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...At three in the morning, while Brighton was driving and Cherry was sleeping, I unzipped Miles' pants and took his erection into my mouth. It wasn't something I expected to do, but while lying in his lap, with his fingers raking through my hair, the urge crept over me.

Never known for his tendency to shut up during sex, he sighed in obvious pleasure. His fingers tensed in my hair before traveling to the waistband of my gauchos. He wiggled his way into my pants and traced my rectum.

He was obsessed with my ass, loved to eat it, finger it, enter it, but I suspect he touched me there because it was most easily accessible in the cramped quarters of the back seat. I shuddered with joy and pulled my tongue along the length of his cock. Did Brighton know what we were doing?

I sucked hard and moved my tongue in a frenzied motion against him. Somehow, the possibility Brighton was aware of our consorting heightened the urgency of the moment. With my eyes pinched shut, I imagined Miles' twin stationed across the room, watching as we made love. I wondered if my body would turn him on, if he'd be content to pleasure himself, or if he'd want to come a bit closer and touch me.

I wanted to know the intimacy of Brighton's kiss while Miles took me like an animal, from behind. This scenario shocked me more, perhaps, than the realization I wanted to explore both their bodies at once. If animal lust were a varsity

sport, Miles and I could've lettered in it at the starting blocks. I'd been yearning for a more personal connection with Miles, yet in my fantasy, I was content to keep him banging away in the most impersonal sexual position, while his twin bestowed on me patient, intimate kisses...

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BY

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For my Aunt Penny Lee, a survivor.

CHAPTER 1

In the confessional with Miles

I'm sure you're wondering what my brother and I were doing in the shower together in the first place. I can't explain it to someone who isn't, and has never been, a mono-amniotic twin, but suffice it to say privacy wasn't even a word until I moved to Chicago three years ago.

Since conception, every time I turned around, Brighton was there.

The first time he got laid, I was in the next hotel room. Junior prom.

The first time I got laid, he was in the next bed. Summer

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camp following junior prom—we were counselors.

I know. By today's standards, we were late bloomers, but we were raised with two sisters by a traditional mother and an asshole father, who taught us to respect girls—by example of what not to do, in Dad's case, but that's another story.

So when time was winding down and hot water supply low, I stepped under the stream half-a-minute before my brother stepped out. Rest assured, we weren't lathering each other up. Simply making up the time our girlfriends lost.

You'll notice the plural there. *Girlfriends*. We shared every-damn-thing until we found girls. We're both greedy bastards, and when we find a good thing, we don't want anyone else to touch it.

Unlike Brighton, however, I dared to cross that line once. Once. And that's why we didn't speak for three years.

I'm getting ahead of myself, and I'll probably confuse you if I stay on this track. Maybe I should start at the beginning.

My name is Miles McClintock. Three years ago, I moved to Chicago from a sleazy river town north of St. Louis. I told Moms I needed a change of scenery, which she understood, as she'd recently moved to California with my sisters. My favorite aunt had been diagnosed with breast cancer and the lot of them—sans Dad, who'd run off six years before—moved to see Aunt Deb through chemotherapy.

I wish I had a reason half as noble for my trek, but I left because I couldn't face Brighton after what I'd done.

He'd fallen for this rich girl who wouldn't let go of her trust fund long enough to meet me, let alone acknowledge

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him. As I understood it, she'd given freely of herself physically, but by then, he'd had so much ass his eye was on a prize bigger than sex. He loved her, even asked me to be his best man, but he never got around to popping the question. When Cherry dropped him, I lost my brother to an enigma named Sophia.

Sophia. Here's where the trouble began.

Sophia had an agenda all her own, and I could see my brother's happiness was nowhere on it. She flirted with other men, and right in front of him. Once, she stuck her hand in my pants, then tried to blame it on a case of mistaken identity.

Now Brighton and I have had our share of which-one-are-yous, but with Sophia, it was broad daylight in our apartment complex parking lot, and I wasn't wearing a shirt. Not only does he have a blatant birthmark on his left bicep, he also has a one-up on me when it comes to brawn. I'm no scrawny pup, but Brighton has the bulk of a gladiator.

Being what I am—a private investigator—I wouldn't let a sleeping dog lie. I began to follow Sophia wherever she went. When weeks of spying didn't produce the results I'd expected, I set them in motion.

I hit on her. She took the bait.

I didn't fuck her, but I kissed her enough—and saw enough of her body—to leave her begging for me.

Brighton forgave her because, little did I know, she'd peed a plus sign on a pregnancy test the week before, and that's the kind of guy my brother is. He didn't forgive me, however, because you can't forgive the man who pulls the only rug

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you'll ever own out from under your feet. The way he saw it, I was responsible for the demise of a family sealed only with the tattoo of her name on his left shoulder.

