

## Five

A week passes and neither Ethan nor I bring up my journal incident or the overly s\*\*\*\* scene that followed in his ooc. Although we haven't spoken about it, it hasn't stopped me from thinking and dreaming about it. The way he spoke to me was so inappropriate yet I wanted nothing more than for him to do the things he had threatened.

Whenever we ride to and from work, Ethan only talks about work and if it isn't work, he is simply asking me what my plans are for the evening, which usually involves me writing or listening to music while I cook and try to keep my apartment tidy. It is still new to me and I was to keep it looking as such.

Now that it's Friday, I'm a lot more comfortable in my role as nancially stable and employed. The job is easier and the people are even, but it's a little lonely. Ethan doesn't drop by unless it's for work related tasks and even then, he just stays at the door. Every night in my apartment has been quiet. My vibrator has been my friend and condant. It never lets me down.

After clocking out, I head down to the car that is always waiting for me and Ethan. Climbing in, I plug in my phone until the door opens again and Ethan slides in. I look at him brie before turning my attention back to the phone as the car begins to move.

"How was your rst week?" He nally asks as he ips through emails.

"It was good. Thanks for asking."

"So what are your plans for the evening?" Same question, different day. Sitting the phone down in my lap, I turn to him slightly. "Dinner, TV, iver cream, sleep."

I smile as Ethan chuckles softly. "Nice"

"What about you?"

Ethan's eyes icker to mine for a second "I have a party to attend tonight."

"Cool. I'm sure it'll be fun. What kind of party is it? Techno, glow age, birthday?"

Ethan presses his lips together, trying to hide a hint of amusement as he stares down at me. What is so funny? "Just a get together. Nothing specic."

A frown develops in my forehead at how he tip toes around the question. It makes me curious about his nightly activities. My mind instantly goes back to those black masks I found in his ooc and apartment. I have my theories, but nothing makes any sense to me. Maybe he's been to a costume party or two.

"Oh, okay. Well, I hope you have fun. I'm sure your night will be a lot better than mine" I give a chaste smile as turn back to my phone, letting the car fall silent again. After about 20 minutes of playing Candy Crush, I realize that the car has stopped. Looking out the window, I see that we're in the middle of trac.

"What's happened?"

"Car accident. We'll be here for a while" Ethan says, grimly.

"Oh, okay. I hope it's not too bad." I roll the window down and peer out to see if I can spot the accident. When I stick my head out the window, a drop of water falls on my forehead. I pull back, quickly and op into the seat as more drops begin to fall. When I look over, Ethan is smirking at me.

"You have a little something right there" Reaching towards me, Ethan wipes the small drop of rain off my forehead.

I don't know why, but his touch sent a small electric current through me. It was a simple touch, yet it affected me. "Thanks"

"No problem"

After rolling the window back up, rain starts pouring down around us and the sound of of rain drops on top of the car scolds me. I lean back against the seat and stare out the window as my visibility lessens the harder it rains. Thoughts of Ethan begin entering my tranquil thoughts and I discreetly press my knees together. I wouldn't be so damn attracted to the man had we not had that intimate steamy moment in his ooc. Since then, all sorts of It's has been running amuck in my brain. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I see Ethan reach for something. Following his hand, I watch him grab my journal as it hang out the top of my bag. Reaching out to take it back, Ethan pulls it out of reach.

"Can I read a few pages?"

"Uh, I don't think... I mean...it's personal" If he reads what's in that journal, he will think I'm a total weirdo s\*x freak. My eyes dart from his eye to the book. Ethan sees my panic and sighs

"I'm not going to judge you, Thea. I'm just a little curious about what you write"

"Well, you know what they say about curiosity?" I mumble and when I reach for the journal again, Ethan pops my hand away causing me to unintentionally pout at him.

"Don't make that face. It makes you look far too young."

"I am young"

"Yes, but pouting makes you look adorably too young. You could have a man in the palm of your hand with that pout" He chuckles. Did he just say I'm adorable? Out of all the adjectives in the world, the only one he could muster up is adorable.

"Well, apparently my adorable pout doesn't apply to you. Now, gimme my journal" I shoot my hand out, but instead of slapping it away again, Ethan grabs my wrist, rmy. My breath catches in my throat as his ngers wrap perfectly around my wrist, sending electric currents through me. Instead of pulling away, I just look at him.

"Stop" Ethan says in a stern tone. Parting my lips to say something, nothing comes out. His dark gaze sends all my thoughts scattering about. I let my shoulders fall and exhale gently. Ethan's ngers loosen and I pull my hand back. Watching him intently, Ethan ips open the book and turns a few pages before stopping.

