

You're Mine by Penny Brooks #Chapter 101 - Read

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Chapter 101

Easton We're not really cleaning up much out here.

More like the three of us are shooting the shit and talking about taking the boat out with the girls before we head home.

Occasionally, we'll toss a chair cushion back on the couch and pick up the beer bottles and cans we left scattered on the tables from last night, throwing them all away in the discrete trash can that sits nearby.

The back door suddenly swings open and Aisha bursts outside, screaming like she's being chased by a serial killer with Sadie following after her, that serious expression on her face telling me she's intent on murdering her, just as she promised.

"Blake, oh my God, tell her to stop!"

Aisha yells as she runs into his arms, panting like she's just ran ten miles.

He holds her close, rubbing her back as he glares at Sadie.

"What the fuck is your problem?" "Don't talk to her like that,"

Ryan interjects, defending his girl.

Aw, so sweet.

Though we've got no time for sentiment right now.

"Sadie, what happened?"

I ask as Ryan goes to her and wraps his arms around her, pulling her close and glaring at Blake and Aisha.

"She's a complete bitch,"

Sadie practically snarls, pointing at Aisha.

"Talking so much shit to us, yet acting like an innocent angel for you guys.

Don't fall for her lies, Blake—she's a psycho!"

Damn.

If anyone is acting like a psycho right now...

I hate to say it, but Sadie is borderline hysterical.

"I'm the psycho?"

Aisha turns in Blake's arms, her back to his front as she rests her hand on her chest.

"You're the one who's chasing me with a knife!" Sadie glances down at her empty hands before holding them out in front of her.

"I don't have a knife, you fucking whore bag." "Hey, no need for name calling," Blake says fiercely.

"We can talk about this like reasonable adults."

"Reasonable? She's accusing me of chasing her with a knife when I never even had one! What the hell are you talking about?"

Sadie sounds on the verge of tears and Ryan tucks her close to him, rubbing her back as he whispers to her.

I can only assume he's trying to calm her down.

The triumphant expression on Aisha's face is unmistakable.

The girl is trying to make Sadie look like she's out of her mind, and it's working.

Such a manipulative bitch.

Harper suddenly appears in the open doorway, rubbing her ass with a pained expression on her face.

"Everything okay out here?"

I rush toward her, crowding her in the doorway, my voice low so no one else can hear me.

"Are you okay?"

"I fell." She winces when I rest my hand on her right ass cheek.

"Landed on my butt."

"What do you mean, you fell?"

Sadie rushes over, a contrite expression on her face.

"I'm so sorry I pushed you.

I didn't mean to.

I don't know my own strength sometimes, I swear."

What the hell? Sadie pushed Harper? Maybe Aisha is right.

Maybe Sadie is the troublemaker in this situation.

"It's no big deal,"

Harper says, reaching out to grab Sadie's hand and give it a squeeze.

"I'm fine.

Just landed hard on that cold tile floor."

Everyone starts talking over each other after that.

Ryan is yelling at Blake.

Blake is yelling at Sadie.

Harper keeps insisting she's okay while I keep asking her to tell me what exactly happened in the kitchen.

Aisha stands off to the side by herself, a witness to the chaos that I know she caused while never saying a damn word.

Smug bitch.

"Okay, that's it.

We're done,"

I finally announce loudly, everyone going silent.

"Let's pack it up and head home."

"I thought we were going out on the lake—"

Blake starts, but I shut him up with a pointed look.

"Sadie, I'm so sorry if you thought I said something to hurt your feelings." Aisha says, her eyes wide and her lips formed into a pout.

As if she's the innocent victim in all of this.

"Fuck off,"

Sadie mutters as she walks past her and heads straight into the house, Ryan following after her.

"I'm going to our room to pack up my stuff."

Harper tells me.

I kiss her cheek and pat her ass.

"Go on in, babe.

I'll be there in a few."

I watch her pull the door shut before I turn my attention to Blake and Aisha.

"I don't know what the hell you did just now, but you're not welcome here anymore."