"You think I don't know?" He'd had me by the collar, spitting words out so harshly I'd felt the hiss of his breath on my chin. "You think I don't know about that wandering eye, you rat fuck?"

Aside: "Rat fuck" is one of Brighton's favorite insults for me, and I still don't know what it means.

"That's my kid in there." He'd shoved me away. "What the fuck do you expect me to do?"

I'd packed everything I owned the next day and never breathed a word of it to anyone. Until now.

* * *

In the confessional with Brighton

Miles told you about Sophia?

I don't know why you need to know that. If I wanted you to think of me as a schmuck, I would've told you about the time I fell for a girl who chose her trust fund over me.

He told you about Cherry, too, didn't he?

You know, for a guy who hunts secrets for a living, he sure as hell can't keep one.

In any case, you know how my brother and I parted ways. I've never told him so, but I'm glad he decided to leave. I didn't know how I was going to choose between him and the woman carrying my child.

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However, despite it all, I've never felt complete without him. Unless you're a twin, you won't understand having an alter-ego, a perpetual partner in crime, but when he left town, I felt as if I were losing part of myself. Being what Sophia was, she didn't fill the void.

I'm divorced now, and Cherry's trust fund is still sitting in some mysterious bank account because, in the end, she chose me. I keep her warmer at night than all those dollar signs. But I don't know how long Miles and I would've let my ex-wife stand between us had my sister not found the lump.

"You have to come to California." I hadn't heard Moms bawl like that since her husband left her thirty grand in debt with four kids and the mortgage due.

By the way, that man's sperm created me, but he isn't my father.

"Brighton? Are you listening to me? The doctors say—"

I don't know what the doctors said; I had no power to listen. I was numb. My fingertips tingled, and my throat closed, as if a pair of strong hands were clenched around my neck. Images of my baby sister flashed through my mind—singing, dancing, full of life, despite the grim circumstances of our childhood—and for a moment I thought I was the one dying. "Does Miles know?"

"He isn't answering at home, and I don't have his new cell number programmed, and—"

"I'll take care of it." I'd offered before I'd realized doing so meant speaking to him again.

Moms was quiet for a few seconds. Perhaps she was just as

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shocked as I was. The wheeze of a blown nose pierced my ear. Then: “You’ll call him?”

“Yes.”

“The two of you will come. For Kennedy.”

“Yes.”

Her sigh of gratitude was like a burden pulled off my back. For three years, from her faraway home on the west coast, our mother had attempted to draw us closer together, although she had no idea why we’d parted ways under dire circumstances. She’d relayed tales, informed each of us of the other’s accomplishments, copied us on snapshots. Once Sophia and I called it quits, I displayed one of Miles and the woman Moms referred to as his sometimes-girlfriend-Joanna on my dresser.

While that photograph provided me more comfort than I’d imagined it would, it was nothing next to the feeling of hearing my twin brother’s voice on the other end of my phone line.

“Hello?”

A warm sensation flooded my heart. “Miles.” I suspect he knew it was me before I spoke. I like to think he’d programmed my numbers the same way I’d done his, when Moms forwarded them. So I cleared my throat and didn’t waste time with formal salutations and cordial crap. “Kennedy found a lump.”

“What?”

“A lump.”

“Kennedy?”

“Kennedy.”

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The rattle of Chicago's elevated train answered me, but I knew without confirmation what he was feeling. I was feeling it, too.

"When do we go?" His words were no more than a whisper.

"As soon as possible."

We made the arrangements in fewer than five minutes, and when he hung up the phone, I knew the next time I spoke to him, we'd be standing face-to-face.

It didn't occur to me until later that night, however, that we'd be together for our birthday for the first time since the storm broke over our humble haven on the wrong side of the river.

* * *

In the confessional with Joanna

Miles McClintock once offered to take me to the moon. We never got further than the Illinois-Wisconsin state line. From time to time, we'd entertained taking a trip to California, but traveling together meant living together, in a sense. Miles and I aren't like that.

Working charity events with him is tantalizing, and watching him work his magic with under-privileged kids, inspiring. We began as friends with the benefit of an occasional—usually public—fuck, and we've grown together, but I recently learned we've yet to blossom.

I know odds of his hitting a bull's eye during a casual

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game of darts are one in twelve. I know he prefers to lime to lemon when it comes to seasoning the catch of the day. I even know he whispers in his sleep the most poetic prose I've heard pass through a man's lips. Once upon a time, I thought I knew him better than anyone, but when I answered his call late Thursday afternoon at work, I realized my knowledge of the man I was falling in love with was a scratch on the surface of a root buried all the way to China.