"In the dark, her body lays..."

"No, please don't read that one." I say louder than needed, putting my hand over his. Ethan looks down then back up to me.

"Why? What's wrong with this one?"

"It's too personal. That one is private" I had written this on one of my more dark days when I was starving and out of peanut butter. I had depression sets in without my Jiffy.

Ethan eyes me for a moment, rubbing his thumb over the edge of the page.

"Thea, I'm not here to judge you in any way, I promise. You should trust me"

Before I can catch it, it rolls off my tongue "But I don't. I don't even know you, Ethan" I snap, instantly regretting it.

A deep frown burned into his forehead and his lips press into a rm line. Oh, God, I've completely pissed him off. He's done so much for me and I can't even bring myself to give him an ounce of trust. I trusted him enough to let him out me into a new apartment, but not to read my journal.

"I'm sorry, Ethan"

"No, don't be. I understand. I myself don't trust a lot of people, but you can trust me, Thea. I know it's only been a full week, but I'm here for you." My whole body nearly melts into a puddle at his words.

Since moving to New York, I built myself up not to trust anyone. This isn't home, this is a large ruthless city that will eat me up and spit me out. Then Ethan swoops in like a modern day Clark Kent and treats me like I'm his personal Lois Lane. I wonder if they ever slept together. Oh God, get a grip, Thea.

Turning my attention back to Ethan, I run my ngers down the bridge of my nose and take a deep breath. "Go ahead."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, just read it before I change my mind."

I cover my face with my ngers, peaking between them as Ethan clears his throat, shooting me a quick glance before starting again.

"In the dark, her body lays naked stripped of her dignity. Her eyes blinded, from the lack of hope. Her hands bound, riding her of control. The darkness has engulfed her and enslaved her, using her body for his needs. Legs spread, the darkness has its way with her, uses her, breaks her down. Sweet whimpers turn to screams as her own climax betrays her desire, breaks her down. Sweet whimpers turn to screams as her own climax betrays her desire, breaks her down. No one to save her, no one to shed some light. The darkness in her knows she is still alive. No one to save her, no one to shed some light. The darkness in her knows she is still alive. Her love and hate. Her pleasure and pain. Her days and nights. Her sweet death."

The car falls silent and I wait for Ethan to say something, anything. I can literally feel my pulse thumping in my ngerlips as I squeeze my hands together in my lap. Outside, the rain is giving up and the car is moving up only to stop again. Closing the journal, Ethan hands it to me. I take it and quickly slide it back into my bag.

"Thea, what was it about? Did someone hurt you?"

I shake my head "The darkness isn't a person. It's a place. It's New York. I moved here on a whim, because I was naive. It was hard, but I couldn't leave. People wouldn't understand back home. They would think that I was a failure. So I stayed and struggled. I lost everything about myself for a while, but I still wanted to be here. So stupid" I force a laugh, shaking my head at my own words. I could have been home, living an okay like, but who really wants mediocre?

"It's not stupid, Thea. It's a good place here. It's not meant for just anyone." Suddenly, Ethan reaches over and places his hand on my knee, rmy.

His warm touch, sends a jolt right up to my core and a shudder runs over me, that I'm sure he felt.

"Your determination is commendable, Thea. You didn't give up and that's why I was so open to help you. I knew when you walked into my ooc that the job would mean more to you than any other candidate."

I feel my eyes water and I look away before he can catch it. It's odd to have someone be so kind to me and not know me that well. He is foolish to go on blind faith. I mean I could have been a total con artist or something.

"Thank you" I mumble.

"For what?"

I turn to him and wipe the corner of my eye "For seeing something in me that I didn't see in myself. You're a good boss, Ethan"

A proud smile spreads across his face and he chuckles. "I try. But in all honesty, if you need someone to talk to, I'm around. I know I've been quite distant. I just wanted to try to stay professional, but it's quite impossible with you around"

"I'm not that bad" I sniff.

"No, you're not. You're one of the good ones." Reaching over, he taps his index nger under my chin, making me smile at the simple gesture. Ethan holds his hand out.

"Friends?"

Hesitating for a moment, I look into his eyes, nding sincerity and kindness in them.

"Friends" I say, shaking his hand rmy.

When I nally get home to my apartment, I drop my things and the door and kick my shoes off. In the kitchen, I grab my tried and true peanut butter and a spoon before popping down on the couch to watch TV.

After a half an hour, I realize that I don't know what's happening on the show, because I've been thinking about Ethan the whole time. I\*\*k. I've managed to trap myself into having a pathetic crush on the man. My recent journal entries have been about ooc s\*x, surely inspired by him. I lay in bed at night and thinking about s\*x on desks, copiers, tables in front of clients. It's getting out of hand. Thank God he didn't read any of those.

