

## Chapter 2

Alyssa

Niko isn't as much of an asshole as King, but he still makes it his mission to piss me off. He's a little smaller and less muscular than King, with spiky, dirty blonde hair and blue eyes. Like usual, he wears a blue bandanna around his head, even dressed in a black suit.

Mason, on the other hand, is of medium height with a slender frame. He's a redhead with tapered hair, green eyes, and thick-rimmed glasses. He's probably the chilliest out of the bunch, never wanting to get his hands dirty. But just because he's associated with them, I hate him too.

I roll my eyes. "Fantastic, just what I needed. The full set of my brother's annoying-ass friends."

Niko chuckles, his voice laced in amusement. "So mean for no reason, Alyssa. We're just looking out for you, sis."

"If you were looking out for me, you wouldn't be tormenting me all the damn time," I retort, crossing my arms as I glare at them.

King takes another drag of his cigarette, his intense gaze never leaving mine. "It's our way of showing affection, Kitten. You know you love it."

No. I. Don't.

Niko throws an arm over my shoulder, and I stiffen at the unwelcome contact. "Like I said, I'm good. Nobody needs to worry, especially Grayson. Isaac is my husband. He will take care of me," I insist.

"Are you ready to go, Alyssa?" Isaac's voice cuts through the tension as he strides across the lawn towards us. Relief washes over me. Finally, he's here to rescue me from my tormentors.

Isaac's gaze flickers between the three men around me, a shadow crossing his face as he notices Niko's arm draped casually over my shoulder. "What are you guys doing out here with my wife? Get your fucking hands off of her!" His voice is loud and embarrassing, drawing the attention of the few other guests hanging outside. I quickly create distance between me and the boys, rushing over to Isaac and placing a calming hand on his chest.

"It's okay, Isaac. They were just saying goodbye," I whisper, trying to defuse the situation before it escalates further and more people come out to watch.

I can already tell he's had something to drink; that means he's more likely to start a fight. His breath carries the sharp scent of alcohol, and his eyes have that hard, unfocused look.

"Do you want my friends and family to think you're a whore?" my husband hisses menacingly. "Get in the fucking car before you embarrass me more."

I bow my head, feeling shame wash over me, even though I know I did nothing wrong. My heart sinks, and a lump forms in my throat. I don't want to fight on our wedding night; I want to return to all the fun and happiness we were just having a few minutes ago.

"But what about everyone seeing us off?" I ask in a tiny voice, my eyes flickering back to the house where our guests are still celebrating.

"I'm too pissed off for that. We're just going to leave," he says, his tone leaving no room for argument. He grabs my arm, his fingers painfully sinking into my skin, and I wince.

It's okay, he's just drunk. This isn't my Isaac, I remind myself.

As I look up at King, Niko, and Mason, I see their expressions are tense and deadly. King's perpetual smirk has vanished, replaced by a look that could kill. Even Mason's laidback demeanor has shifted to one of alert readiness. Niko steps forward, his eyes narrowed, but I quickly shake my head, silently pleading with them to let it go.

Niko's jaw tenses, his voice a low growl. "Alyssa, I don't think we want you leaving with him. For him to think it's okay to speak to you that way, I think King and I should break his damn jaw."

Oh no.

"Who are you to tell my wife who she can't leave with? Stay in your goddamn place, freak," Isaac seethes, yanking me towards the car.

"Be careful how you fucking speak to him," King warns in a menacing tone.

"Or what?" Isaac retorts, the alcohol obviously giving him a false sense of confidence.

King steps forward, easily towering over Isaac. He's around 6'2" and twice his weight, the difference being his taut muscles. "Or I'll rearrange your face," King warns, his voice dangerously low.

I step in between them, placing a hand on Isaac's chest and pushing gently. "Isaac, please stop. Not on our wedding night," I plead, tears springing to my eyes. The tension is palpable, thickening the once peaceful atmosphere around us.

Is he seriously going to continue taunting three guys in a motorcycle gang? With my brother likely to come out here and join them if they decide to jump him?

Isaac's face twists with rage and humiliation. "Are you really taking their side right now?" he screams in my face.

"She's trying to stop you from getting your ass beat, dude," Mace interjects, his usually calm voice replaced by irritation. His forest green eyes, normally hidden by his glasses, ignite with anger.

"I was speaking to her!" Isaac roars, returning his fury back at me.

I keep my gaze focused on my husband, trying to reach the man I know is somewhere beneath the raging monster in front of me. "Please, can we just go?" I ask, tugging on his hand. My voice trembles, betraying the fear I feel.

His nostrils flare as he glares down at me. "Fine. But I don't want to ever see you alone with these assholes, again. Understood?"

I nod quickly, anything to calm him down before he spirals more out of control. This is starting to feel just like the Championship game our junior year, where he got into a huge fight with the other team's quarterback. But this time, the stakes are higher. King and Niko will kill him, while Mace watches. The last thing I want on my wedding night is to see my husband die.

"Let's go, let's go," I mutter soothingly, dragging Isaac to the car. I don't look at them, but I can feel their heated gazes as I step past them and get into the passenger seat of the car.

Even when we take off, and Isaac speeds through traffic, I keep my head down, staring at my trembling hands. The silence in the car is suffocating, killed with unspoken rage and tension.

At a stoplight, I finally look up just in time to see Isaac's hand collide with my cheek. The sharp sting makes me gasp. "Don't ever do something like that again. You made me look weak out there, I could've taken them," he snarls, his face clouded with fury.

A sob escapes me, quiet and desperate. He...hit me. He actually hit me, and on our wedding night. I should get out of the car right now, right? But then I immediately replay the scene in my head all over again.

It was my fault. I know how possessive Isaac can be; I shouldn't have been out there with my brother's friends. Even if it was accidental. Once I saw King out there, I should've gone back inside.

"I-I'm sorry, Isaac," I say softly, my voice barely audible over the car's engine.

"You should be," he answers calmly, his breathing gradually slowing down. "I didn't mean to hit you, but if we're going to make this marriage work, you have to stop making me angry, okay?"

I nod, my cheek throbbing. "Okay."

I mean, I do want to make our marriage work. My father died when I was younger, and even though he was a dangerous man, they were happy and in love. That's what I want.

A happy marriage.

I pushed Isaac over the edge tonight, but now I'll do better at watching what I say or do. Then, everything will be okay between us.

Isaac extends his hand to me, and even though my face still hurts, I place my hand in his. His grip is firm, possessive.

"I love you," he murmurs, his voice softening.

"I love you too," I say with a small smile, trying to convince myself of the words.

But little did I know, his kind of love would break me bit by bit until there was nothing left.