MINE

XAVIER

"Do you really love my daughter or not?"

It was a good question. One that any good father would ask *before* a wedding. Sure, the old bugger had been in the hospital, but he could have sent one of Angela's brothers to check me out.

No, instead he'd let his daughter marry me, and now he had the audacity to ask if I loved my wife or not.

With my Louis Vuitton overnight bag in hand, I slammed the trunk shut a little too hard.

Now, on top of it all, Angela wanted to go out. To a fucking club.

Now, on top of it all, Aligera wanted to go out. To a fucking club.

wanted to be even less, and that was back inside that house.

I'd already been stewing out here for ten minutes, though, and I couldn't let her go out alone. I wouldn't let her out of

That was the last place I wanted to go. Especially here in the middle of *Timbuk-fucking-tu*. There was only one place I

my sight. If I did, another man might ...

I let out a breath, making a big puff of vapor float through the cold air as though I'd been sucking on a fat Cohiba

Behike.

When the imminent need to punch something subsided, I headed up the front steps and let myself in the unlocked

door.

My bag slipped from my fingers and landed with a thud on the shabby shag carpet.

Fuck me.

Angela was standing at the bottom of the stairs, wearing the tightest, shortest red dress I had ever seen her in, bending

over to lace up her heels.

The door slammed shut behind me, making her stand.

"How do I look?" She spun in a circle, her doe eyes batting at me.

Slowly, I ran my eyes down her body.

Like you want to be fucked. Get changed, now.

The words were on the tip of my tongue. Then, from the corner of my eyes, I saw Ken.

So, instead, I swallowed and stepped toward Angela, placing my hands on her hips. "Beautiful."

I was right.

Unable to help myself, I pulled her tight body against mine. She let out a little gasp that made my cock ache.

Tonight was going to be terrible.

Tomgnt wa

I needed to find Angela. Now.

Twenty minutes later, we were at Marv's.

From the outside, it looked like a prison, a low, squat building made of concrete slabs with an overweight "security guard" checking IDs out front.

Inside wasn't much better, one room that stank of piss and stale beer with a strobe light at the center.

The plan, *my plan*, when we arrived was to take over one of the sticky vinyl booths, drink a glass of watered-down

whiskey with Angela on my lap, and then get the fucking hell out of the place.

Instead, Em had snatched Angela off my arm the second we walked in and yelled at a passing waiter for tequila.

"Where are they going?" I had to shout over the loud techno music so that Lucas could hear me.

He shrugged, brushing past me in the direction of the bar. "Probably to dance."

With no other choice, I dove into the cesspool of pimple-faced twenty-somethings and single moms.

The second I stepped onto the dance floor, a woman with thick black curls pressed herself into me and started to

wiggle her ass against my crotch. Reflexively, I grabbed her hips and then, just as quickly, pushed her aside.

She grabbed my hand, twirled to face me, and wrapped her arms around my neck.

"What's wrong, sexy? Don't want to dance?" she purred.

We were so close I could see her stubby eyelashes clumped together with chunks of cheap mascara.

"Not with you."

while two of their *compadres* chugged beer at the center of their group.

beer in hand.

There she was, twirling in circles with Em, right under the fucking strobe light.

I detangled myself, only to walk into a pack of jersey-wearing frat boys. They were chanting some sort of victory song

She wiggled against my grip and giggled. "Xavier!"

"Angela," I breathed, wrapping my arms around her waist.

Finally, as I broke past them, I caught a flash of blonde hair.

I spun her around to face me, taking in her flushed cheeks and glassy eyes.

Angela put her arms on my shoulder and slid one of her long legs up the outside of my own. "Dance with me."

She tapped her chin with her index finger. "Two? Four? Ten?"

"Ten?!"

"THREE!" Em called from beside us. She threw her hands in the air and shimmied against Lucas, who had appeared,

Wrapping my hand around her thigh, I shouted back, "How many shots did you take?"

Angela pointed at Em. "That's it! She's right on the money. It was three."

"I can walk myself!" she insisted, wiggling again as I veered for the bar. Her shoe clipped some asswipe in the head as we passed.

Bending my knees, I scooped up Angela's other leg, picking her up bridal style. "Let's get you some water."

"That's sweet. You've been *sooo* nice lately. You know that?"

"You're always nice."

"Too nice," she agreed solemnly.

"I know, my angel, but I like to carry you."

his *Iron Maiden* T-shirt was any indicator.

"What can I get you?"

Sitting Angela on a barstool, I flagged down one of the bartenders. A tall, skinny dude with a wisp of a ginger beard

flopped over. He must have been only a couple of years younger than me but had clearly gotten a lot less far in life, if

"I don't suppose you have the 1937 Glenfiddich?"

I took his blank stare as a no.

"What the fuck is that?" I barked.

As I turned back around, I found the second bartender handing Angela what looked like a Jack and Coke.

"Just give me the strongest thing you have and a glass of water."

"Whoa, dude." The goateed motherfucker threw his hands up in the air. "Chill."

The bartender—*Bob* apparently—waved his hand up and down. "She looks great to me."

Mr. Goatee shouted a string of expletives while I tossed Angela over my shoulder.

She beat her tiny fists against my back. "Put me down!"

That was dangerous now, when I was looking for a fight.

my hands through my hair.

"You tell me," I growled.

"What?"

What the fuck?

It was Angela.

She was.

kiss I'd ever had.

Angela grabbed my bicep. "Please, don't talk to Bob like that."

"Can't you see how much she's had to drink?" I demanded, taking the glass he'd placed in front of Angela in my fist.

Before I could think twice, the entire contents of the Jack and Coke, including the glass, flew toward the bartender's chest.

"Za-vier!" Angela slurred as we burst out onto the street. "Put me down!"

I did. I let her slide down my body and, once she stopped wobbling on her heels, took a step away. Then another. I ran

She stepped closer to me. "I've known Bob since kindergarten. He was being friendly."

"What the hell was that?" Angela put her hands on her hips. If the last time I'd seen her drunk was anything to go by, the alcohol flooding through her veins right now was making her feisty.

"We're leaving," I gritted out as we headed toward the frat boys. They gave me a thumbs-up as I passed, for the girl

over my shoulder or soaking the bartender I wasn't sure. Didn't care. I just needed to get out of the fucking club.

"Yeah, you two looked real friendly! Should I get you a room for the night?"

"Why do you always do this?"

Angela threw her hands in the air. "This! Act like a possessive asshole every time we go out somewhere. Anytime another man says hi to me. The second anyone of the male persuasion glances in my direction."

All the fire in me suddenly vanished. "Angela, I ...I'm sorry."

I chuckled softly and took a step toward her. "I deserved that."

I froze, like some teenager who had never been kissed before, panicked.

I'd been kissed before. I'd kissed hundreds of women.

"Excuse me?" Her eyebrows shot up.

"I'm right here, Xavier. I'm not going anywhere," Angela whispered and then pressed her lips to mine.

Taking her in my arms, I started over. "I'm sorry, Angela. I know I can be a bastard sometimes, but

my best friend. I can't—I can't do that again. The idea of another man touching you drives me crazy."

This wasn't just another woman though.

... My ex left me for

Angela, who couldn't even say the word "kiss" without stuttering or blushing, let alone initiate one.

Yet she had.

I managed to move my lips. We'd never kissed before, not really. which was a fucking shame because it was like no

I wound my fingers in her thick gold hair, falling into the moment.

Falling into *her*.