After sitting on the couch for 2 hours doing nothing of substance, I decide to put a pizza in the oven and take a quick shower. By the time I get out, it's dark outside. Flicking on a few light and lighting some candles, I head to the kitchen in my bathrobe to pour a hefty glass of wine that's much needed from the busy week I've had. Whoever said being an assistant is easy is a damn liar. Ethan is a demanding man.

Going over to the couch, I turn the tv off and open Spotify on my phone, choosing a 90's RnB playlist to set the mood for my lonely Friday night. I wish I had parties and events to go to like Ethan. A part of me wonders if I would have asked to go would be have taken me. Most likely not. I'm not exactly the type to do fancy parties. Don't know the rst thing about them. I'd probably eat steak with my salad fork for all I know. Me attending a fancy party makes me think of Ariel and the single hopper.

Breaking my thoughts, I hear a knock on the door. I lie the bathroom around me and get to the door to open it as the second knock starts. My face falls a bit as I look up at the gure.

"Greg. What are you doing here?"

"Do I need a reason to come see a friend? We have talked since you started that job. You texted me your address so I gured I just stop by, say hi." A grin spreads over his lips and I step aside, a bit cross about him stopping by so unexpectedly.

"Yeah, sure. Come on in"

Greg walks in, but stops and looks down at me.

"Wow, you look different." He reaches up, curling his nger around a lock of my hair before letting it fall and walking in.

"Nice place you got here"

"Uh, yeah. My boss kind of put me here after seeing my garbage dump of an apartment." Greg looks back at me and nods.

"Yeah, I bet"

Raising an eyebrow at his comment, I pace over to the phone and cut off Spotify.

"Um, I'm going to go put something on. Make yourself at home, Greg. I'm really glad you came to visit" I put on a smile as I head to my bedroom.

I'm pretty use to random visits from Greg, but it's must have taken almost 40 minutes to get there. Did he want to visit me that bad? Pulling a shirt over my head, I grab a pair of shorts out of the drawer and slide them on. I walk my hair to the top of my head, wrapping it on a bun before securing it with an elastic as I pile my back on to the kitchen.

I nd Greg behind the counter, pulling my pizza out of the oven.

"Thanks" I mumble, walking around the counter to grab the pizza cutter.

"So, how long did it take you to get here?"

"Uh, about 45 minutes, but I don't mind. I've missed you and I guess you've been too busy to talk so I just felt like coming over to hang out a bit. I hope you don't mind" Greg eyes me as if he is trying to guilt me into something.

"No, it's ne. Just a surprise and I'm sorry about not calling or texting. When I get home from work, I usually just fall into bed."

Lies, but I don't want him to know that. Honestly, I haven't talked to Greg in a while because I know what kind of guy he is. He looks down on people from this side of the city and now I live here. He has a habit of making rude comments to make people feel bad, including me when he wants. When I was working as a nanny in a nice part of the city, not as nice as this part, but still pretty nice, he immediately judged me. As I recall, he said something along the lines of

"Oh, Thea, you are molding yourself to be the ultimate kiss ass by working for rich people as a nanny of all things. I'm sure the husband wanted to hire you on the spot."

For the rest of that conversation he made me feel cheap by telling me I'm more likely to let the husband grope me for a raise. I didn't talk to Greg for a few days after that. I doubt he is aware of how much of an asshole he is. Being away from his has made me realize just how much I was settling for his company to avoid being alone all the time.

After cutting the pizza, I ix us two plates before going to the couch. I turn the TV on and nd a movie before settling next to him. As we watch the movie with Greg until he goes to the apartment, picking it apart bit by bit. I try to ignore it, but it begins to make me irritated. Shifting over just barely, I put a few inches of space between us so our arms are no longer touching.

"Thea, can I ask you something?"

Chewing my food for a few seconds, I nod.

"Sure" Here we go.

"How much do you pay for this place?"

"Uh, I don't pay, Ethan does"

"Ethan?" He looks at me, quizzically, his smug smirk creeping up on his lips. I don't have to ask to know what he is thinking.

"Yes, my boss"

You call your boss by his rst name?"

"Yes. He asked me to." I sit my plate down in my lap and frown. "Where is this going, Greg?"

Greg turns to face me, sitting his plate on the coffee table. Sighing, he reaches over and rubs his thumb over my jaw line. "I just worry that maybe his intentions are more than you think, Thea. I wouldn't want him taking advantage of you"

"He doesn't take advantage of me. Why would you say something like that?" I pull away from his touch and his hand falls.

