughed a little, “you feel fucking big.”

Ego stroked. “You feel tight as fuck.” I reached down to jerk him off. “And so fucking good. I want you to come. Fuck, please come.”

There was a spark in his blue eyes that told me he was gonna try to hold out as long as possible just to fuck with me, but when I started fucking him slow and deep, he lost that competitive edge for a different kind of edge. I jerked his cock with one hand, and then he batted me away so he could do it himself. I was so focused on getting him off that my own lack of control became more bearable. He grabbed his knee, pulling his leg back, and... holy hell.

For once, we worked together. Mutual satisfaction was the prize, but this goddamn connection was the price...and I was willing to pay it over and over again.

“Fuck. Fuck. Fuck, Maddox,” he groaned. His eyes shot open, meeting mine, and his body spasmed. His ass clamped down on my cock, and I watched in a mesmerized daze as he came all over his stomach and chest. “Ohhhh, fuck yessss.”

Watching him come and feeling the way it reverberated through his body was now the hottest thing I’d ever seen. So hot that the leash I had on my control snapped, pulling me into orgasm right alongside him. I grabbed his hips and fucked him hard for a total of point three seconds before pulling out and jerking myself off. I came. Holy shit, I came. All over his stomach, mixing our mess of pleasure together, damn near blacking out from exertion and heat.

I groaned, getting light-headed. My eyes closed and my throat constricted, and my lungs turned right the fuck off. My brain no longer worked.

“Ah, shit yeah.” Devon watched me, his hands sliding up my thighs, making me tremble under his touch. “So hot.”

I couldn’t have kept myself upright if I tried. I collapsed on top of him, our cum slick between our abs, but our bodies slick with sweat everywhere else. Devon caught me, laughing against my neck, and then he flipped me off him.

I crashed to my back beside him, panting like a pug, sweating all over, and really, *really* fucking happy. It was too hot to touch or grab each other, so we just lay there until we’d calmed down enough to talk. Because that just happened. We fucked.

I was so mind-fucked about it that I got up and grabbed him a towel from the kitchen area. I used it to clean myself up first, but fuck him; he could use a dirty one. It wasn’t like it was really that clean in the first place. I threw on some boxers while he cleaned up, and then grabbed his off the floor and tossed them to him.

“Too hot,” I rasped. “Outside. Now.” I pushed through the door and left it open for him.

The night air was relieving against my flushed skin, and Devon must have felt the same because he sighed as soon as he walked out, flopping onto a lawn chair because his legs were jelly. I sat down beside him, still breathing hard. I chugged a whole bottle of water from the cooler before I remembered to offer him one.

He drained it and stared out at the forest.

I didn’t even know what to say to him. Like, thanks for the best fuck of my life? Ready to go again? How’s your ass? I didn’t know.

Devon cleared his throat after starting a second bottle of water. “Well,” he said, pausing after and shaking his head, “that was hot as fuck, yeah?”

I barked out a laugh, nodding. “Fucking right it was.”

Devon laughed and then silence set in again. It wasn’t an uncomfortable silence; more like a mutual understanding of respected solitude. Or some bullshit like that.

In my head, that was the hottest sex of my life. It felt good, still felt good, and went off without too much of a hitch. In reality, from the outside, it probably looked like two low-rent, dirty trailer park assholes, sweating and grunting with red cheeks and fucked up hair. We wouldn’t make a good porno, but I didn’t care. I just fucked Devon Sawyer.

And I didn’t plan on stopping.

“So, is now a bad time to talk about the fact that you planned ahead with lube, but no condoms?” Devon asked.

Fuck.

He stood up and smacked me in the face. “I’m clear, and I know you are, too.” He kissed my lips.

“How the fuck do you know that?”

“Xavi told me,” he laughed.

My damn brother. Always meddling. “You talked to him about this?”

“No, he just casually threw it out there in case I needed to hear it. Came in pretty handy, to be honest,” he laughed again, smirking.

I stood up, suddenly pissed off again.

“Relax, Kane.” Devon waved me off. “Great weekend though, yeah? You literally beat my ass, and I beat your ass in the race.”

“Fuck you, Devon.” I might have been grinning. Just a bit.

Second place in the race didn’t seem so bad anymore. “Next time I’m coming in your ass.”

He smirked.

20

—DEVON—

MY DAD HADN'T COME looking for money after we got back from the track. Whatever Maddox did the other night to threaten him had worked. For now, anyway. I knew the other shoe would drop and shit would hit the fan eventually, but for the time being, it was such a damn relief to not have him hounding me for every penny to my name. We were able to use it to pay rent and offer some to Mary for groceries to keep Mom fed.

My mom sat on the porch swing on Mary's front porch, and Nate was beside her, watching over her shoulder as she drew in her sketchbook. We'd stayed here with her the past two nights because Mary was out of town with Kathy—another woman in Garron Park who sometimes let Mom stay with her. She was due back tonight, and since there wasn't enough room in her trailer for all of us, we'd have to go back to the Kane's.

But that freaked me out a bit. Now that things had progressed to the point of sex with Maddox, I didn't want to get rashy. Like an irritating itch that wouldn't fuck off. I'm sure he needed his space, and I sure as shit needed mine, so staying together in his small bed probably wasn't the best bet. We were bound to start fighting again sooner or later.

“We gotta get our own place, Nate,” I said. “Somewhere temporary until we can get Mom somewhere more permanent.” She needed to be in an old folks’ home or something. She had dementia, even though she wasn’t much past her mid-fifties. On top of that, she had had some mental condition that’d been poorly diagnosed as bipolar disorder. Pretty sure it was wrong, but we didn’t know where else to go to get her diagnosed. Not until we could afford the right medical professional.

Mom looked up and smiled at me. She barely talked these days, but her smiles were still nice.

“What’s wrong with staying with Madd and Xavi for now?” he asked.

We had this chat last night. He thought we’d be better off getting Dad thrown out and taking over the trailer again rather than trying to find a new place. There weren’t many vacancies in the park, and we couldn’t afford to live anywhere in town, so he figured that’d be our best bet. He was half-convinced that Dad would get himself thrown in jail or get killed by whoever the hell he owed money to. I didn’t think we’d get that lucky, and if we did, would we be able to wait around long enough to hope for it to happen? Guys like us didn’t get lucky breaks. Fortunes weren’t on our side. We just...weren’t fortunate people.

“Nothing,” I deflected, not wanting to have that conversation in front of my mom. Plus, my ass was still sore because of that prick, and I was perfectly content to sit here and use that as an excuse to be pissed at Maddox.

Nate glanced at Mom, then he went inside to make her tea. That meant he wanted to talk, so once he got her all set up on the porch swing with her drink and her pencils, he sat next to me on the step, lighting a smoke.

“Okay, what happened?” Nate asked. “You’ve been quiet about Madd since that night at the track.”

“That was two nights ago. Lay off.” I took a cigarette from him. “I don’t want to talk about Maddox right now. I want to talk about what the plan is. What’re we doing about Dad?”

“We’re talking about Maddox,” he insisted. “But fine; later. Let me ask you something, Dev.” He spun his body to face me. “What’s your big plan in life?”

“Survive,” I scoffed. People like me didn’t get to hope for more than that.

“Devon,” Nate scolded. “There’s more to life than all this shit.”

“Yeah? Like what? You’re older than me, and you’re still here.”

Nate sighed. “Well, believe it or not, I like it here. Other than having to deal with Dad’s bullshit, I like Garron. I like the people, love Xavi, and someday, I still plan to open that shop we talked about. Down by the docks.”

“You still wanna do that?” Shit. We used to dream about opening a little shop where we worked on people’s boats and other small engines. Nate and I were both good with our hands, building and repairing stuff came pretty naturally to us, and it had always been a goal to stick together in life. The shop was how we saw that happening, but could we even accomplish that?

“Yeah, but I get it if you don’t, man. I don’t have these big dreams to travel the world and make something of myself. I like this shitty, simple life. I just wanna live it with a bit more cash in my pocket, not always so dire and desperate, and without Dad hounding us. If Mom’s in the right place and I get at least some of that, I’ll be happy, Dev. That’s it for me. That’s what I want out of life and I’m okay with that. I want you with me,

but I also won't stop you from living all your big dreams if we can make 'em come true."

Well...it's not like I had big life goals and aspirations either. What Nate just described sounded pretty fucking perfect to me.

"Don't answer right now. Just think about it. What do you want? You want a family? To get married and have kids? You want out of Garron? You wanna stay here? And don't limit yourself just because you don't think you can get it. Just because we're poor doesn't mean we aren't allowed to dream. If you want something, you'll find a way to get it."

I took a drag of the cigarette and rubbed my eyes. "When did you get all philosophical and shit?"

"Hey, I've always been this wise," Nate laughed. "And we'll figure something out with Dad. I promise."

I nodded, believing him.

"Now spill the deets on Maddox."

I shook my head at him, taking another drag. "I take it we're just gonna stay with them a bit longer then, yeah?"

Nate nodded. "Unless you're really uncomfortable with it. We could try Aunt Tammy, but she's...not much better."

I stood up and kissed my mom on the head before walking down the steps. "Nah, it's fine for now. But Maddox is gonna turn into a moody bitch when I kick his ass in the fights tonight."

Nate laughed. "This shit between you guys will never end, will it?"

I smirked as I walked away. Probably not. I hoped not. He fucked me in the ass and we were still fighting, so if that didn't change anything, nothing would.



EVERY MONTH, THE RESIDENTS of Garron Park put on a fight night down at the beach. There wasn't anything fancy about it. It was a group of people drinking on the beach in some sort of circular shape that contained the fights. Headlights and spotlights lit the ring up, and that was about all there was to it. There was no money in it, no hard feelings, and no skill level. Some people bargained for shit or put on wagers that had been agreed upon between them, but nothing official.

Honestly, it was a way for us to party together, blow off some steam, and let out some of our more physical frustrations, so half of us didn't end up in prison.

Some of us requested to fight certain people while others just threw their names in a hat and hoped for the best. Maddox and I had fought at this thing every few months for years. It was a good chance for us to beat the shit out of each other with a crowd around to hold us accountable. If we took it too far, there were people there to pull us off each other. We obviously fought outside these nights, too, but during the event, there was a level of safety that contained us a little more, and tonight, that's what I was looking for.

"Don't assume because we fuck now that I'm going to let up on you," Maddox said, appearing right beside me.

I didn't look at him. I was too afraid of getting a hard dick before the fight started. I sipped my beer and watched the two men on the beach beat the shit out of each other. "If anything, it makes me want to fuck you up

even more,” I admitted. It was truthful, but I wasn’t too concerned with the reason behind it.

Maddox laughed. “Good.”

We stood there together, but not really together. Just beside each other, waiting our turn, being close because we fuelled one another’s fire. It might be weird to get in the ring with him without having an actual fight first, but I was sure I could piss him off somehow. I was even more sure he’d find a way to piss me off.

“Are they friends now?”

“Why aren’t they fighting already?”

“No way they get along.”

“Why are they so calm?”

Yeah, I guess the sight of us together was something new, so I didn’t overly blame people for taking notice of it. I was the one who’d been fucked by him and even I felt weird about it.

“Wanna up the ante?” Maddox asked with a tone of deviance in his voice.

I finally turned to face him and thanked my lucky stars I hadn’t looked earlier. Fuck, he was sexy. Dark, dangerous, and powerful. He wasn’t wearing a shirt, and under the fading sun of the evening, his chest looked strong and broad. His jaw was stubbled, but the scruff never grew in along the scar on his jawline. I hated that fucking scar because of how he got it, but damn if it didn’t make him look harshly beautiful.

“What’s the bet?” I asked. “And don’t bet anything you can’t follow through on, asshole.”

He scoffed and rolled his eyes. “I’m not a little bitch like you are, Sawyer.”

This felt good. This was familiar. “What’s the bet?” I repeated before we ended up fighting before our turn.

Maddox squared his shoulders and faced me fully. His chest called my attention, and his abs, while not a full six-pack, were tight and tense. I fought hard to keep my eyes on his. He was confident and cocky, and when he stated his conditions, he didn’t even falter. “When I win, I want to bend you over the fucking guardrail and fuck you from behind.” His jaw clenched.

My cock got hard. Fucking cheater! I swallowed the surge of arousal threatening to take over my anger. I needed to stay pissed off if I wanted a chance at winning this fight.

“What do I get if I win?” I asked. “*When* I win,” I corrected.

He almost grinned. “What do you want, Sawyer?”

So many things. Fucking hell, so many things.

I stepped closer to him. To anyone else, it’d look like we were squaring off, getting ready to fight, making our bets and settling our deals. But they couldn’t feel the level of tension encapsulating us, and they had no idea there was a sexual undertone to it now.

“I want you on your knees behind that bend with my cock down your throat.” I nodded down the length of the beach.

He licked his bottom lip and glared at me. “So, it’s a deal then?”

“It’s a deal.”

We shook on it, and when our palms connected, the challenge was clear. Neither of us would back down from this fight. There’d be no holding back.

Not a damn chance.

21

—MADDOX—

BLOODY, BRUISED, AND HALF-CONSCIOUS, that's how my night was going.

But I had my eye on the fucking prize. Devon, bent over the rail, taking my cock like a sexy power bottom and loving every minute of it was clear in my mind. I was so close to getting what I wanted, I could practically feel the tight clench of his ass around my dick.

He swung at me, pain exploding behind my eye. The gathered crowd went wild. I went wild. I swung back, missing him by a hair, my swing going wide and allowing him to get his arms around me. I struggled against him, but when he got a good grip on me, he flipped me onto my back, the sand colliding with my head.

My blood burned up my veins.

“What's the matter, Kane?” Devon taunted. “Prize not good enough to give me your best?” He slammed his knee into my ribs and his elbow cracked against my shoulder.

I tried to pin his arms, blocking my face at the same time. I bucked my hips and his hold on me faltered, allowing me enough time to get him

flipped over and climb on top. I hooked my legs around his and pinned him beneath me. At this moment, I didn't give a shit that the dynamic of our relationship had changed. All I wanted to do was win. I wanted to wipe that smug smile off his pretty fucking face, and gloat about my goddamn victory. That was who we were together—competitors, rivals, equals.

The crowd started counting down from ten. Winners were decided by the crowd after ten minutes of fighting, unless someone got knocked out. I didn't want to acknowledge the tiny part of my mind that didn't want to knock him out. Because...fuck, I wanted to bang him over the rail. Kinda needed him to be awake for that. Right?

I slammed my fist into his jaw and watched as blood coated his lips. Devon grabbed my wrist and twisted it hard, pulling me off him with the pain of it. I shouted out an angry battle cry until we were rolling in the sand, fighting for the top position while the crowd got close to the end of their countdown.

Three. He landed a punch to my gut.

Two. I punched him in the kidney.

One. We lunged at each other.

“Over! Over! Over!” someone shouted, but fuck that. We weren't close to being done.

“Fuck you, Sawyer!” I yelled at him, holding him around the waist, trying to get him on his back.

“I knew you wouldn't fight fair, you dick!” he shouted back, bringing his knee up to give me a leg cramp in my hamstring.

“Boys!”

“Madd!” Xavi jumped on me, pulling me off Devon. “Fuck,” Xavi half-laughed, trying to contain me.

“You piece of shit, Kane,” Devon spat blood at me when he yelled, trying to wiggle free of Nate’s hold. “Can’t take a loss so you fight dirty?” he accused.

“What the fuck was dirty about that? It’s not my fault you don’t know how to take a hit. Fuck you.” I glared at him, furious now. Maybe he just had that effect on me. Always had, so I didn’t know why I expected it to change now.

Devon started to shout some bullshit, but Nate pulled him away and Xavi got in my face.

“You good?” he asked. “Relax, Madd.”

“Who won?” I asked, trying to look around to see what way the crowd would go. I needed to know I was going to get my prize.

I paced in front of Xavi, but he wasn’t dumb enough to let me go; he kept a hand on my chest and paced with me, staying in my path to Devon.

“They haven’t said yet,” Xavi laughed. “What got into you? You two always go full out, but tonight was different.” He handed me my shirt, and I used it to wipe the blood from my brow and the corner of my mouth.

“We upped the bet,” I admitted, still trying to calm down. I watched Devon across the sand, seeing him in the same mental space as me, which was reassuring.

I didn’t even wince when Xavi brushed sand free from some of my cuts. “What was the prize?” he asked. “Something good?”

I wiped my mouth with the back of my wrist. “Something I really fucking want.”

The crowd went nuts with chatter, trying to decide which of us had won. We usually brought forth a big crowd, but tonight, I just needed them to make up their minds and put me out of my misery. I was pent the fuck up,

ready to get this announcement over with, and more than ready to bend that cocky bitch over the rail and fuck him like I owned him.

Devon was on the opposite side of the makeshift ring, pacing the length of the crowd with Nate in front of him. There was blood on his face, chest, and lips, but fuck me if that wasn't a sexy sight. I didn't want to think of him as sexy right now! I wanted to continue this fight until one of us tapped out, passed out, or fucking died.

"Okay!" the guy running this show shouted. "And the winner is..." I held my breath. "Devon!"

No fucking way! Are you kidding me? Again? "He doesn't even know how to—"

"Maddox!" Xavi yanked me back.