Blake steps in front of Aisha as if he's going to actually try and defend her, "She did nothing, Easton.

It's obvious Sadie went off her meds or whatever and now she's making up lies."

"Pretty sure the only one lying here is Aisha."

I pause for a moment, letting my words sink in.

"And possibly you, Blake." He rests his hands on his hips, squinting at me as if he doesn't recognize me anymore.

I feel the same way, bro, is what I want to tell him.

But I keep my lips shut.

"I'm not lying about anything.

I thought we were good.

I came here to have fun.

Aisha just cooked all of us a huge breakfast.

She's trying to make peace with the girls, and this is how they treat her?"

He scratches the back of his head, his man bun wobbling with the movement.

"This is all kinds of fucked up.

Come on, Aisha.

We're out of here." "I need to get my stuff," she whines.

"Let's go then."

Blake heads for the back door, Aisha following him, but I grab her arm, stopping her.

"I know what you're up to,"

I whisper.

"It won't work."

Her smile is like a baring of teeth.

"You don't have any idea who you're dealing with, do you?" She flounces away with her nose in the air and I slowly shake my head.

Damn, I really don't trust that girl.

Not one fucking bit.

Chapter 102

Chapter 102

Harper

As I'm in the bedroom, packing up my things, I hear a door slam and a long, drawn-out puff of air come from the other side of it.

There's no question in my mind who it came from, I know it's the room Aisha is sharing with Blake and I'm positive it's her reaction to Easton telling them their sorry asses need to leave.

I don't know for sure that he kicked them out, but I can't imagine him offering a ride on his jet ski after the shit she just pulled.

The last few minutes have been crazier than I can handle.

First, I land on my ass, then Aisha accuses Sadie of chasing her with a knife, and then it's full chaos as we all speak over each other, trying to share our own sides of the story.

No one listening, no one trying to reason, everyone just pointing fingers.

There's only one person guilty here.

Aisha.

The minute she showed up with Blake, I knew our fun, relaxing weekend was over, and stress was about to ensue.

I don't care if the bitch makes the best French toast in the world, she needs to go.

As I hear her thrash around inside the room, I suspect she's getting ready to do just that.

Thank God.

I finish putting the last of my stuff into my bag and I make my way into the living room, sitting next to Sadie on the couch, a front row seat for when the parade of losers finally leave.

My best friend looks like hell.

Her hair is a mess, sticking out the sides of her hoodie as it's drawn over her head, some type of stain on her leggings that I didn't notice before.

"Are you all right? "

"I'm about to commit murder. "

She looks at me, her hands clenching on her lap, her lips grim, eyes so dark I can barely see her pupils.

"Honestly, how do you think I'm doing? "

Her mouth parts and she practically growls.

"A knife? Really? Like I would ever. "

I want to laugh, but I'm afraid she'll reach for my throat.

"I mean ...

you do want to disassemble her limb by limb, but a knife is a serious stretch. '

"She was trying to make me look like a psycho in front of my boyfriend. '

She sighs, wrapping her arms around her stomach.

"And to know her and Ryan have hooked up, makes me ill. '

She pauses.

"Like want to puke kind of ill. '

"Hey. '

I put my hand on her shoulder, squeezing it.

"She's been with , too.

We can be sick together. '

"I hate her. '

"L hate her more. '

I glance toward the hallway, hoping she'll be walking through it.

But it sits empty, no sign of Blake or Aisha anywhere.

"What do you think they're doing in the bedroom? I mean, how long does it take to throw one night's worth of shit into a bag and zip it up? '

"Maybe they're fucking.

You know, leaving a nice, big stain on the comforter.

Their parting gift, like the loud, shouty sex you gave them as their welcoming present. '

"That's a visual I won't ever recover from, '

I say.

"Good, now you feel as shitty as I do right now. '

"Sadie ... '

"Harp, I don't think you realize what Aisha is doing.

She's the most manipulative bitch I've ever met in my life.

She's trying to take us all down— make me mad at Ryan, make you mad at Easton, have Ryan and Easton think we're positively nuts.

