

Chapter 36

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Alyssa

When Zuri wakes up, I'm beyond exhausted—physically from the way King fucked me into oblivion last night, and mentally from lying awake, trying to figure out what Niko was doing in King's room while I was in the shower. His shirt was wrinkled, his lips swollen, cheeks flushed, and there was an unmistakable bulge in his sweatpants.

What the hell happened in there?

After feeding Zuri breakfast, I set her up in the living room with her toys, though my mind isn't fully in the present. Thoughts of King and Niko keep swirling in my head, and every time I push them away, they come back stronger.

And then I hear footsteps coming down the stairs.

I look up, and there's King, descending with that mix of raw masculinity and effortless confidence that turns me on so fucking much. My stomach flutters in that annoying way it does every time I see him now, a reminder of how much my vagina has betrayed me.

"Mornin', kitten. Zuri," he greets, his voice husky with sleep. It's unfair how sexy he sounds, how much I want to drag him back upstairs and beg him to ruin me all over again.

I was never this horny with Isaac, but it turns out that once you discover what it actually feels like to receive pleasure, it can turn you into a goddamn fiend. I should be ashamed of how badly I want this man, but I think it's way too late for that.

King heads into the kitchen, likely in search for coffee. I made some for him the other day, and he liked it so much, he's been hooked ever since.

"Already have a fresh cup ready for you on the counter," I call out.

"Good girl," he praises, amusement lacing his voice.

A moment later, he's back in the living room, leaning against the wall as he takes a sip from the mug. "When are your friends supposed to arrive?" he asks casually.

"In a few minutes," I reply, feeling a mix of excitement and nerves. "Thanks for letting me invite them over. It'll be nice to see them after all this time. They thought I ghosted them too."

His lips twitch into a small smile. "This is your house too, kitten. For as long as you want it to be."

His words send a wave of conflicting emotions through me. It's not just the words themselves, but the way he says them, like he genuinely means them. Like he wouldn't mind if I just stayed here forever. And I don't know how to feel about it.

I'm not stupid enough to believe that this is more than just sex. It's just... an arrangement of convenience, nothing more. Maybe he just likes having access to pussy 24/7, and that's why he's so eager to keep me around.

Before I overthink more about it, there's a soft knock at the door. King gives me a nod before disappearing into his office, while I pick up Zuri and rush over to the door. When I open it, there stand Chelsea and Ashley, both grinning from ear to ear. Chelsea's got her two-year-old

son, Ben, balanced on her hip, looking just as bubbly as I remember.

"Alyssa!" Chelsea squeals, pulling me into a tight hug before Ashley does the same. It feels surreal, seeing them after all these years.

"Hey girl, we seriously haven't seen you in forever!" Ashley exclaims as they step inside.

Chelsea sets Ben down on the living room floor, where he immediately starts playing with Zuri's toys. "Be good, Ben, and I'll get you some ice cream later, okay?"

He nods eagerly, turning his attention back to the toys.

"I can't believe you have a two-year-old!" I say, my voice tinged in awe. I missed out on her pregnancy, her son's birth—everything—thanks to Isaac. And both of my best friend's missed out on mine.

"I can't believe you had a baby either," Chelsea replies, her eyes softening as she looks at Zuri, who's eyeing them curiously from my arms.

Ashley takes a look around, clearly impressed. "You said this was King's house, right?" she asks, her voice filled with astonishment. "This place is nice as hell."

"Yeah, it is," I agree, knowing exactly where this conversation is headed. "We're just staying here for a little while."

I've only given them the bare minimum of details—Isaac and I are no longer together because he's an abusive asshole, and I came back to town to get away from him. They really don't need to know anything else.

"Are you guys safe here?" Ashley drops to a whisper, her expression

serious. "Like he's not holding you hostage or anything, right?"

I laugh, shaking my head. "Believe it or not, I'm safer here than I ever was with Isaac."

My friends exchange a glance, but before they can say anything, King strides back into the room, his presence commanding as always. "Don't mind me, ladies. Just grabbing another cup of coffee."

"Hey, King," they say in unison, trying to look like they're not swooning over him.

When he passes us again on his way back to the office, his eyes meet mine, lingering for just a beat longer than necessary before he disappears.

"Wow, he is fine as hell!" Ashley whisper-yells, pretending to fan herself. "I mean, he's always been fine, but goddamn! Alyssa, can I get his number?"

Before I can even think of a response that doesn't make me sound jealous or possessive, Chelsea cuts in, "Uh, did you just see the way he was looking at her? And that sexual tension? I think he's already been claimed."

I feel my cheeks heat up as Ashley's head snaps in my direction, her eyes wide with shock. "You're having sex with him?"

"No," I blurt out way too quickly. They both raise an eyebrow, unconvinced. "Okay, maybe a little bit."

Or a lot.

Every night.



Every single chance I get.

I brace myself for the inevitable judgment, but instead, they just grin at me, like this is the best news they've ever heard.

"You've definitely changed sis," Ashley comments, her voice playful but tinged with a hint of concern. "I didn't think you'd ever touch King Sterling unless it was to push him into a fire."

"Yeah, you used to hate him. Unless you still do...and this is some kind of hate fucking," Chelsea adds with a teasing smile.

My cheeks burn even hotter. "It's...complicated," I whisper back. "But it's just sex. Nothing more, nothing less."

"But he's letting you live here?" Chelsea asks, her brow furrowing slightly.

I bite my lip, glancing at Zuri, who's playing alongside Ben. "More of a favor to my brother. I'm kind of hiding from Isaac at the moment, and he'd never suspect I'd be here."

Their faces cloud with sympathy. "I can't believe we thought you ghosted us, instead of figuring out that Isaac was abusive. We're so sorry," Chelsea says, reaching out to squeeze my hand gently.

"Yeah, we're so sorry," Ashley adds, grabbing my other hand. "We should've known better. Isaac was a walking red flag. His temper was always so out of control, it was only a matter of time before he started using you as a punching bag."

I laugh, but there's no humor in it. "Yeah, it seems like everyone could see that but me."

"You stubborn bitch, it doesn't matter if I tell you. Mr. Ellsworth sent me to retrieve the agreement. Just remember, if you dare to tell anyone about this, I'll make sure you end up in a wheelchair like your brother."

"So, it was you who broke my brother's leg. You've committed so many crimes. Aren't you scared the police will catch you?"

"I've been to prison before, do you think I'm afraid of the police? Hurry up, my patience is wearing thin." With that, the scarred man pulled Rhonda's hair and forced her onto the sofa.

"Are you handing it over or not?" The scarred man pulled out a dagger and pressed it against Rhonda's face. "If you don't want to be disfigured, take out the agreement now!"

"Help! Help!" Rhonda screamed.

The bathroom door was kicked open.