I butted chests with my brother, wanting him to let me go, knowing that I shouldn't. Devon was gloating, and nothing pissed me off more than to watch him brag. He shot me a full-fledged smile that was both smug and bloody, and I was two seconds from running across the beach and drowning him in the ocean.

"I can't wait to look down at you, Kane!" he shouted across the sand.

My jaw clenched so hard my teeth almost cracked. Fuck him and his damn bet!

"I take it he really wanted whatever he won, too?" Xavi laughed.

I gave my brother the finger. "This is bullshit. I clearly won."

"Maybe you should learn to smile more. Win over the crowd, you know?"

I growled at him.

"Shit, alright. Let's get you outta here." Xavi started to pull me away, but Devon shook his head in warning.

“Where you going, Maddox? You have a deal to keep!” Devon shouted loud enough for everyone to hear.

The pricks watching looked at each other, staring between us, trying to figure out what had changed between the two of us. Taunts and jibes weren’t anything new, but this...this was new. Whatever this was. We were mad at each other, but for the first time, there was a teasing, almost playful undertone to it, and it was throwing everyone off. Me included. How did we even get here?

I didn’t really care if they knew, but at the same time, fuck them and their nosy asses. Sucking up my pride, I nodded to the edge of the crowd to tell Devon I’d meet him there.

“What do you have to do?” Xavi asked as we cleared the crowd.

I ran my fingers through my hair, let out a deep breath, and met my brother’s green eyes. “Get on my knees and suck his dick.”

The smile Xavi beamed at me was blinding. He reached forward and rubbed at my cheeks. “Better loosen up that jaw then, bud.”

“Fuck you.” I smacked his hands away.

“You ever sucked a dick before?” Xavi opened and closed his mouth like he was feeling sympathy for my damn jaw. Idiot. I didn’t answer him, so he pushed me to. “Well?”

“His, yeah. Back off, Xavi.” I walked away from him, pissed that I didn’t win, but not entirely unhappy about my punishment.

“Okay! Well, we don’t have a dental plan! Just remember that, Madd!” Xavi shouted after me.

I threw him the finger over my shoulder.

My eye was already a bit swollen, but it felt more like my cheekbone than my actual eye, so that was a bonus. My nose wasn’t bleeding anymore,

and the worst of my pain came from that cramp in my hamstring. Not too bad for losing.

Rigged. Devon rigged that fight, set it up so I'd lose. Paid off the official or something.

"Winning feels so fucking good!" Devon jumped on my back from behind. "Not that you'd know," he laughed.

I threw him off and swung at him, missing.

"Fight's over, Madd. Better luck next time," he said...again. He'd said the same damn thing at the track when I lost to him. I wasn't going to make this losing a habit, so he could fuck off about it.

He hadn't put on a shirt yet, and blood still dried on his chest. He had a bottle of water with him, which he drank, swishing it around in his mouth to spit out red. His blond hair was a hot mess, and his cheek, the one I'd stitched, was bleeding a bit. His knuckles were busted up, but that was about the worst of it. I should have hit harder, damaged him more, fucked him up a bit better.

He kept shit-talking. "Shit, we should up the bets on all our matches. Really gets my blood pumping."

"Would you stop?" I snapped at him. "You didn't even win. You cheated somehow."

"Aw, Madd. You sad?" He pouted as we walked down the beach. "Because I can't wait to have your mouth—"

"Madd? Babe?"

Fucking Julie.

22

—DEVON—

I TRIED TO TELL myself I had no right to stake any sort of claim on Maddox. I tried to talk myself off the jealousy ledge. I tried so hard to remind myself that Maddox wanted me, not this bitch. But that was really damn difficult when she stood right in front of us in a white string bikini with her full tits on display and her puppy-dog eyes pouting right at Maddox.

Julie was beautiful and sexy, wrapped up in low-income charm; we both knew it. Both saw it. He glared at me from the corner of his eye, unsure what to do or say to her. He was always quiet, but I needed him to speak up right now.

Unless he wanted her.

Unless she was tempting him.

Unless he remembered how much better a chick was than a guy.

Unless he'd rather go fuck her instead of sucking my cock.

Insecurities consumed me. Of course he'd rather get fucked than have to perform some sex act for me that he probably wouldn't even enjoy. Why the

hell had I made that the bet? Maybe if I'd said I wanted him to fuck me again I'd stand more of a chance.

Who was I kidding? Julie was the better option. At least she had a nice body, a full chest, and a wet pussy. He could go off with her and she'd do whatever the hell he wanted her to do. She wouldn't fight him on it, piss him off, challenge him, or refuse him anything. She'd submit, making him feel powerful, and comply with his every demand. That was their dynamic, and he'd obviously liked it because he was with her for a while. She didn't fight him like I did.

I was just some scarred, battered, bruised piece of shit who pissed him off more than I turned him on. I was nothing compared to her. I was his rival and his enemy since childhood. I was the guy who just stomped on his ego by winning that fight, and now he needed to go off and get his ego stroked. I was the guy who'd purposefully fucked with his life for as long as I could remember.

He'd never pick me. I was a one-off, a fluke, a one-time deal, an experiment that he'd remember but never want again. I was just the guy who ruined his day for the past fifteen years, and that didn't entitle me to any of his attention.

I had no hold on Maddox Kane. Especially because I had nothing to offer him except my shitbag life and my dad problems. Fuck, he'd been cut in the wrist because of my dad, and if we hadn't started any of this shit, he wouldn't have that scar now. All I was capable of was bringing him down in life and adding more stress to his already stressful existence. I was nothing.

Whereas Julie could offer him an actual life. She could marry him, give him a family, offer him some sort of home, and fuck him exactly how he

wanted. And he wouldn't even have to fight with her to get what he wanted. She was semi-put together, had a job, and even had hopes and plans. She was more than me. More than I'd ever be.

"Maddox?" Julie said again, stepping closer to him. "We need to talk."

Whenever a chick said that in this town, it usually meant a baby. Fuck.

"About what?" he asked impatiently.

Julie looked at Maddox and then at me. "Are you two...friends now?"

"What do you want, Julie?" Maddox was clearly annoyed. Maybe he was just doing it for my benefit. I needed to walk away and let them have this talk...this night.

"I just want to apologize and try to work things out," she cooed, her voice changing to become more seductive. Bitch had superpowers I didn't. "We were so good together. We can fix this, Maddy. Please."

Fuck it. I was out. I turned away from the water and went to take a step by Maddox, but he put a hand on my chest to stop me.

"Didn't you fuck Devon last year?" he asked her. "Weren't we supposed to be together then? So good together, at that."

"I...we were on a break!" she defended.

Maddox still had his hand on my chest when he said, "No, I don't remember a break. You fucked Devon, then you came back and fucked me, right?"

"No!"

"And then we stuck it out for a bit, even though you were still going off to flirt with Devon, yeah? Why? Just to make me jealous?"

"I didn't try to make you jealous! Nothing ever happened with Devon." She looked at me, hoping I'd confirm her lie.

“Liar,” I scoffed. Shit, I should have just shut my mouth and stayed out of this.

“Well, it worked,” Maddox went on. “You used Devon against me and it fucking worked. But you know what else it did?” He paused and Julie’s mouth gaped open. “It pissed me off and pushed me away.”

“Devon was...he pursued me!” Julie shouted.

Yeah, I sort of did. It felt like a good way to fuck with Maddox at the time.

“I believe that,” Maddox almost laughed. “Maybe I should make you jealous by using him now, yeah?” Maddox wrapped his arm around my chest and pulled my back to his front. What? Was he really doing this?

“What? What is...what is happening right now? This isn’t funny, Maddy.” Julie looked absolutely shocked, and I really couldn’t blame her. I was shocked, too.

Feeling a bit more bold, I pressed my ass back to his groin, making him groan right next to my ear. His lips were so close to brushing the skin of my neck as he taunted Julie.

“We’re done, Julie. Have been for a long time. Go back to the party.” He had a cold heart, but fuck her. Dismissed. “I know most of it is my fault, but there’s no point in dragging this out. You deserve better than both of us anyway,” he laughed.

Her eyes went wide and her lips pursed into a tight line while her mind caught up with what was happening. My mind was still catching up. He picked me over her. Holy shit.

No doubt she'd spill our secret all over the park, but would anyone actually believe her? And if they did? If the rumours started flying? Well, I didn’t really give a shit, but I didn’t know how Maddox felt about it. He

was the one doing the taunting right now, and he wasn't dumb enough to think she'd keep it to herself, so he must have been okay with it on some level.

Maddox didn't wait for her to respond. He shoved me from behind and kept shoving me until we were moving away from Julie. The farther we got from her, the more my insecurities came back. He didn't say anything, like usual, but my mind spun with all the things he'd just turned down. A good woman, the potential for a future, good sex, a hot body, and a normal relationship. Yeah, she cheated on him a year ago, but she wasn't an all-around terrible person. He could do well with her. At least she had her shit together and held down a real job.

"Wait." I stopped him. "You should go back to her, Madd. She's... she's..."

"She's what?" he asked casually.

How the hell did I phrase it without sounding like an insecure fool? "She's..."

"History," he said. "Not what I want. Not even on my fucking mind. We done?"

"You can't give up on a future that—"

His laugh cut me off. "A fucking future? What the hell do you know about my future, Sawyer? You think you know what I want, you dumb fuck?"

My blood boiled and my fists clenched, mostly because he was embarrassing me, and I didn't fucking appreciate that. "I know you want a better life than you've got now! I know you have the option of a beautiful girl who can give you a family and a way out of here! A girl who—"

“Fucked my enemy? Cheated on me? Did everything in her power to make me jealous to get my attention?”

I fumbled for words.

“You feeling insecure, princess?” he mocked, taking a step closer to me.

I threw my fist at him on instinct, but he caught it.

“You know what I want out of life, Devon?” He glared at me and I struggled to get out of his hold, wondering how the fuck I beat him tonight when he had that kind of grip. “Someone to match my anger. A worthy opponent, hot sex, a simple life with my brother, motocross, and a douchebag with a big mouth.” He smacked me right in the mouth, cementing his point. “Someone who makes me agree to get on my knees and put his cock down my throat after beating me in a fucking fight I should have won.”

“Maddox—”

“I’m not done. I wanna live in this shitty town, maybe get out of it now and then for fucked up trips and stupid adventures, but I like it here. I want a job that gets me by, a hobby that keeps me interested, and a roof over my head that keeps me dry. I don’t know what that means for us exactly, but I know that I’d rather get on my knees for you than fuck her.” He hooked his head in Julie’s direction. “So, stop telling me about families and futures you know nothing about. Maybe the family thing happens someday, and maybe it doesn’t. I’m not at that part yet. But right now, every day starts with me being pissed off at you. Every day ends with me being even more pissed off at you. And in the middle, you make me feel shit no one else does, and that pisses me off even more. You piss me off, Devon. Always have. But it excites me and gets my dick hard. You make me want shit I never knew I wanted, feel things I never felt before, and hope for things that weren’t ever

an option. You're a piece of shit asshole from Garron Park, and you're what I fucking want. So...we good?"

What the fuck was happening inside me? My chest got all crampy, my stomach roiled, and my goddamn eyes were about to combust. Was my throat closing in? Where was the air?!

A tidal wave of completely unwanted emotions surged up my throat and got stuck in my windpipe, cutting off my breath until it came out in a forced choke of *feelings*. Feelings!

No one had ever said anything like that to me before...and I didn't know how to handle it.

"Fuck you for saying that, you prick!" I shoved him in the chest. "Fuck you for...for making me like this!" I shouted, slamming my fist against his chest. "Fuck you for all of it!"

He smirked at me, which just pissed me off even more.

"You're such an asshole," I growled at him.

"I know," he laughed. He kept that smug grin on his face as he pulled on the front of my shorts, wrapped his arms around me, and hugged me for the first time. "Don't tell anyone I'm doing this. And don't read into it."

We were doing everything extremely backward, and it felt good anyway. Sex before hugging. Enemies before...whatever we were—still enemies but sorta fuck buddies slash lovers. Hate before lust. It was all churned up and out of order, but it felt right. Honest.

I hugged him back, and closed my eyes to let myself enjoy the rush of emotions I didn't want anyone to see. I didn't even want Maddox to see them, but for this moment in time, this instant, I'd allow myself to feel them. Just for a minute or two.

“I still won the fight,” I said against his hair. “You still owe me a blowie.”

He didn’t say anything, but I felt his cheek pull into a smile.

23

—MADDOX—

JULIE FUCKED THINGS UP with our fight bet, but I was still on my knees with Devon's cock in my mouth. The aggression and excitement from the fight, the bet, and his victory had fizzled out when Julie showed up like a buzzkill at the worst possible time. Shit got a bit sentimental, Devon got begrudgingly emotional, and the mood changed. But like fuck was I going to let the night end there.

While everyone else was busy at the beach, partying in the glow of the fights, I brought Devon back to my place, checked to make sure my mom wasn't home, and dropped to my knees on the kitchen floor.

I wouldn't say I loved sucking dick, but I enjoyed the reactions it pulled from Devon. Immensely. I might have been the one on my knees, but he was at my complete mercy. Just how I liked him.

"Maddox...fuck." He groaned, trying to keep his shit together. Another thing I was learning to like about Devon was that his loud mouth was good for more than taunting me. He was a vocal person, and that had its benefits during sex. So hot.

I took him into my mouth and used my hands on the base of his cock. He moaned low in his throat, pushing on my head like the bossy fucker he was. The head of his cock touched the back of my throat, but by some miracle, I kept my gag silent. Didn't want to give him even more of a complex than he already had.

"Fuck, you look good with my cock down your throat," he rasped at me. "Look at me."

What a control freak. I looked up at him, his blue eyes burning with pleasure fires, and his lips parted with his attempt to control his breathing. His hand came up to touch my chin.

"Open," he demanded.

I opened my mouth wider, confused at how easily I abided. Devon thrust into my mouth harder, making my eyes close and my nose open to breathe.

"Open your eyes and look at me," he ordered.

I complied. Not because he told me to, but because this was hot. I didn't overly want to be submissive, but I didn't hate seeing him dominant. Flawed, but sexy.

He fucked my mouth, his hand still on my chin and his eyes watching everything. My vision blurred with tears, but I kept my mouth open and used my tongue to lick him every time he pulled out. The best part about sucking his cock was the way it became yet another battle for power. He thought he was winning, and I *knew* I was winning, and in the end, it'd be mutually beneficial no matter who came out on top.

"Fuck, Maddox," he growled.

And even though I knew it was coming, I wasn't fully prepared for the assault of his cum filling my mouth and hitting the back of my throat. His cock throbbed with each spurt, and he cursed my name over and over while

I just tried to breathe and get through it. Some of his cum slid down my throat, and then I quickly closed it off. Fuck. He pulled out and I immediately grabbed a towel, spitting out the rest but trying not to make it obvious. Okay, so maybe I couldn't swallow a whole mouthful yet. I'd work on that.

Devon pulled me to my feet with a laugh. "You can choke on a dick without gagging, but you can't swallow a load?"

I did gag, I just didn't let him hear it. "Fuck you." I wiped my face and tossed the towel. "I wasn't ready for all that! I've never had cum in my mouth before, and Jesus, I didn't realize there'd be so...much." I mean, I'd seen my own cum a hundred times, but it felt like more when it was all contained in my mouth.

Devon grinned and tugged on my hair as his other hand pulled up his shorts. He kissed me slow and sexy, licking the remnants off my lips and smirking while he did it. "Still sexy as fuck. You sure you never sucked a dick before? Goddamn, Maddox."

I turned away from his praise so he couldn't tell I was blushing.

"Don't take this as gloating," Devon started, which meant it was totally going to be gloating, "but I really fucked up your face. Let me patch it up." He laughed, pressing his fingers to the sensitive bruise under my eye.

"It's gloating. Bragging," I scoffed. That fight felt like forever ago, but the aches in my body reminded me that only a few hours had passed.

I sat on the couch and Devon sat on the coffee table, cleaning my cuts and putting ointment on them. I had to teach this idiot how to do it. Like, who lived here, without medical insurance, and didn't know how to take care of injuries? That was Garron Park 101.

“Did you mean all that shit you said?” he asked, not looking at my eyes as he dabbed at my cheek.

I shrugged. “Yeah.”

“You don’t want to leave this place? Garron?”

“It’s not the place that fucks with me,” I admitted. “It’s just the situation. I don’t want to look after my drunk mom forever, give every penny I make to my dad and this trailer, and never get ahead. I want out of *that* shit, not necessarily the town.”

He ran the pad of his thumb under my eye, coating the cut with antibiotic gel. “I don’t wanna live under my dad’s control forever, either.”

My jaw clenched at the mention of his dad.

Devon noticed, so he said, “Me and Nate always wanted to open a little shop down by the docks. Fix boats and shit, you know? Maybe rent a slip and have a boat or rent it out for more money. It’s a pipe dream, but it’s still a dream.”

“That shitty building beside O’Malley’s is for sale,” I offered up my insider knowledge from working at the docks. “I think he wants to sell the whole place. Docks, fuel pumps, garage, the whole business.”

Devon smirked at me. “Yeah. How the fuck am I gonna buy that? Plus, at this point, if my dad finds out we’re looking, he’ll find a way to fuck it up just to make us miserable.”

I hated that man more than I’d ever hated my own dad.