Hell, she's probably trying to tear the boys apart, too. '

She pauses and there's a shift in her eyes, a pain I haven't seen before.

"Part of me thinks it's working. '

My other hand goes to her free shoulder, clamping down.

"Stop right there.

We're not going to let this bitch win.

I don't care how convincing she is, our guys won't believe her. '

"But they're thinking about the things she said, therefore she's already won. '

"Over my dead body. '

"We wouldn't be so lucky, '

Aisha says.

My head whips in her direction, not knowing how long she's been standing at the mouth of the hallway, but obviously long enough to hear what I just said.

"I don't understand what you're still doing here, '

I spit at her.

"Haven't you done enough damage? You must be dumb enough to think we want you here—let me spell it out, in terms you'll understand: we despise you, we want you gone. '

I point at the front door.

"Now. '

"Someone's just salty because I fucked her boyfriend before she did ... '

A smile moves across her vile lips.

"Fuck you! "

I shout.

"Oh, you whore, I wasn't talking to you. "

She nods toward Sadie, her bag dropping from her shoulder, now resting on the floor, as her arms cross over her chest.

"I was talking to her. "

Sadie goes to stand up.

I know she's probably going to go into the kitchen and really get a knife this time, so I extend an arm across her body, stopping her from moving.

"Stay right where you are, "

I warn Sadie, letting her know I'm serious.

Once I'm sure she won't move, I stand up and approach Aisha.

"I've never met a more jealous, insecure cunt in my life.

You're standing there, bragging about who you've slept with while all it's doing is making you look like a slut.

Take your shit"—I grab her bag off the floor—"and get the fuck out. "

I carry the bag to the door and fling it open, tossing the bag outside onto the ground.

When I glance behind me, Aisha hasn't moved, but her mouth is open, eyes wide.

"Blake! "

I yell across the house.

"Blake, your slut is ready to be taken back to her brothel. "

"Whoa, whoa, "

Blake says, suddenly appearing in the living room.

"I've had it, "

I tell him.

"With Aisha, with her lies, with her drama—with all of it. '

Easton has now joined us, and I bare my teeth while I shout at Blake and Aisha, "Get out right this second. '

"Harper— '

"Don't, '

I warn Blake, cutting him off, not giving a shit about what he wants to say.

"The only thing I want to see is your backs as you walk out the door and the sound of your car as you drive away. '

He says nothing for a few seconds, and then he grabs Aisha's arm and leads her outside, picking her bag up from where I'd tossed it.

I slam the front door shut the minute they're gone, and I look at the faces around the room, all of us now in here.

"Boss lady, '

Easton says, smiling.

"Damn, I kinda like when you get mad, '

my brother says.

I glance at my best friend and say, "Sadie? Are you okay? '

She stands from the couch, her gaze locked on Ryan.

"Did you fuck her? '

"Sadie— '

She puts her finger up, silencing me and glares at Ryan and adds, "You told me you were a virgin, that I took your virginity this weekend.

Is that true? Or did you fuck her and lie to me about it?"

Chapter 103

Chapter 103

Easton Oh shit.

Between Harper tossing Blake and Aisha out— something I'd already done and they hadn't listened— and Sadie asking Ryan if he fucked Aisha, I don't know which is more wild.

Maybe it's the possibility that my best friend hadn't fucked anyone before Sadie.

That little player made his way around school, the same way I did.

But he hadn't slept with any of the girls he hooked up with? Now that's mind—blowing.

"Sadie ... '

Ryan starts.

"Don't fucking Sadie me, '

she responds.

I look at my girl who's taken a seat on the couch, staying far away from this argument.

Hell, I don't blame her, it's her brother and his sex life.

That's ano touch zone.

"L need an answer, Ryan.

I need to know the truth if you want this relationship to last a second longer. '

He moves across the room and tries to put his hands on her waist, but she pulls away.

"Answer me, '

she snarls.

His face drops, no longer making eye contact with her.

Oh damn.

I can feel Sadie's anger building from all the way over here.

"You know what kills me the most? '

Ryan says.

"That you're questioning whether I told you the truth or not.