"Look around, Thea. This expensive ass apartment, fully furnished with expensive s\*\*t. He wants to f\*\*k you" Greg laughs and it sends heat to my cheeks in anger.

When Greg sees my expression, he stops laughing, but keeps a smile on his lips.

"That's not true, Greg. He hasn't tried anything with me or the other way around, so just stop, okay? It's not funny. Why can't I just have a job and a nice boss like normal people?"

"Because, Thea the world isn't full of nice bosses. Hell, look at my situation. I am the best journalist at that company, but because I don't kiss ass. I have been promoted in the 2 years I've worked there"

"Greg, you haven't been promoted because all your work makes you out to be a pompous asshole, kinda like what you're being right now." Standing up, I grab his plate and make my way to the kitchen.

"I think you should leave. I'm sorry you have to come this far. I'll give you cab money to get home." I frown as I put the two plates in the dishwasher. As I'm closing it, I feel his hands on my waist.

"Thea, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you angry"

"Well you did." I push his hands off of me and step around him.

"Oh, come on, Thea. You don't see me all bent out of shape over your rude ass comment about my job. I know you didn't mean it"

Naturally, I roll my eyes "No, I was telling the truth. Something I should have said all those times you asked me to read your columns. I'm sorry, Greg"

I lean against the counter and run my ngers over my hair. Greg stands in the middle of the kitchen looking at me, his expression no longer humorous. Suddenly, he paces in front of me and wraps his arms around my waist.

"Thea, I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything I said. I've just missed you and I guess I'm a little jealous. Please forgive me"

Without letting me answer, his lips are on mine, rough and too eager as always. Needless to say, none of my journal entries have started him. Letting him kiss me, I feel his tongue slip over my lip and it makes me cringe which Greg interprets as a shudder of excitement. Not!

Pushing him back, he holds me in place, his mouth now on my neck, sucking too hard.

"Greg, stop trying to give me a hickey"

"I want that boss of yours to see who you belong to" He mumbles and trap his back more forcefully.

"Stop. I don't belong to you. I don't belong to anyone"

"Thea, don't ruin the moment, I know you want this." He tries to step closer, but I slip out from in front of him.

"I think you should go"

Greg huffs, letting his arms fall to his side "Come on, Thea, don't act like this. You've never turned me down before"

"Well I am now. Bye" I gesture towards to door and surprisingly, Greg turns to walk to it.

Following behind him, I can't wrap my head around why he is acting like a total ass wipe. We're almost to the door when Greg turns around, making me jump.

"You know what, I don't even want you anymore. That boss can have your ass. Maybe if you f\*\*k him tonight, he'll buy your trash ass a car"

Suddenly, I pull my hand back and slap him.

"f\*\*k you. You never complained when I was in bed with you. The s\*x wasn't even that great. I don't even know why I put up with you. You're the one who cheated on me"

"That's because I knew you were desperate. I just didn't know you were this desperate. f\*\*\*\*g for money, real classy, Thea" Greg step forward and I step back.

"Get out, now!"

"You know what, f\*\*k you, Thea. I should have kicked your broke ass to the curb a long time ago. You're nothing. You f\*\*k your bosses to get where you want. You f\*\*\*\*d your last boss and now you're f\*\*\*\*g this one. I hope you're proud of all of this"

Swinging his hand out, he knocks over a glass vase off the stand by the kitchen and it hits the oor, sending glass everywhere. Jumping back, Greg steps toward me again, knocking over the bottle of wine from edge of the counter.

"Stop it!" I yell, but Greg goes over to the living room, leaving me barefoot with glass around me.

"I tried to be nice to you, Thea. I let you use my apartment for whatever you needed. I helped you whenever you asked. We had a good thing going."

Picking up my phone from the coffee table, he tosses it in his hand before throwing it into the wall, breaking it apart. Standing there with wine around my toes, my body shakes in fear. I've never seen him act like this.

"Greg, get the f\*\*k out before I scream so f\*\*\*\*g loud I'll have every person in this building at my door in seconds" I have a stare down with Greg until he marches over to me. I go to step back and a sting of pain shoots through my foot as I step on glass. Greg gets into my face and I immediately fear he's going to hit me.

"When he drops your ass, don't come running to me. I hope you rot on a corner" As he turns to leave, he rams his shoulder into my chest, knocking me off balance.

I try to nd my balance, but I can't. Falling to the oor, my hands press into the glass. Thankfully, none of the glass gets into my knees, just wine. Hissing loudly, I look up, tears in my eyes and see Greg swing the door open. As he walks out, I hear him yell for someone to watch where they are going.