“Why do I get the impression you’d actually kill him?” Devon asked.

“Because I fucking would.” Maybe not outright, but I’d kill him to protect Devon if it ever came down to it.

“Why? Why risk it all for me?”

“Because.”

“Because?”

“Because...you’re mine or some shit.” I blushed for real this time. “I don’t want him fucking with you. I don’t want you looking over your shoulder because of him. I wanna...protect you.” I gave him a look that dared him to mock me for that. Yeah, I’d been laying out feelings all goddamn night, and I was vulnerable as hell at the moment, but fuck him if he wanted to tease me about it.

Devon wet his smirking lips and leaned back to set the gel down. “You turning into my protective boyfriend, Maddox?”

I rolled my eyes. “Protective, yeah. You’re a pussy who needs someone watching out for you.” I didn’t touch the boyfriend part. Yet.

“Even though I just beat the shit out of you?” he joked.

“You cheated,” I snapped. “I’m serious, Devon. I don’t want your dad ruining your life forever. Even when I hated you more, I didn’t want that. No one deserves that shit.”

Devon moved to sit beside me on the couch. “I know,” he relented. “We’ll find a way out of our fucked up lives somehow, right?”

I hoped so. I wanted to believe it was true, at the very least. Thinking about my future had always been more of a distant dream than an actual plan. Xavi and I were slowly saving up the money we could keep hidden from our dad, but now that this shit was going on with Devon’s dad, it made me think about things in a new light.

Urgency. It felt dire. I started to think of my future as something that was happening right now rather than something I was striving for. Devon was in danger all the time because of his dad, and I’d meant what I said to him on the beach. I wanted to fuck with him forever. I didn’t know how long forever meant to me, but I realized, one way or another, Devon would be in

my life. I used to want him out of it, or at least, that's what I told myself. But now? Now I wanted him to be the biggest part of it, and his dad was putting a big fucking damper on those goals.

So maybe I didn't know exactly what I wanted out of life, and maybe I didn't know what role I wanted Devon to play, but I did know that Jim Sawyer was getting in the way of my budding dreams.

Couldn't plan a future with Devon if he was gonna end up dead at his dad's hand. So fuck Jim Sawyer. It was time to remove him as the obstacle in my way.

24

-DEVON-

HO-LY FUCK.

Pleasure like I'd never known before sparked through my body at an intensity that threatened delusional thoughts and false realities. My knuckles were white underneath the cuts that lined them, gripping the bathroom vanity so hard it rocked in this piece of shit trailer.

Maddox held onto my hips, pounding into me from behind with the ferocity of a wild fucking animal. A strangled groan of pure satisfaction escaped me.

"Fuck," Maddox panted. "Shut the fuck up, Devon."

But Maddox rocked into me deep and hard and that same sound left me again. He cursed me and clamped his hand over my mouth to shut me up.

"Dev? You good?" Nate shouted through the bathroom door. "Something happen?"

"Look what you did," Maddox accused in a whisper. He removed his hand so I could answer and softened his thrusts until they were mostly silent. But he sure as shit didn't stop fucking me.

“Yeah, all good.” I turned my head to look at Maddox. He glared at me, sweat lining his forehead and chest. “Fuck,” I complimented and complained at the same time.

He kicked my legs apart and bent me over even more, changing the angle. My hands lost their grip on the counter and I fell forward, knocking toothbrushes everywhere.

“Devon!” Xavi shouted through the door. “Did you fucking fall or something?” Why were they so worried about me?

“I’m trying to shower! Fuck off!” I shouted through the door.

“Is Madd in there?”

Maddox shook his head in the mirror, grinning at me. He reached around my front and gripped my dick, jerking it in time with his thrusts.

I moaned, trying to bury the sound in my arm. “No, he left for work already.” To Maddox, I added, “You gotta climb out the window now.”

He leaned forward, chest pressed to my back. He slowed his pace, fucked me deep, jerked me off, and kissed my neck between words, his teeth grazing my skin. “Are you going to think about this all day, Devon?” he teased. “Me fucking you? My cock filling your ass and driving you wild?”

I bit my lip to stifle my moan of affirmation.

“My cock feel good in your ass, Devon?” He bit my neck. “Answer me.”

“Yes,” I rasped. “Fuck, yes.”

“You like it when I fuck you?”

“Yes.” He was such an asshole, but I loved this version of him.

“Devon?” he asked, hitting that perfect spot inside me, jerking me off just right. “You ever want to switch?”

“Mmmm.” I lost my mind.

“You want to fuck me?” He was a criminal. He should be locked up for coercion. “Do you?” He pulled me upright.

I groaned so long and so low my head fell back against his shoulder. My mind swirled with visuals of that, my body tensed, and my cock fucked his fist without him even having to move his hand. “Yes. Fuck, yes. So bad.”

Maddox smirked against my neck, and then in the sexiest, raspiest, most gravelly dominant voice I’d ever heard, he whispered, “Next time we fuck, you can bend me over and come in my ass.”

That did it. My orgasm ripped through my body. My head fell back completely, and my cock throbbed, pulsing spurts of cum into the sink. Thank fuck I knocked those toothbrushes off. Maddox growled his approval against my neck and shoulder, and when I started to sag down the vanity, he held me up with a hand around my throat. That was my move.

“Jesus fuck, Madd,” I gasped. So impressed right now, but also, “You better mean that.”

He grinned and stayed quiet. I pressed my ass back, fucking his cock as my body cooled and the tension started to ease.

“You better come, Maddox. You have three minutes before you have to leave.” Someone’s watch blinked the time at me from the back of the sink’s tap. “Three minutes.”

He looked down to watch me. I gyrated my hips and fucked him slow, deep, and sensual. He let go of me, giving me control. The only point of contact between our bodies was his cock in my ass, and I loved it.

Maddox groaned, continuing to watch. “Fuck, that’s hot.” He reached for my hips but stopped himself before he touched me. “Keep going. Feels so fucking good.”

I watched him in the fogged mirror. His brows furrowed, his lips parted, his chest stopped moving altogether, and he moaned so deeply I could barely hear it. He bent over in pleasure, coming inside me, allowing himself to touch me again.

“Ah, holy shit,” he groaned, adding a string of nonsense at the end.

I loved it when he came because it made him vocal when he usually wasn't. I let him get his shit together for a moment, and then I moved. The loss of his dick in my ass was abrupt, but he spun me around and kissed me like he couldn't wait a second longer. I hated how much I loved this shit. Using one of those shitty yellow towels, he cleaned us both up and turned the shower from cold to hot. It'd only been background noise and we hadn't wanted to waste the hot water.

“Thanks for the bathroom fuck, Devon,” he laughed, pulling his pants on.

“You're not showering?”

He shook his head. “My three minutes are up. Worth it, though. I gotta go to work.” He kissed me again, his finger and thumb pinching my chin. “I meant it,” he added with a grin. He meant it. He wanted to switch roles. With one more kiss, he opened the door.

“Window!” I hissed.

His only response was another smug grin. He closed the door behind him, the sound of the shower not enough to block out the taunts he was getting, and more than likely, walking right through.

Leave it to Maddox to walk right out and leave me to deal with Nate and Xavi's bullshit acquisitions.

Fuck you, Maddox Kane.



“NATE!” I SCREAMED.

“Mr. Sawyer,” a cop said from beside me, trying to grab my arm as I ducked. “This will be a lot easier if you just comply.”

Comply, my ass. “What the hell are you taking him for? He didn’t steal shit!” I shouted at the cop.

“Devon!” Nate yelled. “It’s Dad. He’s setting us up. Just calm down!”

I was tackled to the ground. My face pressed into the gravel lot of the Garron Park entrance, and my arms were forced behind my back, cuffs slapped over my wrists.

“Devon Sawyer, you’re under arrest for theft over five thousand,” the cop told me, naming off a bunch of shit I supposedly stole. “You have the right to remain silent.”

I tuned out the rest, staring at my brother with real fear. What the actual fuck was happening? And how could I protect him from this?

Thank fuck Maddox was at work, or he’d be in cuffs, too.

We were thrown into the backseat of a police cruiser just as Xavi ran up, asking what was going on.

I shook my head at him. “Don’t let Maddox do anything stupid,” I warned him.

Xavi looked between me and Nate, ignoring the cop who was trying to push him back. “What can I do?”

Nate leaned forward, pressing his head through the door the cop was trying to slam shut. I blocked it with my shoulder. “Find whatever the fuck

it is my dad says we stole!”

I should have known. All this time I’d been preparing for a physical altercation with my dad, but this was his big move. If he couldn’t kill me, he’d get me thrown in prison to get me out of his way.

I should have known he wouldn’t go down without a fight.

As we left Garron Park in the back of a police car, I closed my eyes and tried to hold on to something good.

He meant it. Maddox said he meant it.

I’d die trying to stay alive long enough to hold him to that.

25

—MADDOX—

NO ONE WAS HOME when I got back from work. There was a note from my mom saying she was at Gale's place up the road, but I expected Xavi to be around because he wasn't working. And as much as I hated to admit it, I'd gotten used to seeing the cocky smirk on Devon's face around here when I got home.

Where the hell was everyone?

I took a quick shower, trying hard not to get lost in the memory of this morning's bathroom fuck. Devon was so hot bent over the sink like that. Jesus. The way he fucked my cock like he knew exactly what I needed, trying to hold in his sounds and...I was getting hard again just thinking about it.

I stood under the semi-hot water, thinking about how much shit had changed since the night Devon showed up here beaten and bloodied by his dad. He'd gone from being my archnemesis to my hookup. How had that even happened?

My image of him started to change that day we pulled into town and saw his dad hit him over losing the race. Seeing him so vulnerable, in a position

I could relate to, scared and damaged...yeah, that shit hurt. It rocked me so hard, even if I didn't want to fully admit it to myself at the time. It made me realize I valued him in my life, even if he was my rival.

Sure, he was just the guy I fucked with, lived up to, taunted and teased regularly, but he was...consistent. Other than my brother, Devon was the only constant in my life, even when we were fighting all the time. I didn't put much pressure on that because I held on to the hate, but now that I knew he held such an important role, even back then, it was hard to think of a life he wasn't in.

I could even get behind the reasoning Xavi and Nate liked to spew about us being addicted to or obsessed with each other. Yeah, I sort of was addicted to him. He was the only person who brought any real excitement into my life. Other than my ongoing spats with Devon, all I had was the same shit over and over again. Wake up, find work, take care of Mom, shoot the shit with Xavi, dirt bike, dream about a hopeless future, pay Dad, make sure Mom was safe, find more work, and so on. That was my day, to varying degrees, but it was about the extent of it.

I don't think I ever stopped to think about how much I looked forward to Devon's challenges, insults, deceptions, and games. I thought I hated them, which I half-ass did, but they were also the only spice of variety I had.

And it's not like shit has changed much now. We still fought. We just fucked, too.

Coming to terms with that made it even easier to believe that our aggression had turned into attraction. Yeah, we had thick-as-fuck tension, and now we also had hot-as-fuck sex. It made sense. Once I got over the shock and shame of actually being attracted to the guy who I was supposed to hate, it resonated, became clear, and didn't seem too far-fetched.

It was everything else floating around in my mind and heart that was confusing me now. I felt things for Devon. *Felt!* Felt things that were more than physical, more than hate and frustration, and more than competitiveness. I felt *for* him. I felt him in that beating organ that ticked away in my chest.

The fucking weasel had worked his way into my heart, and I had no idea how to get him out. I started to think I didn't even want to get him out anymore, that he'd brainwashed me so hard I was...more than addicted to him. Dependent on him or something lame like that. Were we going to have some normal relationship? Would that ever be enough for me? I loved that Devon pissed me off just as much as he turned me on, and to be honest, I didn't want that part to change. He'd always been my best rival, and none of this shit *should* change that.

I told him that night on the beach that I wanted someone with a big mouth, someone who pushed me and pissed me off, and that had been the truth. I said it in a generalized way, but I think we both knew I was talking about him. I wanted him in my future, and I think...I think I wanted him as the biggest part of my future.

That fucking fucker! He did this to me! With his hard dick and his vulnerable eyes, he tricked me into falling for him. He won me over with taunts and chirps, and he made me angry enough to act on what I really wanted. He fooled me into feeling this way, and shit... I hated him so much. I wanted him so bad.

And I'd sure as shit meant what I told him this morning. I wanted to get fucked by him, and I couldn't wait to try it. Never, not even once, had I fantasized about something up my ass, and here I was, falling for Devon's trickery, craving his dick up there.

Pathetic.

I finished up in the shower, got dressed, and headed out the front door to find someone. I didn't know where Devon was, but I was gonna find him, and I was gonna get fucked by him. In that order.



I GOT A STRANGE feeling when I walked through Garron Park and the front porches were all vacant. There weren't too many nights when residents weren't grilling on their porches or over their fires, sitting and drinking, or gossiping about the current events in the park. The odd elderly person sat on their lawn chairs and porch swings, but otherwise, the park was eerily silent.

I walked to the Sawyer's trailer, hoping Devon hadn't gone home alone. But no one was home, not even Jim. I couldn't find Nate or Xavi anywhere, and I wondered if maybe they picked up some random last-minute shifts somewhere.

Xavi would have left a note, though.

I was about to go home and take advantage of the whole place to myself, but shit got real when I walked by the common area at the centre of the park. The grassy, mostly dirt yard was swarming with groups of people who didn't usually hang out. As I got closer, I heard Devon's last name, his name, and Nate's name, and the word *cops* in hushed tones.

"Madd," someone called me over, but I was focused on Andrea, our neighbour who helped Devon that weekend. She was the only one who really knew things were changing and that I actually cared about Devon.

“What’s going on?” I asked her. “What happened?” I searched the area for Devon, but there was nothing but his name floating around.

“Calm down, honey,” Andrea said. “But...Nate and Devon were arrested.”

I stopped dead in my tracks, searching her eyes for answers. All they showed me was worry and a lot of concern. “For what?” I asked, trying to keep myself together.

Arrested? No! No fucking way they did anything that stupid. This had Jim written all over it, and like fuck was I going to let him get away with locking up my...Devon. My fists were clenching, itching to do something, my neck got hot, and a million versions of the future flashed before my eyes. I held onto the one I wanted.

“Theft,” Andrea answered. “Maddox, honey, look at me.” Andrea tilted my head towards her. “We’ll get them out of this. The whole park is coming together to speak against Jim.”

It wouldn’t be enough. “He was the one who filed the report?”

Andrea nodded. “We think so.”

The gathered residents started shouting my name and pointing at me, and then Xavi rushed through the field, looking relieved as hell to see me.

“Madd! Thank fuck,” he gushed, wrapping his arms around me. “Did you hear?”

“What are we doing about this, Xavi?” I snapped, pushing him back, ready to make a damn plan. There was no time for this hugging bullshit. I had a fuck buddy to bail out. “What’s the bail?”

Xavi ran his fingers through his hair and shook his head. “We can’t afford the bail, Madd. Not even with everyone chipping in. This is so fucked.”

“What’d they steal? Or what do they think was stolen? What are they being charged with?” I fired questions at him. “Have you talked to them?”

Xavi shook his head and dropped his hands from his hair. “I saw them get cuffed. Devon told me not to let you do anything stupid, and Nate said to find whatever they were accused of stealing, but fuck! I don’t know what it is, Madd. The cops won’t tell me shit, and no one around here has heard anything.” Xavi huffed, looking at me with a serious expression. “I know you and Dev are rocky or whatever, but I need your help, man. I need...”

“I’m in, Xavi. Whatever the fuck it takes, I’m in.” With absolute certainty. Not only did Nate and Devon not deserve this, but I was possessive of Devon. No one got to take him from me.

I wasn’t sure what this primal instinct was, but it felt a lot like ownership. Whatever. I was rolling with it. I’d handle this clusterfuck of feelings when I had the time to think about it. Right now, I needed to figure out how to keep Devon in my life, because shit, while there was something sexy about saying your boyfriend was in prison, I did not want to actually live that reality.

Someday, Devon was going to be mine. My boyfriend. And he wasn’t going to be my prison boyfriend unless I was in that fucking cell with him. Since my brother wouldn’t let me go to jail, I’d have to find a way to get Devon out. And then make him pay me in sexual favours.

Proving their innocence was key, but finding bail money to get them out was my priority. We needed them both out here, working with us to clear their names, and if anyone knew how their dad’s fucked up mind worked, it was them.

I had a jailbreak to plan.

26

—DEVON—

GARRON DIDN'T HAVE MUCH of a jail. It was more like a communal holding cell that typically housed drunk idiots until they sobered up enough to get home safely. It wasn't that intimidating being in here; it actually wasn't even my first time here. Maddox and I had spent a night here when we were teens. The cops had picked us up from one of our more heated brawls, thrown us in here, and told us to cool off before they let us loose. We never cooled off, but it was the first night we spent together.

I wasn't feeling nostalgic for it right now.

The scariest part about being here was that we weren't out there trying to clear our names, and if we didn't get these charges dropped within twenty-four hours, Garron police would ship us to an actual prison a few towns over while we waited for the rest of the charges to be finalized.

I knew Xavi would help. He was a loyal friend to Nate, and I was glad my brother had someone like him in his corner. But me? I had no one. Unless Maddox was going to try to get me out.