That you listened to her and doubted me. '

"You're turning this around on me? How dare you- '

"You're furious that Aisha made you look like a lunatic outside, chasing after her with a knife when it wasn't true.

Meanwhile, she stuck a knife in my back and you're kicking me while I'm down. '

My eyes are bouncing between Sadie and Ryan, taking in both of their expressions, feeling both sides.

"I need to hear you Say it, '

she whispers.

"I need it, Ryan. '

"I didn't fuck her. '

Sadie puts her hands over her face, bending forward, like she's just finished running and she's trying to catch her breath.

But I know she's just trying to hide her emotion.

She feels emotionally beaten.

We all do at this point.

I walk over to the couch and sit next to Harper, pulling her against me.

She doesn't move as easily as I want her to.

In fact, her body is stiff, almost frozen.

"What's going on, baby? '

"That was ... '

She shakes her head.

"I can't, Easton.

I just can't. '

"Can't what? '

I turn her face, so she looks at me.

"Breathe. "

She gets up and rushes down the hallway to our room and I glance back at Ryan and Sadie, Sadie now hurrying after , leaving Ryan and I staring at each other.

"What in the literal fuck, "

I say to him.

He puts his hands in the air like I'm pointing a gun at him.

"I have no fucking idea what just happened.

It's like the goddamn Twilight Zone just exploded in here. "

I smile, remembering the highlights, and the one I want to bring up.

"So, V—card, huh? At the lake house out of all places— "

"Shut it, "

he warns.

"Seriously, not a fucking word about it. "

I didn't know my boy was a virgin, I certainly didn't think he'd be losing it this weekend.

As much as I want to give him shit, I don't, I sit on the couch and run my hands through my hair, moving on to a more pressing matter.

Like the girls.

How am I going to fix this? How am I going to get everyone talking again? We can't leave the lake with two pissed off girls, not muttering a word during the drive home.

I glance up at my friend who's pacing between the living room and kitchen, feeling as fucked up as me —I can tell.

"Listen, man, we still have a few hours until we have to leave, "

I tell Ryan.

"Why not make the most of it? "

He pauses by the back of the couch.

"What are you suggesting? You have to drive, so that leaves just me drinking my face off. '

"Nah, for once, I'm not suggesting booze.

How about some fun on the water? I'll put Harper on the back of my jet ski, Sadie on yours.

We can ride some wake and forget about the last few hours of hell. '

"Do you honestly think you can make that happen? '

He nods toward the hallway where both girls disappeared.

"I'll let you do the honors, I'm not stepping foot in that bedroom. '

I can make this right.

Somehow, I have to believe that.

I push myself off the couch.

"Give me five minutes, '

I say over my shoulder and stop at the closed door, my hand hovering over the wood before I knock on it.

I don't wait for a response, I just open it and peek my head in.

"I've come with an idea. '

"You'd be much better off if you were coming in, bearing gifts, '

Harper says.

"Or a death sentence for Aisha and Blake, '

Sadie responds.

Tears are streaming down both girls faces, the snot is running, there are tissues all over the bed where they're sitting.

I join them on the other side of the mattress, keeping my distance—because I know better—but getting close enough so they can really hear me.

"We can't let them ruin the end of our trip.

We still have time left before we have to leave, I think we should spend it having fun, not lying in bed, hating two people who don't deserve a second of our attention. '

My baby looks at Sadie, and back to me.

"What do you have in mind? '

I want to cup her cheek and tell her how badly I need her to grin for me.

But I don't.

Again, because I know better.

So, I bite my lower lip and offer, "Some jet skiing? '

I nod toward the window.

"The storm that's coming has set off some sick waves.

It would be a real shame if we didn't go take advantage of the wake. '

"I don't know ... '

This time, I don't stop myself from reaching forward, holding Harper's neck steady.

"You don't know what? '

I brush my thumb across her cheek.

"Because I know how much fun we can have in the water, and I know it'll take our minds off the train wreck we just witnessed and it'll be the best ending to an amazing vacation.

