

## Chapter 4

King

I never thought Alyssa Bennett would reach out to me. For her to be that desperate, I guess she finally got tired of her piece-of-shit husband.

It's been a while since I've driven anything other than my bike, but when she called, I pulled my truck out of its resting place in the garage.

I park beside the red car on the side of the road, the sun starting to set on the horizon. Alyssa immediately jumps out of the driver's seat and rushes to the rear. First, she grabs a diaper bag, then a car seat.

I squint to make sure I'm seeing it right.

Yeah, it's a fucking car seat.

Stepping out of my truck, I offer to help with her bag. I watch as she secures the car seat in my backseat. I didn't know what to expect, but a real baby, dressed in a pink onesie and making little noises, wasn't it.

Maybe it's her niece or something. I wonder silently.

It's been three years since I last saw Alyssa, and she's really grown up. I'm not sure if it's for the better or worse. She looks worn out, like she's been fighting for her life.

And I have a gut feeling she has been.

She's wearing a black hoodie and jeans. Her dark curly hair is pulled into a messy bun, strands escaping to frame her face. There are dark circles beneath her hazel eyes. And if I wasn't the observant son of a bitch I am, I wouldn't have noticed that there's makeup on her cheeks, poorly concealing the purple blotches underneath.

The sight boils my blood. I shouldn't have listened to Gray, we could've saved her a long time ago. I don't give a fuck if she didn't leave willingly, I would've killed that motherfucker and brought her back home.

Alyssa jumps into the front seat and quickly buckles herself. Her knee bounces nervously, and she gnaws on her lip as I climb back into my seat.

"Can we leave already?" she asks, her voice edged with tension.

"Any reason we're abandoning your car on the side of the road?" I ask, raising an eyebrow.

I wonder if I push enough, she'll be honest about what's going on. We could always make a pit stop by her house, and deal with the issue. It's been a few days since I've had my fill of violence, anyway.

"It's dead," she answers, but there's a hint of anxiety in her tone that I don't miss.

"I have some jumper cables in the back. I could just—"

"The engine is dead, not the battery," she interrupts, her words rushed.

"Do you want me to call a tow truck?" I ask, sensing her growing more antsy by the second.

Yeah, she's lying her ass off.

"No, it's okay. Isaac says he will pick it up when he gets back home," she says, the lie slipping smoothly from her lips.

"Wanna call him and make sure?"

"No, that's okay." Her desperation is starting to become more evident, but I can tell she's trying to maintain her calm demeanor.

I smirk at the effort. "Have somewhere to be, Kitten?"

She doesn't answer, her hazel eyes silently pleading with me. Usually, I enjoy fucking with her, but I'll save that for later. When she's safely in my home.

I pull back onto the highway, glancing between her and the car seat in the back.

I clear my throat. "So, who's the kid?" I ask nonchalantly.

"Zuri," she murmurs.

"And she's—"

"My daughter."

Interesting. I don't recall Gray saying anything about her having a baby. Actually, I think they only speak once a month. And the phone calls are usually five minutes or less.

I should beat Gray's ass. That should've been the biggest red flag he needed right there.

"How old is she?" I ask, trying to keep my emotions in check.

"Seven months."

I hate little crotch goblins—never imagined myself having one—but jealousy and anger still bubble beneath the surface. Isaac Carter was the first man to fuck her, to breed her. Lucky motherfucker. That was supposed to be me. But Niko and I made a pact when we were teenagers: since we both liked her, neither of us could have her.

"She looks like you. Got your curls."

Alyssa smiles weakly. "Yeah, she does."

As we drive, out of the corner of my eye, I can see Alyssa's eyes darting to the side mirrors, checking for any signs that her husband is following us. The tension in her shoulders slowly eases as we put more distance between us and her abandoned car.

Finally, she shifts her gaze to me, where it belongs. "So, where's Gray? I'm surprised he hasn't called me back by now."

I grunt. "Haven't seen him much lately. But you know how it is with the club—always something going on. I'm sure he'll call you back soon."

I know my brother has his own shit going on. But when he texts me to go handle someone, I do it without question. That's my job, and I enjoy the fuck out of it.

Alyssa snorts. "I think you mispronounced 'gang'. Let's be forreal, it's a gang."

I pick up the disdain in her tone, but she has no idea why we have to do what we do. That's how it's meant to be. Gray wanted her to be a clueless little kitten, and I've never had the time or fucking energy to argue with him about it.

Until now. Matter of fact, I think the topic will be coming up very soon.

"Can we actually stop at Target real quick? I need a few things," Alyssa asks, nervousness creeping into her voice again.

"Sure." I pull into the nearest Target, and park halfway down the parking lot, since it's always so goddamn packed. Alyssa quickly hops out of the truck, but before she can close the door, I shout, "I think you forgot something."

She furrows her brows. "What?"

I point to the car seat, unease settling in my gut. "You're leaving the kid here?"

"Yeah, Zuri's asleep," she says, emphasizing her name. "I'll be quick. You'd be surprised by how long she still sleeps."

I watch as she runs into the store, leaving me alone with her crotch goblin I have no fucking idea what to do with.

Only minutes after Alyssa is in the store, Zuri starts crying.

Fuck. Maybe I can just ignore her and leave her be. I'm guessing she'll eventually cry herself back to sleep or something.

The cries quickly become louder, more demanding.

Goddammit. Fine.

Reluctantly, I reach behind, struggling to undo the restraints before pulling her out of the seat. Grimacing, I awkwardly hold her in my arms, and she immediately stops crying, snuggling into my chest.

God, I hate this. Why didn't she just take her with her?

As the goblin gazes up at me, I notice that her eyes are the same as Alyssa's. Yeah, definitely her child. And there's unfortunately some of Isaac's DNA mixed in there too.

Her tiny fingers grab my shirt, and I feel a pang of something in my chest. Maybe it's that big-ass burger I ate earlier clogging my arteries. Whatever it is, I shove it aside, glancing around the parking lot to ensure there's no danger.

A coo grabs my attention again, and I frown down at her. "Look, kid. We can be cool, but don't try to get in my way. Me and your mother have some unfinished business that I plan on taking care of tonight."

She babbles in response.

"Good. I'm glad we understand each other."

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