Would he? Did he care enough to help me? Were we building something that would last? Something like a relationship, or at least, some fucked up,

flawed friends-with-benefits dynamic? Would a fuck buddy bail me out of jail?

Sitting here surrounded by bars, knowing I had next to no one in this world, really put things into perspective. Yeah, I'd been feeling sorry for myself like a fucking fool for months, maybe even years now, but what had that accomplished? I'd resigned myself to this role in life, the one where I was trapped, stuck, not allowed to hope, and destined to become my dad. But now that the possibility of *more* was being threatened, I realized hard and fast there was so much more I wanted to live for.

That shop Nate and I dreamed about suddenly felt so perfect. Getting my own place, maybe with Nate or something, felt like the best possible dream. I wanted to do things—not monumental things, mind you—but things! I wanted to work hard, fuck hard, fight with Maddox, have a safe place to call home, and be proud of something. Anything, really.

I wasn't the same piece of shit my dad was. Nate and I watched each other's backs to ensure we didn't fall into his shadow. Sure, we lived in fear of him, but we weren't him. We did better, made our own way, and stayed away from the bottle and the gambling dens when we got desperate for money. That in itself was something I could be proud of. But sitting here in this fucking holding cell made me wonder if it didn't matter, anyway. We ended up here regardless of how hard we tried not to.

"Devon," Nate called to me. "Don't give up. Hear me?" He sat down on the bench beside me, eyes wide and stern. "Don't you fucking dare give up. We're better than this."

Were we? How did he know what I was thinking? Back when my mom was more verbal, she used to tell me my thoughts were clearly written on my face. Maybe my brother could read my facial language.

“We’re never going to escape him,” I mumbled, feeling defeated now that I realized I had actual hopes and dreams slipping through my fingers.

“Don’t be an idiot,” Nate scoffed. “They won’t find any proof. Dad can’t just claim we stole something and that be it. They have to prove it.”

“He obviously proved it enough for us to get arrested!” I shouted, trying to calm down. “And now we’re stuck in here without a way to clear our names, Nate. There’s no one out there helping us!”

Nate leaned his head back against the concrete wall, rolling his eyes at me. “So quick to write yourself off, Devon. You get so caught up in how one person—one fucking person—makes our life hell, that you forget there are good people around us all the time.”

There were good people, but none of them would help a guy like me. “Who? Who would give enough of a shit to help?”

“Andrea loves you like you’re her own kid. You know that, right? And Mary and Kathy won’t just let dad get away with this. They see how he treats Mom. Xavi is out there right now, tearing the fucking world apart to help us. I know he is. He’s my person.”

“How do you know?” I honestly needed the answer because I couldn’t understand how he could so loyally and blindly trust someone like that. Was there something broken inside me that I didn’t have that capability, or was I just so shitty at life that I didn’t have a person like he did?

“Because I asked him to. He won’t leave us, man. Fuck.” Nate shook his head. “And I know you’re too stubborn to admit it, but Maddox is—”

“Is what?” I butted in. “He’s nothing. We’re fucking around, Nate. That’s it. He’ll eventually get bored and go back to someone like Julie. He doesn’t care enough about me to help with this shit.” I knew I was being a dick, but my head was in a dark place, and I couldn’t drag myself out of it.

Nate let out a frustrated laugh. “You know what, Devon? I hope Madd kicks your ass for being so quick to doubt him. I hope he knocks your teeth out and puts you in line. Don’t doubt him just because you’re all low on yourself.” He sat up, blue eyes glaring at me. “But if you wanna keep acting like a selfish, sorry-for-himself little bitch, then you don’t deserve his love and loyalty anyway.”

Love? Love! *Love?* “His fucking...what?” Not a goddamn chance Maddox loved me. He still wanted to kill me half the time.

“Oh, get your head out of your ass, Devon. I know you’ve been all secretive about what you two are doing, but that guy you claim doesn’t care enough about you? Yeah, he fucking loves you in whatever weird way he can. You’re allowed to keep your competitiveness and your rivalry and still care about each other. None of that shit has to change. You fucking get that, right? So shut up about him going back to Julie, alright? He’s sold on your bullshit. Fuck knows why.”

My heart hit my heels, my stomach flipped right the fuck out, and my mind snapped on all synapses, trying to figure out what the hell this all meant. Maddox couldn’t love me; he was still too put off by the fact he was fucking his enemy. Right?

But then memories were playing out in my mind like a highlight reel, showing me things I’d tried to write off as...what? Acts?

Maddox told Julie they were over. He pulled me against his chest and didn’t even try to hide our secret from her. He told me I was his, that he wanted to protect me. He fucking called me his. *Mine*, he had said, and holy shit...why was that just sinking in now? Maddox called me a piece of shit asshole from Garron Park and told me I was what he wanted. He’d been

admitting things to me in roundabout ways since this whole thing started, but I was too dumb and low on myself to pick up on it.

He might not love me, but we were...working towards something like it. Our own brand of feelings that fit us in a way the world wouldn't understand.

I stood up, a surge of adrenaline shooting through me with this newfound realization. Maddox wanted me, for whatever reason, and I wasn't done with him.

"I'm a piece of shit asshole from Garron Park," I told Nate. "Time to out-asshole Dad so I can get my hands around Madd's throat."

"Not exactly where I was going with that, but I like it," Nate laughed.

27

—MADDOX—

I FELT LIKE A trashy badass as I tossed the cheap cigarette from my fingers and blew out a cloud of smoke. Walking across the street in Redding, two towns over, I looked around to make sure we weren't being fucked with. I hated this town, and I hated being here, but this was the best idea I had.

"Madd." Xavi tried to slow me down, but fuck him; I was on a warpath to get my Devon addiction back. "Slow down for a sec. We don't want to go in there all guns blazing."

I wished I had a gun. That might make this easier. My cheap smoke and dirty work clothes I'd thrown on in a rush to find Devon weren't really intimidating, but they were the only things I had. Apart from a grudge, a vendetta, and something to lose, so that would have to be intimidating enough.

I just wished there was someone around to see my badass cigarette toss; Xavi clearly didn't appreciate it.

I banged on the front door of a small house, my fists permanently clenched.

“What’s the plan?” Xavi asked. “We just going to talk to him?”

I banged even harder. “Yeah, unless they decide to be douchebags.” I didn’t really have a Plan B if they decided to be douches, but I knew this was the answer we needed. Before Xavi could ask me anything else, the front door opened and a middle-aged man wearing sweats and a knock-off Nike sweatshirt stared at us.

“What?” he snapped.

“Where’s Patrick Harris?” I kept my tone neutral, letting him know I wasn’t going to cause a scene, but also showing him I wasn’t a bitch.

“Who’s asking?” Nike asked like he was some doorman-bodyguard combo.

“I’m asking,” I growled. “Get him or I’m coming in.”

“Don’t threaten me, boy,” the prick warned with some hillbilly accent that was mostly due to his missing front teeth, and partially due to the wad of tobacco stuffed in his lip.

“I’m Patrick Harris,” another man said from behind, walking up to the door. He was a bit more put together and didn’t have the undereducated accent, but he wore bright yellow aviators that looked fucking ridiculous. “Who are you?”

“You’re going to tell me what Jim Sawyer gave you to pay off his debts,” I ordered. “And if you don’t, I’ll find out anyway. So, you might as well just tell me.”

Nike tried to growl at me, but it came out airy from between the gap in his teeth. “You his kid?”

I didn’t answer.

“Alright. Come on.” Harris pulled Nike away from the door.

It felt too easy. This could be a trap, so Xavi gave me an uneasy look. He had my back, and I had his as we walked through the door and into a fairly well-kept kitchen.

I didn't know what this guy did for money, other than give out shady loans to shadier fucks, but I had to assume he was at least a half-decent businessman. I mean, he lent money to Jim Sawyer, so that was already diminishing my confidence in his smarts, but we'd see where this went.

"So, you wanna know about Jim?" he asked, sitting down at a worn wooden table.

I stood in the doorway to the kitchen and crossed my arms. "I wanna know what he used to pay off his debts," I said while Xavi came to stand beside me.

"Why?"

Fuck you, asshole. I might be slightly intimidated, but I wasn't about to let that show.

Harris and his lame aviators nodded at Nike. Nike set down a plastic grocery bag—of all things—and Harris rifled through it, pulling out papers and documents.

"He gave me the deed to...two trailers." He set the deeds on the table. "A dirt bike, pawned off some jewellery that wasn't worth shit, and...a boat. A really nice boat."

A damn boat? Jim didn't own a boat. I snatched the ownership papers for the boat out of his hands, looking them over while Nike pulled a gun and pointed it at me. Harris made him lower it, so I stopped shitting my pants and read the paper. Apparently, this boat Jim gave up was worth thirty grand. Luckily for me, I happened to know exactly what boat this was from working at the docks. And who owned it.

“You seen this boat yet?” I asked.

“Nah. Going to pick it up today.”

I had a feeling Jim would already be long gone. He’d either be on that boat, halfway to the Caribbean, or he’d have taken Nate and Devon’s truck and fled before any of the heat could come down on him. Jim was an asshole, but he was criminally smart sometimes. He had good instincts when it came to self-preservation, at the very least.

“You know somethin’ about it?” Harris asked.

I knew the actual owner, where it should be, and that it was what Nate and Devon were being accused of stealing. All I had to do was find that fucking boat and get them out.

Xavi cleared his throat, standing up straighter. “You clearly don’t give a shit about hot items, yeah?”

Nike laughed and Harris smirked.

“Give us today,” Xavi said, not asking. “You already know the boat is stolen, so give us today to find it. Do you know where it is?”

Harris shook his head. “Jim said he’d give me the location at six tonight.”

“Let us do it. Once we’ve found it, we’ll call you.”

“Why? I’ll get the location at six. Why should I make this deal?”

“Will you? You trust Jim?” I asked.

Harris didn’t answer that because he wasn’t entirely stupid. “You setting me up?”

I rubbed my temples and pocketed the ownership to the boat. Nike didn’t like that, and Harris got to his feet. “Look,” I snapped, stopping them both before they could pry it from my pocket. “I need that fucking boat for one thing. I know the owner, and once I’m done, I’ll get him to sign the

ownership over to you legally. That way, you aren't moving stolen goods. It'll be legit." It was the only thing I had to offer.

"How you gonna get some rich fuck to sign a boat over that has already been stolen?" Harris asked, looking at me like I was the dumb trailer trash I really was.

"Because I grew up there and I know some shit about that sleazy fuck." I just hoped it'd be enough of a threat. "Once I have it signed over to you, I'll drop off the damn paperwork myself. Deal?"

"And if you don't?"

Great fucking question. I'd hoped he wouldn't ask. *Here comes the biggest mistake of my life.* "Then I'll owe you the fifteen grand you would have been able to move it for."

"Maddox!" Xavi snapped at me, shaking his head. "No."

But I'd do it. I'd do it for Devon fucking Sawyer.

"Alright, deal," Harris agreed. "You have until midnight." He held out his hand to shake on the deal.

I didn't shake it. "You'll never come after Jim Sawyer's sons. Ever. If you're dumb enough to loan him money again, that's on you, not them."

Harris stared at me for too long, but he eventually nodded. "Deal."

I shook his hand this time.

As we walked out, I looked at the cigarette butt I'd tossed on my way in, crossing the street with my brother at my side. I didn't feel like so much of a badass anymore. More like an idiot who was putting it all on the line for one thing—some sort of fucked up love type thing for Devon.

"You better know what the fuck you're doing, Madd," Xavi warned me.

Yeah, I better, because there was no way I'd come up with fifteen grand if I couldn't pull this off.

I had a half-cocked plan. Quarter-cocked, at least. It had to work.



TURNED OUT, THE BOAT was being kept in a warehouse owned by the goddamn owner himself. He made some sort of deal with Jim Sawyer—make an insurance claim, get the money, and get Jim to put up his kids as collateral to go down for the theft. That last part wasn't even necessary. He could claim his boat was stolen and still claim the insurance money without fucking over Nate and Devon, but Jim was a hateful son of a bitch when it came to his boys. Stupid, cruel, not that far-fetched for someone of his calibre of asshole.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Steven, the boat owner, gulped in my face. "The boat was stolen yesterday. Right from my dock!"

Where there were conveniently no cameras. I guess that wasn't too odd for this area of town. "Cut the shit, asshole. We know where the boat is," Xavi snapped.

We'd already taken a shit ton of pictures for proof and had a few guys from Garron Park guarding the warehouse until we could get the cops there. I wasn't taking the risk of it being moved when Devon's ass was on the line. Literally.

Steven paled, his double chin shaking double-time as he shook his head at us. "Impossible!"

"Look, buddy," I got right in his face, "you're going to report it found, call off the insurance claim, drop the theft charges, call this whole thing a misunderstanding, and sign the ownership over to Patrick Harris." The

threat in my voice was clear, and I started to feel like that cigarette-tossing badass again.

“Why would I do that?” he gasped. “I already started the claim!”

Andrea got a friend to check the arrest warrant and the charges written up against the Sawyer boys. Steven here was the one to rat them out and provide some sort of evidence against them. I had no doubt Jim offered up the option, and this lowlife was eager to go along with the plan, not giving a single shit that he’d be ruining the lives of two young guys.

“If you don’t want me revealing the coke you push outta that house uptown, you’ll do exactly as I say, or we’ll have a fucking problem.”

I knew it was risky to threaten a drug runner, but fuck, this guy was small-time, relied on desperate kids who needed money for their families to take all the risk for him, and probably perved on them, too. He didn’t seem like he even had the balls to come after me when this was all said and done. I slapped the ownership on the picnic table in front of him, nodding at it. He was already glancing around all sketchy-like, getting nervous that I was causing a scene at the docks.

“Sign it, asshole,” Xavi demanded, crossing his arms. “Sign it, call the cops, report your boat found, and end this thing. Losing your boat is better than ending up in jail, yeah?”

Steven and his chins paled, but he took the pen from Xavi and signed the ownership over to Harris. Shit, that was a relief because I seriously had no idea where I’d get fifteen grand if he didn’t sign it over. I stuffed it in my pocket and nodded at his phone on the picnic table. “Now call the police and tell them where it is. And if that boat goes missing before I can get it to Harris, your coke deal goes to the cops, got it?”

“Wait!” Steven pleaded. “Let me at least move it out of the warehouse. I’ll dock it here and get my daughter to say she took it out without me knowing. Please.”

Xavi looked at me with raised brows, working over the specifics of that change in plan and wondering if there was a chance it’d screw us over.

“Fine. We’ll let you do that on one condition.” I looked at Steven, an idea forming that was insane. “Sell us the O’Malley building, the docks that go with it, and all the mechanical shit inside it for a quarter of what it’s worth.”

Xavi laughed at my unexpected demand. “Through a realtor to make it legit,” he added.

Steven laughed, but it soon faded when he realized we were serious. “You can’t expect me to take a loss like that!”

He was one of the only fuckers around here who could actually afford to take a loss like that. Plus, he was a slimy piece of shit and I didn’t care.

“If you don’t, you’ll go down for coke distribution, insurance fraud, and falsifying a criminal charge.” Xavi pulled one of our old phones from his pocket, showing Steven that this whole conversation had been recorded. It was bullshit. Pretty sure that phone didn’t even turn on anymore. “What’s it going to be?”

I had no idea where we planned to get the money for this building we were trying to buy, but fuck it, Devon mentioned a dream, and I didn’t mind stalking it like a nightmare to make it come true. He was going to be so pissed at me.

Steven agreed, called a realtor, and got it in motion.

After that, it took four hours, a lot of scowls, too many minutes standing idly by while cops investigated the boat and interviewed the daughter. They

closed the case and started the processing paperwork for Nate and Devon's release. But I had a deadline, and I couldn't go pick him up yet.

I once again looked at the cigarette butt on my way across the street, seeing three more with it now. When I slapped the ownership in Patrick's hand, I told him where the boat was, and then I told him to forget my face and never talk to me again. He was still wearing the yellow aviators, but he nodded. Done deal.

I leaned on the back of the truck in the parking lot of Garron's jail. Xavi was on a pay-as-you-go phone with someone, talking about the building we were buying, and I was staring at the front door, brimming with a weird mix of anxiety and anticipation about seeing Devon again.

"Thanks. See ya." Xavi hung up and hopped up on the tailgate to sit. "You did it for them, right?" Xavi asked.

Yeah, I did it for them. I didn't want the fucking building, and I sure as shit didn't have the money for it. Neither did they, but hopefully they'd be able to figure it out somehow.

"How are they gonna pay for it?"

"No idea," Xavi laughed. "It's currently in our name, and I wrote the truck and track trailer off against it, so they better come up with something fast. They'd never get another deal like that though, so it...thanks, Madd. For doing that for them."

I ignored that, my eyes on the door. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Where were they? Where was *he*?

"They're gonna hate us for putting them in debt, though," Xavi laughed.

"They'll get over it. If not, we can sell it for four times what Steven sold it to us for."

"You really went all out, Madd."

Again, I ignored that.

“You love him?”

I wanted him, respected him, hated him, needed him, and was damn near addicted to him, but was that love? More like obsession. “Fuck you, Xavi.”

He laughed, and then hopped up on the tailgate to stand. “Shit, they’re out!” He pointed at the front doors as Nate and Devon pushed through them. “Welcome back to reality, prison bitches!”