Harper's eyes start to soften as she stares at me.

Just so she doesn't think it, I add, "Nothing excuses what that bitch said and how she acted.

But I'm not going to let her lame ass—or Blake's—ruin my time at the lake.

Fuck that and fuck them. '

Harper glances at Sadie and says, "What do you say? Do you want to change into our bikinis and go jet skiing for a bit before we head home? '

"On one condition, '

Sadie replies.

"What's that? '

I ask.

"I get to drive. '

I laugh, even louder as I think of Ryan's face when Sadie tells him he's about to ride bitch.

"You can take that up with Ryan, '

I tell her.

"Oh, I plan on it, '

she snaps.

"Along with a few other details that I need to get off my chest. '

I chuckle.

"Be easy on my boy. '

It's a good thing Ryan can handle pain because he's about to get a verbal beating.

Chapter 104

Chapter 104

Harper

Fun is exactly what we need, Easton was right, and I realize that the second I'm on the back of his jet ski, going at least a million miles per hour toward the upcoming wave.

I wrap my arms around his waist, burying my face in his neck, squeezing my eyes together as we slam into the wave, sending us shooting into the air.

"Abhh! '

I scream, holding onto him for dear life.

"Fuck, yeah! 'he shouts.

I don't know how high we get, but I lose my stomach on the descent, the jet ski slapping the water as we land.

I can't stop screaming, I can't stop laughing.

And I only get a second to recover before he's driving toward another wave.

"Hold on, 'he warns, "this is going to be a big one. '

I don't know how it can be taller than the last one, but it is and we hit air again, my lungs emptying on the way up.

"Watch out, it's going to be a hell of a splash, 'he says.

My mouth fills with freezing water, my body feels like it's on a roller—coaster, I can't see anything, I'm as cold as ice, and I'm positive I'm not breathing.

But I don't want him to stop.

I don't even want him to slow down.

I want to be on this ride forever.

As I glance behind me, Sadie is weaving her and Ryan around the water, following us into the crests, and I can hear them laughing from behind me.

"Are you all right? '

Easton asks as I look forward again.

I squeeze him, smiling even though he can't see me.

"More than all right. '

"Just making sure I haven't scared you to death. '

"Impossible. '

"Oh, yeah? Is that a dare? '

I know I shouldn't say this, but I can't help myself.

"I'm surprised this is all you've got ...

I thought you could do better. '

"Oh, fuck, 'he laughs.

"Your ass better hold on. 'He shows me his grinning lips.

"An ass I'm not going to be gentle with. At all. '

Tingles spread through me as he gives me a kiss, and then we're suddenly charging through the water, heading straight for a ridiculously large wave.

One that promises to take us out.

But navigates it perfectly, blasting us upward and tilting the nose of the jet ski forward so we don't capsize.

Water splashes around us as we land, more of it entering my mouth, stinging my eyes, burning my lungs.

I still can't stop giggling.

I can't stop urging him to do, "More! Higher! '

He rubs his hand over my bare thigh.

"Man, you're fucking perfect for me. '

I hold those words in my heart and clench him with all my strength as we follow another path of waves, zig zagging across, Easton revving the gas sO we're speeding over the top of the water.

I don't know how long we chase the waves, but at the first crack of thunder, followed by a massive bolt of lightning, we know it's time to head back.

Easton ties the jet skis to his dock, and we all hurry up the lawn toward the house, grabbing towels on our way in.

"Shower? 'I say to Easton.

He smiles.

"Let me grab a drink and I'll meet you in there. '

I know exactly what's going to happen once he joins me, and he reconfirms that when he slaps my ass.

"I'm freezing, 'Sadie says, shivering, as she walks with me through the living room.

"Go warm up—shower, whatever—then we'll make some lunch and head out. Sound good? "

"Perfect, 'she replies.

When I get to our room, I quickly check my phone, seeing if I missed any notifications, like Aisha posting something on Instagram about her time here.

The first thing I see is several missed calls from my mom.

She knows I'm here, I'm not sure what she could be calling about.

I call her back, holding the phone to my ear.