When it's quiet, I look down at my bloody hands, with their shards of glass in them. Body still shaking, I can't bring myself to get up. Suddenly, I see the half open door being pushed open. Blinking, tears run down my cheeks and I see Ethan standing there in a black suit.

"Thea, what the hell happened?!" He rushes over to me, shoes crunching over glass every every step of the way.

"Who was that guy?" Ethan asks as he kneels in front of me, taking my wrists his hand. I sniff, ghting the urge to ball my hands up in frustration.

"My ex. He's kept saying things and I asked him to leave and then he did all of this" I can't help but stutter over some of the words, still in shock.

A look of darkness spreads over Ethan's face and he stands, only to pull off his suit jacket. He quickly rolls his sleeves us before kneeling back down.

"I'm going to pick you up, okay?"

I nod and he hooks his hands in my arm pits and lifts me up like a child. I wrap my forearms around his neck as he carries me over to the couch. Sitting me down, Ethan rushes to the bathroom, coming back with a towel and a box. He sits on the coffee table in front of me and opens the box, which is a rst aid kit. When he reaches for my hand, I curl my toes and cringe, remembering the glass in my foot.

Ethan slides back and grabs my ankle in his large warm hand. Lifting my foot up, he reaches into the box and takes a pair of tweezers. When he goes to pull the glass back, I pull my foot back in fear. Ethan tightens his grip on my ankle and gives me a hard look.

"Be still"

Bitting down on my lip, I close my eyes and hold my breath. I hear Ethan let out a short clipped snort. When I open my eyes, he is holding the small shard of glass in the tweezers. I watch him as he inspects my feet for any more glass before moving to my hands.

Carefully, Ethan picks out the few pieces of glass that are actually in my skin, brushing the piece off that are just stuck to my hand from the wine.

When he is done, he sprays a little Neosporin on my hands and foot before placing Band-Aids.

"All better" He mumbles. I sit as Ethan packs up the kit and sits it aside, moving to the next task.

I sit on the couch for an hour as Ethan cleans up all the glass and wine, removing all evidence of the temper tantrum Greg had out of a jealous rage. A rage that I will never understand, because he cheated on me and we weren't together anymore. I honestly hope I never have to look at his face again.

When Ethan is done, he runs his hands through his hair in frustration and then eyes his watch. I look over at the clock and it's almost midnight. Oh crap, Ethan's party.

"You can go. I'm sure you can still make your party."

"No, it's ne."

"I didn't mean to ruin your plans, Ethan" I don't know why, but tears come to my eyes. I blame it on the already high level of emotions I'm feeling. I'm still quite shaken up over the whole thing. Pushing my tears back, Ethan shakes his head.

"It's ne, Thea. It's just a party. There will be others."

Ethan inspects the apartment, making sure nothing else is broken and so on, yawns start creeping up on me. Expecting Ethan to leave so I can go to bed, I'm surprised when he makes no move to actually leave. As if reading my mind, Ethan presses his lips together

"I'm not leaving tonight. If he comes back, I want to be here. I'll stay on the couch"

"Ethan you don't..."

"It's not up for discussion, Thea. I'm staying. Now, go to bed" His voice his hard and stern, sending the message that I'm not going to win this.

Nodding, I stand up and head to my room. Before I can get to the door, I stop at the linen closet. Grabbing a blanket, I walk back to the living room and nd Ethan looking my door.

"Here, just in case you get cold"

He smiles brie "Thank you. Now, go get some rest."

In bed, the last thing I can do is sleep or rest. I toss and turn, relentlessly before giving up. When I see the clock, it blinks back 2am. Sighing, I throw the covers back and hop out of the bed to get some water. I open the door, the apartment is dark, the only light coming from the TV in the living room. Walking closer, I see Ethan stretched out on my couch, shoes off and blanket thrown over his legs with his hands behind his head. Eyebing him intently, I take in his now messy hair and the slight scruff developing on his chin. Still deliciously handsome nonetheless.

When I'm done gawking at his face, I notice something laying on his stomach. When I realize what it is, I bite my lip. My journal. Why is he so fascinated with my personal thoughts? Nosy devil. Gently lifting it off his stomach, I tuck it under my arm. I quietly make it to the kitchen and get a few sips of water, looking at infomercials on the TV to distract myself some and man on my couch.

After getting a handful of information on Hot Buns and blenders, I sit the cup in the sink to head back to bed. As I pass the coffee table, I grab the remote to turn the TV off, but before I can, something catches my eye. On the edge of the couch, Ethan suit jacket lays with something poking out. Tip toeing over, I grip the edge of the object and pull it out. I inhale sharply, looking down at a black mask in my hand.