Fuck. Shit. He was here. What was I supposed to do now? How was I supposed to act?

A weak-ass part of me wished I’d never come so that Devon never knew I was involved. Plus, it would have been easier to greet him in private than here...in front of Nate and Xavi. Another weak part of me wanted to march across this lot, grip him by the cuff of his shirt, call him a stupid prick for letting his dad get one up on him, and then crush my mouth to his because...fuck! I missed him!

He flashed before my eyes and I resented him for it. Fuck him for making me worry!

28

—DEVON—

WAS I NERVOUS OR some shit? Fucking hell. What was wrong with me?

The street was dark and the side lot was empty, apart from Madd and Xavi's truck parked right in the middle of it. Xavi hopped off the tailgate and ran at Nate like they were a couple of long-lost sisters meeting for the first time after plotting their union for months on the internet. Good Lord. Xavi scooped him up in a hug, spun him in a circle, and they giggled like six-year-olds. Losers.

I looked past them to where Maddox leaned against the back of the truck. He was so hard to read sometimes, especially right now. He stood there all casual-like, one arm resting on the truck bed, the other shoved into the pocket of his jeans. I couldn't tell if he was relieved we were out or pissed that we were out. He could have wanted to kill me or kiss me, and I'd never be able to decipher which. Maddox was a complicated bastard like that.

Feeling like a nervous wreck, I walked past Nate and Xavi, trying to come up with some sort of reaction to give Maddox. Like, did I thank him? Call him a dick? Ignore him? Fight him? I didn't know, and I didn't know what we were or what our roles were in this whole thing. I still didn't even

know how we got released with all the charges dropped. Did Maddox have something to do with that?

As fucking usual, Maddox kept his damn mouth shut. Each step I took grated on my nerves. Every inch of distance that closed between us was another tether snapped on my temper. Just standing there, he pissed me off. Each second ticked by under the intense glare of Madd's green eyes, his jaw twitching with words he wanted to say or insults he wanted to shout. He had too much control to let them fly just yet.

Fuck him for making me sweat. I was used to getting the first word in with him, so no time like the present to revert back to my old ways.

"What the fuck do you want, Maddox? Come to gloat?" I barked at him, all heated and agitated now. I wanted my hands around his throat, just like I'd planned in that cell, but I didn't know if it was to strangle him or kiss him. Up for debate still. His jaw clenched and his eye twitched, but he kept his mouth closed. "Fuck you!" Okay, now I was pissed.

How dare he come here just to watch me walk out of prison like it was some omen for my future?

Whatever revelation I'd had inside was going to shit now. Yeah, I knew I wanted him in my life, but fuck him for ruining that right now. I didn't know what I expected him to do or say when I got out here, but looking at me with that barely contained fury roiling under the surface of his eyes, yet having a calm disposition, wasn't what I pictured. I should have pictured it because it was such a Maddox thing to do. I'd rather he take a swing at me, yell at me, laugh at me, or even smirk. Anything was better than this.

"Madd?" Xavi tried to break the tension.

Maddox's eyes didn't even shift to his brother. No, he kept those judgmental things right on me. Well, fuck his silence and his perfect eyes. I

wasn't going to back down from him now. Never had before.

I picked up my pace and clenched my fists, walking right up to him like I had no shits to give. When I got a few feet from him, I knew I wanted to hit him. When I got within a foot, I knew for certain we were going to fight.

I lifted my arms, ready to swing at him, took one more long step, and then lunged for him.

But he was faster. He shifted to the side, avoiding my punch, and then *he* wrapped *his* hand around my throat and spun us until my back hit the truck and his body pressed against mine.

"Fuck you, too, Devon," he growled.

Then he kissed me. Hard.

Every angry part of me got angrier, but my body came alive against his. His lips were demanding, tongue controlling, his hand sliding from my throat to the back of my neck to pull me closer, to take more. I gave it to him, and I took everything I could from him in return. Adrenaline like I'd never experienced pumped through me, and I finally knew what it meant to be alive.

I tried to shove him off, but not to push him again—I just needed control. We were locked together through primal need, warring with each other based on vulnerabilities those needs inflicted. I needed this guy, and I wanted to hate him for it.

How did he make me want him so badly? How had Maddox Kane become the person to influence the way I felt? And not just in a hateful way, but in a positive way.

His hot breaths were thrilling against my lips. The scruff on his jaw scratched at me with the best kind of burn. My neck ached from the force of his hold, and I was loving every infuriating minute of it.

“Fuck, Maddox,” I cursed him for everything good in my life. “It’s only been a day.”

Maddox pulled back enough to rest our foreheads together. I knew better than to see this as some sort of sweet, romantic gesture. No. This was some sort of new fight we were having. He was about to accuse me of fucking up his day, and I was about to tell him to fuck off and stop fighting my battles for me.

But maybe that would come later, because first he said, “Get in the fucking truck, Devon. Now.”

I rolled my eyes at him but complied. Not because he told me to, but because I wanted to get out of here, away from that holding cell, and away from Nate and Xavi’s shocked expressions. I opened the door and climbed across the seats.

“What the hell, Devon?” Nate ran towards the truck with Xavi in tow. “Hey!”

I flipped them both the bird as Maddox climbed in after me, starting the ignition. I gave them a smirk as we fled the parking lot, leaving them there like a couple of assholes. Served them right after the night they left us at the gravel pits. I noticed them both grinning, and I swear I heard one of them call us horny fuckers as we drove away.

Maddox got quiet again. I didn’t know where we were going, but I trusted him to get us there.

Holy shit. Holy shit! I trusted Maddox. How unreal was that bullshit?

I had a million questions I wanted answers to. Like how we got out, and what happened today while we’d been locked up. I wanted to know where my dad was and what he was plotting next. I needed to know what role Maddox played in all this, but another part of me wasn’t ready for that

answer. What if he didn't rescue me? Worse, what if he did save me? Why was he always saving me?

First, he saved me that night my dad stabbed me, then again he saved me from my dad the night he got sliced on the wrist. He tried to save me like some idiotic superhero from the guy he thought was gay bashing. He saved me from embarrassment and humiliation on the beach with Julie, and now he was saving me from a life in prison. Why? What was I supposed to make of that?

I hated the power imbalance. I hadn't saved him from shit.

Was I indebted to him now? Did I owe him for all the times he'd helped me? Thinking about it made me antsy, a bit pissed off, and unsure of everything. He was so much better than me, and I hated that, too!

Maddox drove right by the entrance to Garron Park. There wasn't any point in asking him where we were going because he wouldn't answer me anyway, so I leaned back in the seat and put my faith—or some shit—in him.

We'd never been alone in a vehicle before, but my god, it was tense. The cab of this truck wasn't near big enough to contain our energy, and it made me more jittery than I already was. Grumpy, too.

My patience ran out. "Where are we going?" I snapped at him. "I've been in a fucking prison cell all goddamn day, Maddox. I want—"

"I know exactly where you've been all fucking day," he growled at me, low, deep, and scary as shit. I mean, the guy growled often, but not like that.

"What's your problem?" I rolled down the window in an attempt to air out our bullshit and give myself a chance to breathe. "You think I wanted to be in there?"

Maddox clenched his jaw shut just as we pulled into the marina. He parked by the docks, shut the truck off, and got out without another word. Completely fucking annoyed, I slammed the truck door behind me and followed him into the old O'Malley building, wondering if he brought me here to actually kill me. I wouldn't put it past him.

"Are you working or something?" I shouted ahead, trying to catch up. He didn't work at these docks, but fuck...why else would we be here?

The building was vacant. A full shop with old tools and equipment sat dusty and ignored; we walked right through it and to the room at the back of the building. It looked like a rundown sunroom with glass walls and screen doors, and a small kitchen area to one side. A sunroom converted into a staff room? I flicked the light switch, but there wasn't any power.

"What the fuck are we doing, Maddox?" I sighed, getting tired. It'd been a long, stressful day, and I just needed...him. Not whatever this was.

He looked at me, tilting his head to the patio doors. Opening them, a rush of cool night air came in to let this place breathe. I followed him out to the deck at the back of the sunroom, standing beside him at the railing, looking at the nice view of the ocean.

The view was pretty perfect, but fuck, my patience kept dwindling by the second.

"I don't know what your problem is, Madd, but I'm out. I'm done with this whole day." There was a weariness to my voice I hadn't wanted him to hear. I was so tired. So confused.

"Come here," he said calmly. "Please." *Please?* Mind blown.

That please was the only thing that made me step closer to him. We just stood there for a few minutes, our shoulders brushing, as we watched the water ripple under the glow of the moon.

“Why are we here?”

Maddox sighed, rubbing the back of his neck. “Because it’s empty, and I need to be real with you for a minute.” He turned to face me, and the vulnerability in his green eyes scared me.

I straightened my back, agitated. “What the fuck did you do, Maddox?” He better not have done something stupid because I just got a straight shot to my future, and if he wasn’t in it, I’d kill him.

“Nothing,” he blatantly lied. “I was so fucking mad at you today,” he snapped, completely changing the subject.

“It’s not like I planned this,” I snapped back.

“No, but you didn’t plan *for* it either!” he shouted. “How could you have been so stupid, Devon? You knew he’d do something like this, and you didn’t—”

I shoved him. Two palms to the chest, shoved him as hard as I could. “I can’t prepare for every fucked up thing my dad does! Lay off!”

“Devon...” he sighed. “I just—”

“No, fuck you, Maddox. Fuck you for making me think this was somehow my fault.” I shoved him again and his entire demeanour changed.

He had tried to be calm before, but I’d just opened up the worst parts of him. His eyes went from vulnerable and caring to sick and twisted. He was livid, brimming with fury, desperate to unleash all his anger on me. Good. This was the Maddox Kane I knew and...liked. This angry, vengeful, spiteful asshole was what I needed right now. Seeing him like this brought forth all my strength, and for the first time today, I finally felt fucking capable of something.

Maddox breathed through his nose, his jaw clenched and his body taut. And then he let out the most sinister-sounding laugh I’d ever heard.

My spine tingled. Oh shit.

29

—DEVON—

HE WAS GOING TO kill me.

“What’s your problem?” I wheezed, Madd’s hands tight around my throat, the boards of the dock digging into my back. “You’re such a little bitch, Maddox!” I taunted him because that laugh was ominous as shit. Bringing my knee up, I slammed it into his gut.

His grip on my throat slipped loose, and I went on the attack. I jumped right on top of him, ready to put him in his place. I had tight control of his arms and fists, but he wrapped his legs around my hips and squeezed hard.

“Me?” he scoffed from beneath me. “You spent one day in jail and think you’re tough? You get fucked in there, Devon? Someone make you their prison bitch?”

I punched him right in his filthy mouth. “Jealous?”

He looked at me like I was murdering his mother. Oh yeah, he was jealous. Not gonna lie, it put me in a position of power I wasn’t afraid to take advantage of. But Maddox used that jealousy to overpower my hold on him. Instead of flipping me off his body, he forced his way into a sitting position, legs clamped around my hips, our faces inches apart.

“Yeah,” he growled, twisting his wrists out of my grasp. “You’re mine, Sawyer.”

More tingles.

My fingers twined into his dark hair, yanking as hard as I could to bring his mouth to mine. Our lips slammed together between our teeth, creating a mess of moans and copper. I tasted the tang of blood, but I didn’t know if it was mine or his, and I didn’t care either. Maddox damn near growled into my mouth, his tongue clashing with mine, our bodies writhing together with an urgency I’d never felt before. Yet another form of battle between us, but I really fucking liked this one.

“Maddox,” I groaned against his mouth, my cock hardening between our bodies. “Fuck, I want you. Right now.” No longer tired, I just fucking wanted him.

Maddox dug his fingers into my hips, grinding my body against his. Our cocks rubbed furiously, already pushing me towards an edge I wasn’t ready to fall over. “I fucking *need* you,” he said, having to outdo me. “Right now.”

There was nothing graceful about the way we scrambled to our feet. Nothing fluent in the way we ripped each other’s clothes off, and absolutely nothing gentle about the way Maddox shoved my naked body on top of the patio table and tugged my ass to the edge.

There wasn’t even a hint of a smirk on his lips when he spread my legs wide and his fingers grazed my ass. And when he knelt between my legs, sucking my cock and my balls, and roaming his tongue over my hole, I choked on a groan.

I cursed him, even though I knew he was just getting me ready. I was too impatient for that. I’d rather it hurt than suffer through another second

without him inside me. “Maddox.” I reached forward and pulled on his hair again, forcing him to look at me from between my legs. “Hurry up and fuck me.”

With a clenched jaw and intense eyes, Maddox stood to his full height, looking down at me like I was...his. His most prized possession. He just watched me for a second, eyes gliding from my face to my dick and back up again. His hands ran up the inside of my legs, and even though this was the most exposed I’d ever been, I’d never felt more important than I did right then.

Under his scrutiny, I learned my importance. And holy fuck was it empowering.

He leaned over me, biting my bottom lip and dragging it through his teeth as the head of his cock pushed against my hole, slicked with only spit. I was barely prepped, but I wanted him so bad. Consuming every sound I made, he inched inside me, filling me completely.

“Ah, fuck, Devon,” he groaned, pulling out and rocking his hips back into me. His lips moved to my neck, sucking the skin there while my eyes watered from pleasure mixed with pain. My hands grabbed at his hair, pulling and yanking until I relaxed around him and needed more. I rasped the demand beside his ear, and Maddox took it to heart, fucking me harder. Adding more spit.

Every thrust sent me closer to a high I’d only just started chasing. There were no words, no taunts or jibes, just straight fucking on a dock with desperation and greed while the moon watched. Maddox’s panting breaths echoed in my ear, his sweat-slicked chest bumped against mine, his hands tightened on my thighs, and his thrusts got deeper. He lifted my ass, fucking me harder, causing friction in all the right places at all the right angles.

“Holy fuck,” I groaned. I’d never been in this position before, fucked like this, used like this. I’d never experienced this level of intense build-up. Was the sex just good, or did it have to do with our vibe, who we were to each other, and the tension we always created?

The way our bodies rubbed together with just as much friction as his cock in my ass was tantalizing. My dick, hard and leaking, wedged between our abs as he fucked into me. I wasn’t going to last long.

“More,” I rasped, urging him on. “More, Maddox.”

He moaned, pulling back to look at me. “You want more?” Taunts. There they were.

“Yes. Harder.” I had no shame. None. Didn’t even know what the word meant.

Maddox pulled on my thighs, changed the angle again, and fucked me so hard my eyes wouldn’t stay open and my body slid back and forth on the table. Flashes of white sparked behind my eyelids, my body convulsed, and primal pleasure erupted in every cell of my body. My ass spasmed around his cock and my cum hit me in the neck.

Maddox moaned so loud that it snapped my eyes open just in time to watch his face contort in pleasure. He breathed my name, fucking me through my orgasm, and extending his until the peak crested and his body trembled, sagging forward. I wrapped my legs around him, not wanting him to pull out yet. With his forehead pressed to the crook of my neck, we both tried to calm down, wheezing like a couple of lifetime smokers. We’d earned the wheeze.

I was exhausted and weak, but I’d never felt stronger. I didn’t know if I was buzzing from the orgasm or thrumming from the way my life flashed before my eyes today.

“Are you okay?” he finally asked, still breathing hard. “No lube.”

A lot of spit, though. I’d probably be sore tomorrow, but for now, I was too happy to care. “I’m fine. Stop worrying about me. I’m not some helpless—”

“Oh, shut up, Devon.” He rasped out a laugh and kissed my neck before lifting himself up. “You’ll never be anyone’s prison bitch, got it?”

I rolled my eyes and shook my head at this jealous dipshit. “I’d find my own prison bitch.” I grinned at him. “It’ll probably be you.” He frowned at me with a nasty look on his face, so I corrected, “It *will* be you, Kane. Relax.” I pushed myself into a sitting position, kissed his jaw, and told him to get me something to clean up with.

“Come in the water with me,” he said instead, tugging me to my feet.

My body ached, but the tepid ocean felt good against my over-sensitive skin. I washed the sweat, cum, and prison from my body while Maddox disappeared under the water for what I guessed was a moment of silence. He’d always been that type of asshole who needed a hot minute to get himself together. Usually, I was all about interrupting that moment to take advantage of him in a temperamental state, but not tonight. Tonight, things were different, and I needed to know where all this anger was coming from.

“What’d you do today?” I asked with a bit of a cocky tone when he surfaced.

Maddox shook the water from his hair. “Worked.”

“How’d you know where I was then?” I pulled myself up onto the dock and threw my boxers back on.

Maddox dipped underwater again before climbing out. I watched his biceps flex as he pulled himself up, and then I watched his tight ass as he walked across the deck to get his boxers. He sat down on the edge with his

back leaned against one of the posts, looking at me. I turned to face him, leaning my back against the opposite post, bending my knee, and giving him a look that said I wasn't going to let that question go.

He sighed. "I figured it out when I got back from work. I...there was no one home, and I...I went fucking looking for you, okay?" Angry again. Nice. But instead of letting that anger burn between us, he let it make him tired.

"What's wrong? You're even moodier than usual."

Maddox rubbed his temples and then ran his hands down his face. I could tell he wanted something to focus on—a drink, a smoke, a lighter, anything—but we had nothing with us. "I thought I was losing you," he said into his hands.