"Thank God, you're all right, "

she says after the first ring.

I hold the towel tighter against my chest.

"I'm fine, Mom, why? "

"A giant storm is heading this way.

The roads are going to be a mess.

You need to come home right this second. "

I glance around the room, seeing Easton's stuff everywhere.

I know Sadie and Ryan aren't packed and we still have to pick up the house, we certainly can't leave it in its messy state.

"It's going to be at least an hour before we leave, " I tell her.

"That'll be too late, honey.

They say the driving conditions are going to be terrible, they're encouraging everyone to stay off the roads. "

"I don't know what to do. "

I push against my temple where a headache is starting.

I don't want Easton to have to drive in a storm, it could take us hours to get back.

"Maybe we should stay here another night until the roads are clear in the morning. '

She's silent for a few moments.

"That would mean you'd miss school tomorrow. '

"Mom, I have straight A's and I haven't been sick all year. '

That isn't true—Easton has made me emotionally ill plenty of mornings where I'd cried myself to sleep the night before, but I still ended up going to school.

"If I miss one day, it won't be the worst thing. '

"I don't know ... '

"I'm with Ryan and Sadie and Easton, there's nothing to worry about. I promise. I'll make up whatever homework I miss. '

"Well, I don't want you to be on the road when the storm hits, and I guess the only way to avoid that is to have you and Ryan stay put. '

She sighs.

"All right, I'll call the school in the morning.

But, before you leave, I want you to call me and check in, okay? '

"Promise. '

"You be safe. Tell Ryan the same. '

"Okay, Mom.

Love you. '

I hang up just as Easton is entering the room and I say, "Call your parents and have them dismiss you from school tomorrow. '

I wave my phone in the air before I set it down.

"Mom says the roads will be too bad to drive home. '

He gnaws on his lip.

"You mean I get another night with you.

In my bed.

Fuck yes. '

I grin as I think of all the things he's going to do to me.

"Hold that thought, '

I say, wiggling out of his grip.

"I need to tell Sadie the news, I'll be right back. '

He tries to grab me, and I laugh as I rush out of the room and hurry into Sadie's.

Ryan is lying on the bed.

Sadie, still in her bikini, is packing her things into her bag.

"Call your parents and let them know we're crashing here until tomorrow, 'I tell her. She freezes.

"Why? '

"Mom says they don't want anyone on the roads, the storm is going to be really bad. '

"Sweet! '

she replies.

"See you guys in a little bit. '

I hurry back to my room where Easton is already in the shower.

I strip off my bikini and step into the large walk— in, the hot steam hitting me immediately.

"So ... 'I say from behind him. He turns around, revealing the sexiest, ripped body that I instantly reach for.

"What do you want to do to me?"

Chapter 105

Chapter 105

Harper

Easton wraps a towel around me before grabbing one for himself and we get out of the shower.

There's an ache between my legs, a soreness in my nipples, my ass still stinging from everything he had done to me while we were in there.

Everything he had made me feel.

Everything he had done to my body.

Sadie had spoken about sex before she started dating my brother.

She told me about the things I could expect, the physical part, anyway.

She described it in ways so I could somewhat anticipate what was going to happen the first time I was with Easton.

But she never told me about this—this feeling in my chest whenever I'm with him.

This tightness.

This fluttering that loops up to my throat, an endless pattern of pattering, pounding, and pure affection.

I can't get enough of him.

Or of his smile, which is spread across his lips right now, watching me in the mostly fogged up mirror above the sink, just enough of a clear sliver that I can see his eyes as he moves behind me.

He grabs another towel and wipes the drips off my back and shoulders and the ones that fall down over my elbows.

When he's done, he turns me toward him, and pulls me into his arms.

"I've never been so thankful for a storm," he says.

"Why?"

"Because this wouldn't have happened."

I feel a blush move past my cheeks, stealing a quick glance at the shower.

It was a performance that even surprised me.

Knowing Easton appreciates my curves makes me more secure in my body.

His love of my body makes me want to try things, it makes me want to step outside that box that I originally felt so comfortable in.