"Madd," I called. "Look at me."

With too much drama, he removed his hands, and those beautiful green eyes met mine. "Don't mock me for this shit, Devon. I don't know what is wrong with me."

"You were worried about me?"

"Hell yes, I was. I went fucking crazy, Devon! I thought...I thought he won. I thought you were...and I'd never get to..." he sighed, trying to slow himself down. "Yeah, I worried."

My cheeks heated and I smiled to myself. God, I could take a hard fuck on a patio table with more grace than I could take his concerned attention. "Thanks." I looked at him. "For worrying. I'm out now, though. Why so pissed still?"

He glared at me like that was a dumb question. "Because your dad is still out there, and I'm gonna lose my shit until I know he can't touch you anymore. Because he sold both your trailers in that deal he made with the

loan shark and now your mom really is homeless. Because you and Nate are homeless, and it's all because of that asshole."

Fuck, I hated my dad. Maddox was right. My dad needed to be put in his place. "So, this is all about my dad?" Sure, I needed to process this shit and come to terms with what my dad had done, but right now, I was focused on Maddox and the reason behind his little bitch fest.

"I mean, yeah. He ruined everything!"

"He *tried* to ruin everything, but fuck him. I'm not going down that easy and neither is Nate. You know we're tougher than that, so what else is it? What's actually bothering you?" I stared at him.

"It's you!" he shouted, getting to his feet. "It's you and all this shit!" He motioned between us. "Like...how fucking crazy is it that we fuck now?"

"Pretty crazy," I laughed. Never saw my life heading here.

"And now it's..." He stopped, looking so vulnerable it was breaking me.

"It's what, Maddox? More?"

He closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and sat back down on the step. "I don't know what the fuck you want out of all this shit, Devon, but yeah... it's more. For me." He let out a shaky exhale, gearing himself up to admit some shit. "I like fighting with you, don't get me wrong. And fucking you is...yeah, holy shit. But it's not just that anymore. I...I like it when you sleep in my bed. I like it when you're there after work. I want to tell you shit and fight about it, and then talk about it some more because we disagree on it. I think about you all the time, and I resent the fuck out of you for that, but...shit. Half the time I want to knock you out for getting in my head, but the other half...I'm...I like having you in there." He glanced at me with shyness.

He was on a bit of a roll now, and I wasn't going to stop him. For a guy who didn't say a lot, he'd said a hell of a lot to me in the time we'd been doing this.

"I meant what I said on the beach that night, Devon. I just want a simple, shitty life. I don't even give a shit where I am or where I live as long as it's safe-ish. But I want you in it." He kept his head down, but looked at me through his lashes.

"Want me in it, how?" I knew I was pushing him, and I knew he'd probably get pissed about it, but I needed to hear him say it.

He groaned in frustration. "You're a dick. I just said a bunch of lame shit and now you're gonna make me say this, too?"

"Yep," I laughed.

"Fine," he huffed. "I want you in my life as...mine."

"Your what?"

"Just mine."

"You can't own me, dipshit."

"Like fuck I can't," he snapped. "What do you want, Devon? What is this shit to you? I've done enough talking."

Everything. This was everything to me. The lifeline I held on to, the light in my dark, the change that sparked the rest of my grim future into a murky one that had some hopeful light. "You realize it's only been a few weeks-ish that this thing started, right?"

He nodded once, hurt by whatever he thought I was saying.

"But it doesn't feel like that, does it? It feels like we've been doing this forever. In some fucked up way, it's like we've...been together since we were teens. Yeah, the sex part is new and exciting, but the rest of it? It's comfortable and uncomfortable, which is...I dunno, comfortable or

something?” I laughed, knowing I wasn’t making sense. “I mean, it wouldn’t feel right if we weren’t still at each other’s throats. You know?”

Maddox nodded.

“Sitting in that cell today, wondering if I’d get sent to prison...it made me realize I had something I wanted to live for. In all honesty, Madd, I don’t have a fucking clue what this thing is between us, but I know I don’t want it to end.” I met his green eyes. “I’m...hooked on you, and as much as I want to hate you for it, it feels too good to get mad about.”

He offered me the shyest grin I’d ever seen. Well, that was fucking cute. “So, we’re like together?”

I shrugged. “Yeah.”

“Exclusively?”

“You wanna fuck someone else?” I raised a brow.

“No. Do you?”

“I wanna fuck you. I’m still holding you to that.” I smirked, and he smirked right back. “Only you, Madd.”

He licked his lips and asked, “Are we hiding it? Nate and Xavi obviously know some of it, but from everyone else?”

“Do you wanna hide it?”

He shrugged and shook his head at the same time. “No. I mean, I don’t need to go shout it to the park or anything, but if people find out, I’m good with that.”

“Your dad might beat you if he finds out you’re fucking a guy,” I reminded him.

“Fuck him. Fuck both our dads.”

I nodded. Deal. “How’d you get me out of there? What happened with my dad today?” I asked. It was about time we got to that chat, too.

“Nate told Xavi to find whatever you were being accused of stealing, so...we did.”

“That’s it?”

“Yeah. It was a boat. Steven Patterson’s boat.”

“Shit. That nice one?” I asked. He nodded. “How’d you find it?”

He looked down at his hands before answering. “Just asked around, found out his boat was missing, looked in his warehouse...and there it was. Found it.”

He was a dirty fucking liar, but I didn’t know which part he was lying about. “What did—”

“What’re we doing about your dad?”

Okay, something was definitely up. The look on his face warned me not to press it, so for right now, I let it go. “I gotta talk to Nate about that.” I leaned back and looked around.

The place was a shit hole, but it was a prime spot and would be perfect if Nate and I ever saved up enough money to buy it for our shop dreams. Had a feeling they’d always remain dreams.

“Why’d you bring me here, Kane?”

Maddox shrugged, grinning.

30

—MADDOX—

NATE AND DEVON WERE both working on the rigs, so I took advantage of the free night with my brother. He handed me a beer and groaned a tired sigh as he sat back on the couch. We had tried to sit outside, but the bugs were so bad we were getting eaten alive. Must mean a storm was coming in. I hope it doesn't rain out the track tomorrow.

“You tell Nate about the O’Malley building yet?” I asked him.

He let out a huff of amusement. “No. That dick needs to get his shit sorted first. They need to deal with their dad. I don’t want word of it getting out until Jim can’t fuck with it.”

I agreed with that, but how were we going to handle Jim? He was missing, but I knew that cockroach wouldn’t stay gone for long. He’d run out of money and come crawling back to Devon and Nate for whatever scraps he could get, probably by holding their mom’s well-being over their heads.

“Alright.” Xavi smacked my leg. “You’ve never outright admitted it, but come on, Madd.”

I gave him a look like I didn't know what he was talking about, even though I knew exactly what he was talking about. Never hurt to make someone feel dumb for a second or two.

"You and Devon. You're fucking, right? You're totally fucking. I mean, shit, that morning we heard you guys in the bathroom? And that kiss when he got out of jail! It's obvious, right?"

It's like he knew, but wouldn't fully believe me until I confirmed it. I loved that about him. He was a nosy bastard, but he'd earned the insider information. "We're fucking," I confirmed, putting him out of his misery. I took a sip of beer to cool my throat from the burn of those words, but it was flat, piss-warm, and tasted like shit. I liked it all the same.

Xavi smiled at me proudly. "So, you got over the *whose dick goes where* issue?"

That felt like so long ago. It felt like second nature to fuck Devon now. I still wanted to try switching, see what it was like to have him inside me and go from there. My cock got a bit jumpy at the thought of it, so I cleared my throat and said, "Yeah, my dick in his ass. Sorted."

Xavi knocked his beer against mine. "Will you switch?"

Nosy, like I'd said. "I'd try it." I shrugged.

"So...?"

"So what?"

"So, are you guys dating? Still hate each other? Fuck buddies? What? What's the situation? And don't lie to me, Madd. I see the way you look at each other, and I saw the way you reacted when he was locked up." He refrained from calling me dumb about that again.

Yeah, it'd been pretty fucking stupid on my part to offer to pay off that debt to Harris if I didn't get Steven to sign the ownership over. But my

mind hadn't been thinking of anything other than protecting Devon. That was the only rational thought that mattered at the moment, and I'd done what I had to do.

"So...what are you guys?" Xavi asked again.

We hadn't labelled anything, but I liked how we left things. Devon said whatever this was, he didn't want it to end, and I'd told him he was mine. That's how I felt, but add in about a hundred more notches of possession, and that'd be where I was at. I owned that fucker. I wanted him to be mine and only mine. In all honesty, I wanted to be his and only his.

"That prick will always piss me off," I admitted with absolute sincerity. "But I think that's part of what makes me like him so much. We're together, I guess, but that doesn't mean we're suddenly gonna change our tune. We'll probably fight forever."

"Good. Don't change it," Xavi agreed. "You two have the thickest tension I've ever felt. The sexual chemistry is off the charts, Madd. Like... holy shit."

I was pretty cocky about that, not gonna lie, but I also felt myself getting a bit defensive. "It's not all about fucking, man."

"Jeez. Such a sensitive bastard now," he mocked me. "This better not mean you're going to take it easy on him this weekend?"

"Fuck, no. Never." Wasn't in my nature to take it easy on him, and I'd still gloat about my victory on the podium if I placed ahead of him. "I'll still beat his ass on the track."

"And after." Xavi winked. Jesus, who winked these days?

"You look like a '70s porn star when you do that."

"I'll take that as a compliment," he laughed. "We're all set to leave tomorrow?"

I nodded. “Yeah, but I still don’t like it that Jim is out there being a cunt. He’s going to come back. You know that, right?”

Jim was my biggest stressor at the moment. It used to be my dad, money, my mom’s drinking, and finding work. All those things still stressed me out, but my dad had backed off a bit lately for some reason. Devon was under constant threat with his dad out there waiting to lock him up. Jim had no good reason to do it other than he was a narcissistic prick who wouldn’t allow his kids to have a good life if he didn’t have a better one. He was low enough to lock them up just to say he could. He stabbed Devon, for fuck’s sake.

The unknown of it was torturing me, and it tortured me even worse when Devon wasn’t in my line of sight. I wanted him to hurry up and get home from work so I knew he was fine. I hated myself for being a worried little bitch, but I couldn’t help that.

“I know. But when he does, he’ll have to deal with all four of us this time. He’s pissed off everyone in the park, so it’s not like he has many allies here anymore.” Xavi stretched his legs out. “We’ll handle this shit with Jim, Madd. And then we’ll figure out how to handle our own dad.”

While our dad wasn’t a complete piece of shit like Jim was, he was still a dick. He was an addict, and sometimes I thought he was actually a good person underneath all those drugs. He had no idea how to handle money; he got money, he spent money, rinse and repeat. It meant that Xavi and I were left to pay living expenses, bills, rent, and loans while Dad fucked off and spent his paycheques on whatever his drug of choice was. Sometimes, he sobered up enough to be good to us for a bit, check on Mom, who loved and hated him at the same time, and give us a bit of a break. Other times, we paid him because it was easier than dealing with the fallout. It made us

weak, but sometimes we had to pick our battles. Lately, he just left us alone unless he got desperate, and he did his best to understand we had to pay for our own shit. He'd never really been a dad, though. So I hated him for that.

Someday, I'd walk out of this trailer, let my mom learn her lesson the hard way, watch out for her from a distance, and cut my dad off completely. It was time we all stopped acting like parents to parents who never treated us like kids.

After a few more beers with my brother, I headed to bed. It was so hot in my tiny room that I just lay there on top of the blankets with the fan going and the window open, staring at the ceiling while waiting for Devon to get home.

While I waited, I thought about what I truly wanted out of life, and not just in the 'escape my current situation' kind of way, but the actual wants and dreams I had. What did I want to do? Where did I want to be? What kind of family situation did I want?

When it came down to it, I just wanted a steady job where I got to be outside, my brother, and Devon. I didn't aspire to own some big house with a pool and a nice vehicle or any of that bullshit. That wasn't me, and I'd never feel right in a place like that. As long as there was a roof over my head and a bed to sleep in at night, I'd be set. I wanted a home, not the house, if that made any sense.

I closed my eyes and tried to picture it. I imagined myself coming home from work, kicking off my boots, and sitting on the front porch to shoot the shit with...Devon. Shit, I thought it'd be Xavi in my imagination, but it was definitely the smug face of Devon goddamn Sawyer. He had a cocky grin on his lips, a beer in his hand, and the heat of a thousand torches in his eyes. I really did want that fucker in my life.

I didn't know about kids or lifestyle, or any of the rest yet, but I was young enough to still have the time to figure it out. I just wanted to be half-ass happy, mostly healthy, and safe. That was it.

I was still awake an hour later when I heard Nate and Devon chatting in low tones as they came in from work. I wasn't going to go to that asshole or anything, but my body relaxed when I heard his voice. He was here, and he was safe. Fucking finally. Now I could sleep.

I dozed off a bit, but groaned when my door opened and the smell of my shower gel filled the small room and blew right at me from the fan. Devon climbed into bed and lay on his back beside me, our shoulders and legs touching in the tight space. I didn't know what we were doing, something like cuddling, but we lay there together, aware that we were both awake, but not speaking. He had such a loud mouth that I almost craved some half-cocked taunt to come from his lips. It didn't come.

So, my eyes shut, my body relaxed, and I got comfortable in the comfort of having him here. I was almost asleep when he finally spoke. Asshole probably waited just to piss me off.

"You wait up for me, Kane?"

"Fuck you," I whispered to the room.

Devon turned on his side and ran his hand up my leg. I smiled into the darkness but hoped he couldn't see it. He didn't hesitate at all; he rubbed my cock through my boxers and rested his head on his arm, watching me.

"I fucked up at work today," he said, still rubbing me, driving me insane. I didn't even know which job he was referring to. He worked the morning at the golf course and the afternoon and evening on the rigs. "I've been cutting grass at that place for years, and I've never fucked up like I did today."

“What’d...what’d you do?” I asked, my voice cracking as he shoved his hand down my boxers, stroking my cock with a gentle touch.

“I cut the fairway the same length as the putting green,” he laughed, pulling my cock out fully.

“Why?” Goddamn him for getting me worked up right as I was about to fall asleep.

“Because of you,” he scoffed. “Because I was thinking of that shy smile you gave me the other night.”

What shy smile? I didn’t do shy!

“Because my dick was getting hard thinking about you smiling at me like that.” He picked up the pace of his hand, spreading my leaking precum down my shaft. “Because I thought about what it would be like to bend you over behind the shed and fuck that shy smile right off your face.”

Jesus. “So your fuck-up is somehow my fault?” I rasped, my hips thrusting into his grip.

“It’s all your fucking fault, Maddox. Everything. All of it.” He leaned in, kissing my neck. “You fuck up my thoughts all the time.” He kissed lower, moving down my collarbones and chest, licking my nipples. His teeth grazed over my nipple, making me jump.

“Jesus,” I breathed.

Devon pushed my legs together and straddled my body. I opened my eyes to watch him as he leaned over and let go of my dick. He gyrated his hips on top of me, creating the best friction when our cocks rubbed together between our bodies.

The room got hotter. I got hotter. My hands snapped to his ass, pulling to increase the grind of his hips, taking more from him.

“The next time we fuck, Maddox,” he said, grinding down on me. “I’ll be above you like this. Can you picture it?”

Oh, I was picturing it. “Mm, yeah.”

He rubbed our dicks together, his hands beside my head, his hip bones digging into mine, and his cock just as hard as mine was. He kept moving as he whispered in my ear, “I’ll get you all worked up, and when I finally fuck you, you’ll be begging for more.”

I was damn close to begging already. I pulled on his ass, bringing him against me, humping him like I was a horny teen.

“It feels so good when you fuck my ass, Maddox. I’m going to make it feel that good for you.” There was that loudmouth I craved. “Tell me you want me to fuck you. Say it.” He kissed my neck, sucking the skin.

I was panting like a dog again. “Fuck. I want you to fuck me.”

“How bad?”

“So fucking bad.” So bad I was tempted to ask for it right now. “Devon.”

“Yes?” His voice was smug as fuck, but it was hot.

“Fuck me now,” I begged like a bitch. “Fuck me now.”

“So needy,” he teased in a playful tone. He ground down against me, making my whole body spasm. “Soon, Madd. I’m not fucking you while you’re half asleep. When I fuck you, you’ll be wide awake and wired.”

With one more thrust of his hips, he grabbed my throat in a power move and looked at me with those intense blue eyes.

I exploded. My moans were matched by Devon’s, and then he slammed his mouth to mine and made out with me like it was the first time we’d ever kissed.

Goddamn. Humping and dirty talk was my new favourite thing.

31

—DEVON—

SOME SORT OF TSUNAMI was happening. The track was completely flooded, the rain hadn't stopped all day, and the thunder was deafening. The lightning was fucking blinding.

It matched my mood.

"Devon, calm down," Nate tried to reason with me. "He did it for you!"

"Where is he?" I barked at my brother, lethal with rage and ready to take it out on Maddox. "Where the fuck is he, Nate?"

"Shit. Relax, man." Nate shook his head at me, sitting on the only dry lawn chair while Xavi stood under the canopy of the trailer at the track. "Nothing bad came out of it. Just let it go, Dev."

"Let it fucking go?" I shouted. "He almost ruined his life!"

"Yeah! For you!" Xavi yelled. "I already gave him shit for it!"

My blood burned hot paths through my veins. Maddox fucked up so badly with Patrick Harris that I was ready to kill him myself. "Gave him shit?" I scoffed. "Did he get the message? Did he listen?" Maddox was so thick-headed he probably didn't even realize how big of a mistake he'd made. "He's so fucking dumb. He almost turned into Dad!"

And that was the kicker. In his attempt to save my ass, he put himself in a position where he could have become as desperate as my dad for money, never getting ahead to pay off debts he shouldn't have to pay.

"But he didn't," Nate reasoned again. "It all worked out, so let it go, Devon. He was trying to help, and if he hadn't, we'd still be locked up...in a worse place."

I'd rather be in prison than have Maddox in debt to that scumbag prick. How fucking dare he! How dare he throw his damn life away for me. Where did he think he'd get fifteen grand to pay Harris back if he couldn't get that ownership signed over? How dumb was he?

"Where. Is. He?" I aimed that one at Xavi, knowing he'd be protecting his brother's whereabouts so I couldn't strangle him.

"I don't know," Xavi scoffed. "But even if I did, I wouldn't tell you right now. Jesus, Devon. Slow down."

"He did it because he cares about you. Remember that. Don't go assault him because he helped." Nate gave me a stern look. Fuck all of them.

I'd assault him anytime I goddamn pleased. He was mine to assault, especially over this colossal fuck up. There wasn't a chance in hell I'd let Maddox Kane put his ass on the line for me like that without beating the shit out of him. He fucked up, and if it had gone wrong, I'd be living a life of guilt in prison while he turned into a soldier pawn in some loan shark's game. Fuck that. Fuck him. Fuck this whole situation.

I peered through the rain, wondering where the hell I'd find him. I didn't care who witnessed this shit, but I was seriously about to murder Maddox. Was I grateful? Hell yes, but my anger about it overshadowed that. My life wasn't worth his, and if he kept saving me, I'd...I just couldn't live with that.

“Devon, think this through,” Nate warned as my fists clamped tight, itching to punch Maddox so hard his green eyes swelled shut for days. I didn’t want to even look at them.

“Don’t go to him when you’re this angry, Devon,” Xavi warned next.

But my feet were already stomping through the mud, and the rain sizzled off my burning skin. I heard them both curse me, but they were smart enough not to follow. This was between me and Maddox. That dipshit needed to learn some life lessons about his own worth, and I’d sure as shit take pride in teaching them.



THE MORE I RAN around camp looking for him, the angrier I got. No one knew where he was, and those who had seen him pointed me in ten different directions. I was soaking wet, covered in mud from the knees down, and livid.

By the time I got back to the trailer, the truck was gone, but Maddox was sitting in a lawn chair under the awning like he’d been there the whole time just to fuck with me.

“Fuck, finally,” he groaned when he saw me walking up. “Where the hell have you been? I got—”

I punched him right in the face. There was no hesitation, no thinking involved, and no remorse. I wanted to hit him, so I did. Simple. Fighting with Maddox was the only constant in my life, and maybe I needed it. The force of the punch knocked him and his chair backwards, but he didn’t get up.

He lay there and rubbed his jaw, looking up at me with more of an annoyed expression than anything. “What was that for?”

“You know what the fuck it was for!” I shouted down at him, holding myself back from kicking him while he was down. The old me would have done it.

He pulled himself into a sitting position and rubbed his jaw. “Foreplay? Fuck, I don’t know, Devon.”

Holy shit, he was stupid. “You messed up, Maddox. How the fuck could you do that to me? If that deal had gone wrong, I’d never forgive myself! Never!”

Maddox got to his feet, ready to fight me, but not sure why. “What deal? What are you talking about? The docks?”

“The docks?” I gasped, confused. “What about the—”

“Nothing. Tell me what deal you’re so pissed about!”

“The dumb-as-shit deal you made with Patrick Harris!”

“Oh,” he scoffed. “Let it go. Nothing happened.”

I grabbed the front of his shirt and slammed him against the side of the trailer. The rain pounded down on the awning so hard I had to shout to talk to him anyway. Luckily, my voice was out of control right now, regardless. Anger and fear controlled me because that deal could have ruined him. *Ruined him.*

“What would you have done if that deal went south? Spent the next five years trying to pay back a fifteen-grand debt that wasn’t yours to take on in the first place?” I held him in place with my hands, but my eyes had a force of their own, pinning him there under my accusatory glare. “It would have set you back *years* on that life you were trying to build, and chances are, you’d never even get out of that debt. You’d be his bitch forever!”

“It would have been better than leaving you in there!” he shouted.

“No! It wouldn’t have been. Fuck, Maddox. Do you know what that would have done to me?”

“No, I don’t fucking know, Devon! Because I was too busy thinking about what it would have done to *me* if you got locked up!”

“What does that even mean?”

“Holy shit, Devon. How are you this stupid?” he sneered at me. “Yeah, I did a dumb thing, but I did it for you.”

“Stop taking on my burdens!”

“I can’t!” he screamed at me. “They’re my burdens now, too!” He smacked his hands to the side of my face, holding my head straight so I couldn’t look away. “Because I can’t live without you anymore. Because I don’t want you in prison, Devon. I want you out here, with me, for as long as I can fucking have you. Because...” He paused, and my heart blew up in my chest. “Because you’re a piece of shit asshole from Garron Park with a loud mouth and the ability to piss me off like none other...and you’re exactly what I want. What I need.”

My heart exploded harder and my ribs blew up next. Thunder cracked with the force of my emotions, and lightning struck from the electricity sparking between us. We were generating this storm, and it was growing in strength. “Maddox...”

“So be pissed at me all you want, Devon. But I’d do it again. I’d do it every fucking time because I’m falling for you, you dumb fuck.”

The strength of the weather had nothing on the raging storm of emotion in my body.

32

—MADDOX—

I DIDN'T CARE THAT water leaked through the ceiling of the trailer and dripped onto my forehead. I didn't give a fuck that Nate and Xavi could be back at any moment. The fact that the windows were open, the lights were on, and the rain slanted sideways through the screen door wasn't even on my radar.

The only thing that mattered was Devon.

His blue eyes and that shitty skull tattoo were staring at me. His slick chest, sweaty abs, tensing biceps, and all his damn scars called my attention, but I couldn't find it in me to look away from his eyes. He was scared. I scared him with that deal, and he didn't know how else to react to it without including violence and anger. I couldn't really hold that against him because I'd be the same. Fighting was what we knew, and even though the tone behind our fights had changed, it was the only reaction I expected from him.

I wanted this. This was my new way of fighting with him.

"Fuck," he gasped in pleasure. "You good?"

My bottom lip ended up between my teeth. I couldn't formulate a word, but I nodded. I was so fucking good. Better than I wanted to admit. After the initial pain, a bunch of pressure, and a weird feeling that slightly put me off, the friction started to feel fucking...wow. Still weird, but a weird I didn't want to give up. A great weird.

Grabbing his hips, I pulled him in, holding my breath as another few inches of his thick cock filled me. He'd spent way too much time prepping me, and now I was just an eager asshole, ready to get fucked like I'd been fucking him. I craved this shit. I wanted him to dominate. I wanted to fight him for control while he lost his mind to a new sensation.

Devon's lips parted in awe when his thighs hit my ass. "So. Fucking. Good." He swallowed and choked on it. "Still good?"

"Yeah. Fuck yeah. Move. Fuck me. Do something. I'm losing my mind."

He started off slow and rocking, getting the feel for it, but as soon as precum stretched from the tip of my dick to my abs, he got a bit wild. He fucked me hard and fast. He switched pace and fucked me slow and deep. He tested all methods and motions and by the time he found his favourite rhythm, he was sweating and barely holding himself back from coming. To be honest, I'd been fighting my orgasm for ten whole minutes because I never wanted to lose the feeling of him losing himself inside me. I needed more of him.

I reached forward and did something I never thought I'd do. I pulled on the back of his neck and brought his lips to mine during sex. While bottoming. Devon's breath hitched in his throat as he kissed me, his body leaning over mine, and his hand weaving into my hair.

The angle changed, and Devon sucked in a harsh breath, moaning against my lips. "Fuck, Maddox."

And I completely lost myself. I lost myself in Devon Sawyer. He filled me, consumed me, and controlled my body, mind, and anger. Devon overtook every feeling I'd ever had and multiplied them by a thousand. He overwhelmed me on all fronts, but I loved the burden of it. Then his cock grazed a part of myself I'd never fucked with and cum shot from my dick without any warning.

And then *my* breath caught in *my* throat as pleasure snaked its way through me and I rose to the highest peak I'd ever ascended and plummeted into the lowest sense of bliss I'd ever settled in. His name escaped my lips without my consent, but he heard it, and it pushed him to that same high I was living in.

My hand jerked my cock and Devon fucked my ass as he groaned, "Madd-ox." Two syllables in a single breath that made me higher.

I captured his mouth so I could take my name from his tongue. I never wanted to hear another person say my name like that. It was the highlight of my life, and I'd never tire of hearing it.

His cock stilled inside me, his face slackening in pleasure. I tried to focus on all of it, but I came so hard my toes curled and my mind blanked, and the fucking storm stopped. Or intensified. Either or.

Whether he collapsed or I pulled him down, I didn't know, but he ended up on his back beside me in the trailer's small bed. I was coated in cum, but I didn't have the energy to care. I wanted to wrap my arms around him, hug him or something, but it was too hot and muggy for that. I linked my fingers with his instead, settling for that bit of touch that wouldn't cause heatstroke. My chest heaved and my face burned from exertion, but shit, I was happy.

"You still mad at me?" I half-laughed, covering my eyes with my arm, trying to cool down.

Devon laughed. “Fuck yeah.” He squeezed my hand. “But I’ll kick the shit out of you later. Too tired right now.”

I smiled at that. I liked that we still fought even though things were changing. That part wasn’t going to change, and I didn’t want it to. He was still my biggest rival, and to be honest, he was the only one who ever rose to the challenge. It might have killed me if he stopped now. Fists and fucking were our future, and I was more than okay with that.

We still wanted to fight—it was mutual, so I didn’t feel so bad about it. We’d continue to compete, outdo each other, and make everything into a challenge. I used to think that was our main driving force, but now I was changing my tune. We thrived on aggression and competition, but we ran on something that felt a lot like love. Harsh love. Something volatile and right.

“I’ll always fight you to be at the top, Sawyer,” I said, panting hard. “But this right here? I might fight for the bottom more often.” I wasn’t even ashamed to grin at that. Yeah, I liked getting fucked. So what?

Devon huffed out a bark of laughter. “Hey, Madd?”

I turned my head to look at him.

“I fell for your bullshit, too,” he said, his blue eyes clear and honest. “Whatever this thing is, I’m so fucking in it, it isn’t even funny.”

My heart thudded out a bunch of beats at once. Words had never been my strong suit, so I leaned over and kissed him, trying to convey all sorts of feelings through touch instead.

His hands roamed even though it was too hot for that shit. I trembled hard when he touched my hole, and then the world stopped because Devon pulled back and eye-fucked me. He jolted to his knees, manhandling my legs until they were spread open as far as my limited flexibility allowed.

“Holy fuck,” he groaned. “I’m...holy fuck.”

“What?” I got self-conscious, thinking something was wrong with my ass.

Devon ran his fingers through the slick mess leaking out of me, a possessive glaze took over his eyes. His fingers came up covered in his cum, and he bit his lip. Right before my eyes, not even ten minutes after sex, his dick sprung back up to a full erection.

“I’m fucking you again. Right now. Look at this!” He looked like he wanted to bend down and lick it straight from my hole. “I fucking own you, Maddox. This is the hottest thing I’ve ever seen.”

Not gonna lie, I felt a bit smug about that.



SHIT DIDN'T REALLY SETTLE after that. The storm kept up, and we cooled down. We heated back up and got trapped in this never-ending rush of hormones and desires. We fucked again, talked a bit, lay there and listened to the storm, and we kept touching. Always touching. Even though it was way too hot for that shit.

We must have fallen asleep at some point because the next time I opened my eyes, Nate and Xavi were whispering about something and Devon's legs were draped over mine in the bed.

“Don't wake them up,” Xavi stage-whispered to Nate. “They'll just end up fighting.”

“At least they're both alive,” Nate said. “Honestly wasn't sure there for a sec.”

Xavi laughed. “Yeah, but this is good news and Devon deserves to know.”

“Yeah, and then Maddox will lose his shit about it not being good enough, and Devon will have to challenge him on it, and then the goddamn trailer will fall down.” Nate huffed.

What were they talking about?

Devon asked, clearly not asleep, “What are you two bitching about?” His voice was all raspy from sleep and sex, but I liked it like that. He stretched his legs out and smirked at me before sitting up. “What’s Madd gonna lose his shit over this time?”

I sat on the edge of the bed beside Devon, rubbing my eyes and trying to wake up. If I needed to fight someone, I needed to get ready...and take a piss. My ass hurt. Jesus.

“Okay, first of all, you two are cute as shit.” Nate beamed.

It wasn’t even planned, but Devon shot up his middle finger at the same time I did, and then they mocked us for that, too.

“Aw, they finish each other’s sentences!” Xavi cooed.

“Fuck you,” I scoffed.

“Fuck off,” Devon spoke over me. “Tell us what’s going on.”

“Okay,” Nate sighed, sitting on the bench in the kitchen area. “Andrea called while you two were busy fucking. Or fighting. Or fucking and fighting. Whatever you two do and call it sex.”

“Get on with it.” Devon rolled his eyes. “Is it about Mom?”

“Mom’s good. It’s about Dad.”

Well, that woke me up. “What about him?” Some bullshit instinct made me want to throw Devon behind me and hide him away. My arm even

twitched with the need to wrap it around him. Devon noticed, and he rolled his eyes again.

“What about him?” I asked again impatiently. Devon gripped my hand and told me to shut up.

“He got pinched,” Nate blurted and Devon’s body stiffened. “I guess he showed up at the Kane’s trailer.”

“What?” Devon gasped.

“He came crawling back, knew we’d been staying there, and broke in. Andrea said Mary noticed him, knew we were at the track, so she called the cops. They showed up and arrested him for breaking and entering, and got him on a few other charges.”

My mind was all confused. Why would this piss me off? “Isn’t this a good thing?” I was trying to find the flaw in Jim going to jail. Maybe it just seemed too easy.

“Yeah, he’s got warrants out for other arrests. They’ve got him now, so they’ll lock him up, right?” Devon looked at his brother, waiting for an answer.

“Yeah,” Nate agreed. “We just spent the past few hours at the cop shop, giving statements and shit. They’re going to lock him up, but we won’t know for how long until after he goes through a trial.”

“They said they only have enough proof to lock him up for a year. Max,” Xavi added, looking right at me. There it was. That was the part that pissed me off.

“Fuck no! That’s not good enough!” I stood. That slimy fuck had tried to kill Devon. He stabbed him, smashed a bottle over his head, beat him bloody, set him up for a crime he didn’t commit, and got him locked up for

a day. A year wouldn't make a lick of difference in the grand scheme of things. "We'll be right back in this situation in a year when he gets out!"

"Madd," Devon said, all calm and casual. He gripped my jaw and forced me to look at him. "This gives us time. We aren't ready to face him right now, so this is good. Calm down and stop being a bitch."

"It's not enough," I said, looking into his eyes, trying to convey how much his dad worried me.

"No, it's not," he agreed. "But we'll take it, right? That's how our lives work—we take what we can get. This gives us a year to get ahead so we can deal with him if he gets out."

"For all we know, he'll get shanked in there," Nate added, a smug tone to his voice. "People in the park are afraid to speak out against him right now, but give them this year without his threat hanging over their heads and they'll come around. Between all of us, we'll find enough proof to keep him locked up."

My fists clenched no matter how hard I tried to relax them. I shook my head, trying to break free of Devon's hold. Yeah, it was a good thing, but it wasn't near enough. Jim deserved to rot in prison for the rest of his life, not just for a year. How the hell was I supposed to protect Devon from his dad if he came out the other end of this stronger than he was now? Who was I to think I measured up to a man who'd been fucking Devon over for all his life? We were useless, and that sat heavily on my shoulders.

"Maddox, it means Devon is safe for now," Xavi reasoned. "It means he's safe."

My body relaxed a little at that. I looked at Devon and tried to calm down further. This should be a happy moment for him, and I was ruining it.

“You aren’t safe,” I told Devon. “I’ll kick your ass every fucking day until I can’t win anymore, got it? You’ll be good enough to win an MMA title by the time he gets out. You’ll be stronger, better, and smarter, and he won’t be able to overpower you anymore. You aren’t slacking off like a little bitch for a year, Devon.”

He laughed at that, letting go of my jaw to pull me in for a hug I wasn’t prepared for. “Fine,” he promised to meet my terms. “But you can’t get all dark and moody when I kick your ass every day, Madd.”

I scoffed, wrapping my arms around him. “With the right bet, I’ll find a way to win.”

I sank into his hug, our nearly naked bodies feeling pretty damn comfortable together. I was happy. Really, I was. This wasn’t what I wanted for his dad, but he was right; it gave us time to prepare, to get ready for whatever shitstorm he brought when he got out. For now, I had Devon safely against me, and nothing would tear him away. Not even our own fighting.