"That was one of the best showers I've ever taken, '

I admit, even though I'm pretty sure there's still conditioner in my hair and I only washed half my body.

"No, not that. '

His hand finds my face, holding it so my chin is aimed up at him, his eyes scanning mine.

"I mean, yeah that was definitely sexy as fuck, but that's not what I meant at all. '

He takes my hand and brings me over to the bed, sitting me in the spot where I've slept every night we've been here.

He goes over to the gas fireplace, switching it on, the flames immediately rising from the pretty crystal rocks beneath.

When he returns, he climbs onto the middle of the bed and while we're still in our towels, he covers us with a throw blanket and pulls me against his chest.

There's silence as Easton runs his hand through my wet hair, our breathing the only noise in the room.

I'm about to ask him what's on his mind, what this is, but he beats me to it and says, "I didn't expect this, Harper.

I guess that's because I've never really done this, this relationship thing.

But it's come out of nowhere and I can't hold it in anymore. '

I lean up on my elbow, so I can look at his face, hoping his eyes can tell me what he's talking about since his words are a giant mystery.

"I've never felt this way before. '

His voice is so soft, honest, purer than he's ever spoken.

"I've never worried about anyone before—things that run through my head when we're not around each other, like if you're okay, if you need me.

I've never wanted to protect anyone as much as I want to protect you.

I've never had this urge to hurt someone, like what I want to do to Blake and Aisha for what they've put you through.

Harper ... '

His fingers are back on my face, holding me, loving me.

"These are all firsts for me and they're all because of you. '

I swallow, the tightness now in my throat.

I don't know where this emotion is coming from, but it's clear, it's present, it's taking over, and I can't stop it.

"You know how I feel about you. '

He shakes his head.

"But you've never said it. '

"Said ...it? '

I can think of plenty of times when I told him I was crazy about him, I can think of hundreds of examples of ways I've shown him.

For him to think I haven't expressed my emotions is almost defeating.

I thought, if anything, that's something I'm decent at.

"Easton, I feel terribly disappointed in myself that you feel that way. '

I rest my hand on his chest, realizing the placement is above his heart the minute I start feeling the thumping.

"I hate to think you don't know how I feel about you, that you don't know there isn't anything I wouldn't do for you, that I'm positive there's no other man more perfect for me than you. '

"Not that, Harper. '

His thumb presses into my cheek and I nuzzle into his palm.

"What I mean is, you've never told me you love me. '

That word hits me so hard, I almost gasp.

Love.

A word I've only ever said to Sadie and my family.

There's no question, I've felt it.

I think it was there from the start.

If I didn't love him, if I didn't always want more from him, I wouldn't have chased him, I wouldn't have put up with all the different ways he had treated me like shit.

But I'm still here. Head over heels. In love with this man.— '

"No, 'he says, cutting me off.

"I want you to hear it from me first.

Because when things get tough, when Aisha starts shit and Blake tries to come onto you again—things I'm positive will happen again soon—I want you to remember this moment. I want you to feel it.

And I don't want you to ever doubt it because my feelings aren't going to change.

They're only going to grow. '

He leans up, pushing his back into the headboard, pulling me closer to him.

"I love you, Harper. '

He closes the distance between us, his lips so close I can almost taste them.

"I love you so much. '

"Easton ... 'I can hear the emotion in my voice.

The tightness has now taken over, the tears threatening to spill.

"I love you. 'I swallow again, pushing it down.

"I...love you more than love. '

"More than love ... '

He smiles, his lips finally touching mine, his hands holding me against him.

Each kiss, I breathe him in, his air settling in my chest, his presence mixing with mine, making us one.

"Oh, my mystery girl ... "

I open my eyes, his locked with mine.

"Promise me you'll never leave me, "

he says.

"No matter what happens, we'll fight it, we'll endure it together. I don't want to do this without you, Harper. I can't. "

I love this side of him as much as I love him.

I never see it.

But I want more of it.

"I promise. His grip becomes even stronger.

"Say it again. "

"I love you, Easton. And I promise."