The moment was ruined by the sound of a cell phone camera snapping. We both whipped our heads toward our brothers.

“Shit,” Xavi laughed. “I had to! Look how fucking sexy you two look together!” He turned the phone to show us. “So cute.”

We didn’t look. Devon patted my hip as a signal, and as one, we lunged for Nate and Xavi. We’d been fighting each other for so long it was time to turn that aggression on these assholes.

33

—DEVON—

THREE MONTHS LATER

“I CAN’T BELIEVE WE’RE doing this,” I scoffed, looking at the building we just spent the past three months fixing up. “Are you sure we’re ready for this?”

Nate smacked me on the shoulder. “Don’t bitch out now, Dev. This place is ours!” He spread his arms wide to encompass the entire place.

I looked around the old O’Malley building with pride...and resentment. That smug prick worked this building into the deal he made to get me out of prison, and I still didn’t know what to make of that. Loved that he did it. Shocked that he did it. Pissed that he did it, and I didn’t know which reaction to settle on. We avoided the topic more often than not.

We’d come up with the down payment with a little help from Xavi, who was part owner, and we somehow got a loan for the rest. It was some small business grant we qualified for that came with a specified loan amount, so hopefully, we’d be able to pay that back with time.

Like...we owned that shop we dreamed about. How surreal was that? Not only the shop, but all the equipment that came with it, a dock with a few slips, and two fuel pumps. How had my life turned around like this? Never in my wildest dreams, or nightmares, did I think this shit would happen. For all the times Nate and I had conversations about owning a shop someday, I always assumed it’d remain as that hopeful conversation we had that got us out of a slump. And if we did get the shop, I figured it’d be some shit hole place way off the water where we wouldn’t get any work. Now we were standing in a shop right on the ocean at one of the best parts of the docks, really close to the marina. We had a prime place, and to be honest, I’d never

had prime anything. Except Maddox. He was a prime asshole. My prime asshole.

Those fucking Kane brothers made this dream come true while they busted our asses out of jail. They blackmailed Steven Patterson into selling it to us for cheap, and...fuck, I was grateful. Did it surprise me that blackmail had made our dreams come true? Nah, that was pretty on par for our lives. But did it surprise me that my former enemy and his brother were the ones to secure it for us? Holy shit, yes.

“So, you’ll be here later?” Nate confirmed. “Xavi is out getting food, so can you and Madd grab beer? The cheapest kind. No expensive shit, Devon.”

We were having some version of a grand opening party. It wouldn’t be anything fancy. Cheap drinks, shitty food, and a bunch of drunks just here for the free shit. But whatever, word of mouth was the best advertising in a place like Garron. So those drunks could drink our beer and run their mouths tomorrow, and maybe we’d actually get some business.

“Or are you idiots still fighting?” Nate added before I answered.

Hell yes, we were still fighting. He pissed me off so hard yesterday, and I wasn’t in the forgiving kind of mood. “I’ll get the beer myself,” I told Nate, turning to leave.

“Dev, wait,” he called me back. “He did a good thing. Stop being a dick about it.”

I clenched my jaw and tried not to get worked up again. “I know that. I’m sick of him doing good things. Makes me look like the fucking villain.” Because, once again, Maddox did something to improve my life, and fuck him for being so goddamn heroic.

Nate laughed. “Get used to it, bud. He loves ya.”

So I kept hearing. *He does it because he loves you. He isn't gonna stop because he loves you.* Well, if that fucker loved me so much, he could fess up to that himself rather than having everyone in Garron Park tell me. I was sick of hearing it from everyone else, and for once, I was flipping the usual saying backwards. Yeah, actions spoke louder than words, but Jesus fuck, it'd be nice to hear him say it rather than show it for once. Damn him and his silence.

"I'm taking the truck," I said as a goodbye.

I drove out of the marina, through town, and out the other side, pulling into the parking lot of Garron Construction. Maddox finally got a full-time job with this company. They paid alright, and had a few good health insurance benefits that he didn't understand came out of his paycheque, but I wasn't going to tell him that. He seemed to like it well enough. He was a grunt worker, but that's what he liked to do anyway. He mainly worked on road maintenance, but as a bonus, he was getting all sorts of new tickets and certifications to operate heavy machinery and shit. Ever since he started working there two and a half months ago, he bulked up, toned up, got stronger, gained a damn tan, and looked even hotter than usual. Asshole.

I rolled down the window to wait for him. I was already twenty-five minutes late to pick him up, but whenever I showed up on time, he kept me waiting. So fuck him again. Now that he had full-time work, the truck he shared with Xavi was better spent getting shit done during the day, not sitting in this parking lot. Between the three of us, we picked him up and dropped him off most days. He couldn't afford his own truck yet.

Maddox walked out of the shop in a pair of filthy jeans, scuffed work boots, and nothing else. His goddamn chest was glistening in the sun like he was some dirty god, and his farmer's tan was ridiculously hot. His abs were

turning into an actual six-pack, and my god, it was nice to watch them shift and move. Guess hard labour really did pay off.

He was walking with this asshole he worked with. The guy's name was Jeff, and he wasn't really an asshole, but I hated him anyway. He and Madd worked together most days, and Jeff was a looker, which naturally made me jealous. And insecure. And worried. And dumb. Yeah, all the things Maddox had already tried to beat out of me. He put me in my place, and by place, I mean that he called me a million cruel names and then reminded me of all the reasons why he wanted me and not that guy.

It worked. I got a black eye from it, but it was effective.

He climbed in the front seat after nodding goodbye at Jeff and immediately started in with his bitching. "I don't give a fuck if you're still pissed, Devon." He slammed the door shut. "If you wanna fuck or fight about this some more, let's go. Right now." He turned to face me, his green eyes honest. He really would fuck me or fight me, right here in the parking lot, without a care in the world. He threw his lunch box in the back seat and waited to see what decision I'd made.

Ugh, I hated him.

I leaned over the front seat and kissed him instead. These full-time hours of his, plus us getting the shop ready, were really cutting into our time together, so I tried to make use of every single spare second we had.

"Put your fucking shirt on so I can think," I said against his lips.

"No self-control," he mocked me.

"We gotta get booze for tonight. You coming with me?" I pulled back and started the truck. If we parked here for too long, we'd end up making a scene. Idle time and tension-filled truck cabs weren't a good mix for us unless we were somewhere private.

“Sure.” He shrugged into a shirt. “I gotta shower before the party, though.”

“At your mom’s?” I asked, heading towards town.

“You mean my place?” He laughed, teasing me. “I still live there, asshole.”

Yeah, I was very aware he still lived there because he was being a dick about it. He had a full-time job now, knew I didn’t want to live at the shop with Nate and Xavi, and there was a trailer and lot coming up for rent in one of the best spots in Garron Park. I’d asked him a hundred times if he was interested in it, and a hundred times he said he was, but he was dragging it out because I wouldn’t outright ask him if he wanted to rent it together. He claimed he did too much confessing that it was my turn.

But I had fucking asked! I asked him so many times I lost count. I mentioned how sweet of a spot it would be. I brought up how much more room it would have. I reminded him how convenient it would be to wake up in our own place without having to be subtle about morning sex while either Nate and Xavi or his mom were around. Like fuck, how many more ways could I ask him to move in with me?

Maddox smirked at the front window, knowing I was lost in my head. Yeah, okay, so maybe I hadn’t outright asked him to move in with me, but it was a battle of wills at this point. I changed the subject because I was getting antsy about it.

“You’re lucky I even picked your ass up tonight,” I told him. “You should be walking home after the shit you pulled.”

“By the shit I pulled...you mean Heidi?”

He knew damn well I meant Heidi. “Yes, Heidi! Fuck, Maddox.”

“Get over it, Devon. It happened.”

My grip on the steering wheel tightened. “She’s my fucking mom! I’m the one who’s supposed to watch out for her and get her care. Stop fighting my battles for me!”

Maddox shrugged like he had been for the week we’d been having this fight. “And you’re mine to watch out for. I watched out.”

“Maddox!”

“Devon!” he fired back, a bit of a laugh following it. “Your mom needed a caretaker, and I found her one. Let it fucking go.”

Yeah, which was all fine and dandy because Heidi was awesome and great with my mom, and we could afford her because her certification matched the government funding program my mom qualified for, but what I hated about it was that—

“Ohhhh,” Maddox mused like a cocky son of a bitch. “You’re jealous again? I thought we sorted this out.”

“I’m not jealous.” I was totally jealous. Jeff, the hot guy Madd worked with, was Heidi’s brother, and that’s where the connection came from.

“That prick ain’t got nothing on you. But if you’re so insecure about it, grow a pair of balls and claim me in front of him or something. Just stop bitching about it.”

“Claim you?” I scoffed. Yeah, I wanted to make sure Jeff knew Maddox was mine, but I didn’t want Maddox to know I was doing it. “You know, our relationship, or whatever the fuck this is, would be a lot more legit if we lived together.”

“Not all couples live together,” he said. “But yeah, probably.”

“So, are you saying yes?”

“Did you ask a question?”

Oh my god, I wanted to kill him. I slammed the truck into a parking spot outside the liquor store and glared at him.

“What?” he laughed. “I thought you were just stating facts about your claim or whatever.”

“Fuck you, Maddox.” I slammed the truck door and tried very hard not to hit him in public as we walked into the store.

34

—MADDOX—

WAS MY MOM SOBER when Devon dropped me off to shower? Hell no, but we had come to some sort of deal over the past few months. She could drink all she wanted to as long as she made it to her part-time shifts at the hospital. It was the same deal we'd made with her before, but for whatever reason, it was sticking longer this time. Was it perfect? Not even close, but once I stopped paying for her rent, her booze, and her everything, she shaped up pretty quickly. She was still a wino, still took her unneeded pain pills, and still blacked out more often than not, but at least she was learning a few things. Like how to budget, get her ass to work, prioritize a bit, and survive more independently. She still failed a lot, but it was one hell of an improvement.

It also made me and Xavi realize how much we enabled her.

Devon's mom, on the other hand, was completely dependent on Mary, but that old mother hen didn't want to let her go. I think she liked having the company, and now that Heidi was coming five times a week to work with her and help take care of her, Mary was loving their living arrangement even more. It wasn't a forever solution, just like Jim's one-

year prison sentence, but it had to be okay enough for now. I was trying to learn to enjoy the little things and only bitch about them in private, where Devon couldn't hear.

"Mom good?" Xavi asked. I leaned against the garage door of their new shop, looking around. Nate, Xavi, and Devon owned it together as equals, and they had a business plan to put into action. I'd never really been interested, plus I didn't think it'd be a good idea for me and Devon to work together. We needed a degree or two of separation every now and then.

"She was pouring her wine into measuring cups to make it last all night, so..." I shrugged, thinking that was progress. "You happy with all this shit, Xav?" I motioned to the shop. There were locals everywhere, even some of the more well-off people who owned boats down here, friends and family, and good people from the park.

"Happy as shit, bud. You happy?"

I grinned, nodding. As close to happy as my miserable ass could get.

"I can't hold Gary off any longer, man. Dev ask yet?" Xavi laughed at me and my messed up methods of fucking with Devon.

"He's asked me four hundred times without actually asking," I laughed. "It's really pissing him off."

"You're such a dick. Gary has to announce it soon because there's a shit ton of people interested in that lot."

"I know. If he doesn't man up tonight, I'll tell him tomorrow."

"I hope he beats your ass when he finds out, Madd."

Mmm, me too. I definitely hoped for that.



DEVON WAS HALF-DRUNK, SITTING in the passenger seat of the truck, swearing under his breath because he was mad at me. Typical.

He'd had a good night at the shop, drank more than he usually did, and was all smiles and laughs for everyone except me. I got all his intense glares, middle fingers, eye rolls and scowls, but those had always been my favourites anyway.

"You sure you wanna stay here, Dev?" I asked, a bit smugly, not gonna lie. "I can take you back to the shop apartment if you're gonna be a moody bitch about staying at my place."

He'd been living in the back of the shop, which the three of them had converted into a half-ass apartment, but I knew he didn't want to be there.

He sighed as I pulled into the lot and parked in front of my trailer. "Yeah," he said. "Shit, sorry. I'm just..."

I waited, wondering if he was finally going to ask me what he'd roundabout been asking me for a month now.

"Tired," he finished, lying like an asshole.

"Okay." I shut the truck off and hopped out. "We can just go to bed if you're tired." I knew I was pushing him, but I didn't care. He needed to be pushed, and I loved doing it. It was my life's calling.

Devon followed me up the front steps. His silence was hilarious because it was the loudest silence I'd ever heard. Every word he wanted to say got stuck in his throat, building up the energy and the tension. I hoped he'd

open his loudmouth soon because if I had to lay in bed and try to relax in the tension of his spinning mind, I'd go nuts.

"Fuck, Maddox," he finally groaned, grabbing my hand. "Come with me." He dragged me back down the steps, and I tried to hide my satisfied grin. I knew he'd give in eventually. Predictable idiot.

He kept hold of my hand the entire walk through the park, through lots, and down the path that led to the place that was going to be ours. Lot 62.

"Look at this place!" he shouted, losing his shit a bit.

The trailer was pretty new and in good shape. The lot was one of the only private ones left in the whole park, and the forest behind the trailer had a river that ran straight to the ocean. There was even a private path to a secluded beach. It really was the perfect place.

"Yeah, I see it," I replied, pretending I didn't give a single fuck about it. "What of it?"

Devon growled at me. Hot damn. "You don't like it?"

"It's nice."

"Nice?" he scoffed. "It's goddamn perfect, Maddox! Why are you being such a dick about this?"

"About what?" Oh, Jesus fuck, I loved messing with him.

"About this lot! This trailer! Why don't you want to move in here with me?" He fully lost his shit now, his cheeks turning red with anger and his eyes going wide with frustration.

"I never said I didn't want to."

"You never said yes! You never fucking said yes to me!"

"You never asked." I raised my brow at him in a challenge. He knew he hadn't outright asked, and like fuck was I going to let him get away without doing it.

“Why should I have to be the one to ask?” he snarled at me like a rabid animal. “Why can't you ask me?”

There was no perfect answer to that. It's just the way it was, and now that I'd decided to make him ask, I was sticking to it. I said a lot of emotional shit over the time we'd been together, so now it was his turn to say the big words.

“Jesus fuck, Maddox, you're going to make me ask, aren't you?” He groaned like a petulant child. “You're that big of a dick?”

Sure was. “You don't have to ask me anything you don't want to,” I laughed. I couldn't help it. I tried to keep my tone bland, but that laugh came out of nowhere. I couldn't even keep a straight face because his blow-up was so funny.

“Fuck you!” He shoved me in the chest. I brought my hands up to grab his wrists so he couldn't do it again. “I hate you so much right now.”

“Mhm,” I agreed.

He wasn't in the mood for my smug bullshit. He tore his wrists free and wrapped a hand around my throat. Loved it when he did that.

“You piss me off so much, Maddox,” he said right in my face. “Move in here with me.”

“Was that a question?” I rasped. He was damn near choking me out.

He growled at me like a gremlin. “Holy fuck. Will you. Move in here. With me?” He glared.

“Say please,” I taunted.

He squeezed harder, my throat constricting and my air cutting off. When his chest rumbled with some animalistic snarl, I swear my dick got hard.

“I heard it's already rented,” I said.

Devon's face dropped and he let me go. I just broke his goddamn heart and it didn't feel satisfying to fuck with him anymore.

"I knew it. I knew we waited too long. You fucked this up, Maddox! Why...why couldn't you have agreed a month ago when it came up? Why did I let you mess with me this long?" he rambled. "I'm so fucking choked right now!"

"Devon." I grabbed his arm and pulled him into my body.

"What?" he barked at me.

"I love fucking with you." I smiled at him. "Which is why I let this go on so long."

"What're you talking about? He tried to push me away, but I put my hands on either side of his head and kissed his lips.

"I wanted to move in here with you as soon as I knew it was coming up. I rented it for us a fucking month ago, you dumb fuck. It's not my fault you took so long to ask."

Devon's mouth opened without words for once. He smiled, then he tried to hide it from me, then he glared. He gasped after that, scowling at me, then a smile and a glare mixed on his face. "You fucked with me for this long?"

"Yep." I smirked.

"It's done? Our names are on the lease?"

I nodded. "I even forged your shitty signature."

Devon nodded, accepting that. "Then you better fucking run, Maddox, because I'm going to kill you!"

The tone of his voice made me very aware he wasn't joking. So I did run. I ran as fast as my feet would take me because Devon was going to kill me for real, and now he had Lot 62 to bury my body on.

Fuck, I loved that asshole.

THE END...FOR NOW.

AFTERWORD

Thank you for reading GARRON PARK, book one in the FROM NOTHING series.

Maddox and Devon started out as a 'just for fun' project to help me get over a slump in writing, and somehow, they turned into a duology! I do love a good underdog story, and these two definitely had a harsh hand in life, so it makes their rise all the much more powerful. If you enjoyed Garron Park,

I'd love it if you could leave a review!

Book 2 picks up a year after book 1. The suffering gets harder, but the love gets stronger. They're in for a whirlwind, but we know they can handle it together, right?

BOOK TWO: LOT 62 [coming soon]

THANK YOU for being here!



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