"Joanna."

I froze, my pen suspended over my desktop calendar like a fly caught in a web. He rarely calls me by my first name and when he does, it's either because he's about to come, or he's about to tell me something he regrets. Needless to say, I'd often heard the strain in his voice for the reason prior, but the tension in his vocal cords that day had nothing to do with pleasure.

"What's wrong?"

"I have to leave town for a while." He said it as if the nose of a mafia-owned automatic weapon were pressed to his temple.

A strange sensation swirled in the pit of my belly. Given his occupation and his recent "business trip" to Oklahoma City—he never took out-of-town work, let alone across-the-midwest work—I imagined he'd gotten himself into a bit of trouble. I swallowed the last bit of moisture in my mouth. "Okay."

"Um...can you... You have to come with me."

I dropped my pen and blood resumed flowing through my

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veins. “When?”

“Tomorrow night.”

“After work?”

“You’ll have to use some personal time. A week, maybe. Unpaid, if you have to.” He cleared his throat. “I can pitch in for your rent if you’re short.”

“Miles, wh—”

“I have to go to California.”

“And you want me to drive with you.” He’s afraid of heights. I knew he’d never consider taking a plane.

“At least as far as St. Louis. My brother—”

“You have a brother?” In nearly a year, he’d failed to mention his brother. I knew about Moms, his asshole father, Aunt Deb, Kennedy, and Eliza, but I had no idea...

“Yes. A twin.”

A *twin*? I gathered case notes and tucked them into a file. I flipped a pencil in my caddy so it was all erasers pointing up. I pulled a sticky note from my monitor and began to record a notated appointment on my blotter.

“Joanna?”

I wished he’d stop using my name.

“You’ll come, right?”

“Of course.”

But I’ll be honest with you, I didn’t want to go anywhere with him at that moment. I felt as if I’d just agreed to get into a car with a complete stranger.

“Stop straightening your desk.”

“I’m not.”

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“All the red pens in order? Away from all the black ones?”

“Why didn’t you tell me you had a brother?”

“Haven’t I?”

“No.”

“We aren’t close. Anymore.” A heavy sigh winded through the phone line. “You should know this isn’t a pleasure trip.”

“I surmised as much.”

He told me then about Kennedy and the lump, but he didn’t tell me about Sophia until he arrived, unexpectedly, at my doorstep around ten that night.

“I have something to tell you, baby.”

I was wearing a cotton nightshirt, probably too sheer for front porch presentation, and the air had grown cool, budding my nipples to tight cones. “Come inside.”

His thumb caressed my knuckles, and his hazel eyes shone a dim green by the light of a street lamp. “You might not like me once you know, and I can respect that, but you have to come to California, no matter what.”

“Come in.”

He shook his head and held me fast on the wrought iron stoop.

I listened to every word, watched as he choked on his tale, and I withdrew when he admitted what he’d done. This was the man I thought I was falling in love with, and he’d seduced—halfway seduced—the woman pregnant with his nephew.

“Tell me you understand.” A lone tear sparkled on his left

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cheek and he promptly wiped it away.

I couldn't look him in the eye. I understood his motive with Sophia, but his fault was too much in the execution. And too much to take in while attempting to hide my breasts from the moonlight. "Please come inside."

"Look at me, Robinson."

Finally, I did.

"I'm not proud of it."

"I can see that."

"You think I'm an asshole."

I shook my head, but I wasn't sure what I thought of him. "Come in."

This time, he acquiesced.

Two steps into my apartment, he was on his knees, pulling aside my panties, dragging his tongue between my labia. "I'm sorry," he said against me.

Under the influence of his mouth, I lost focus. It was a welcome distraction and a reminder of the Miles I knew. Because I didn't want to accept the man who'd done what he had, I allowed myself to escape into the pleasure he provided. I bucked upward, inviting his tongue, holding his head just where I needed it to be.

"I should've told you before." His breath at my clitoris shot a needling urge through my system, which he quickly sated with his talented tongue.

Oral boy.

"Forgive me," he said between licks.

I nodded, but couldn't find breath enough to answer him.

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“Forgive me.” He licked his way up my stomach, nibbled on my shoulder, and nipped at my neck.

He smelled of crisp night air and fabric softener, and he felt like pure heaven pouring over me, as if from a bottle.

“Forgive me?”

“Yes,” I said on a breath, wrapping my arms around him.

But I dare say he’s yet to forgive himself for Sophia.

* * *

In the confessional with Cherry

Brighton’s knee bounced with nerves as he sat on a too-deep recliner, awaiting his brother, who’d drifted into town late last night. Because Brighton hadn’t invited him to stay at his place, we expected Miles and Joanna to leave their hotel room by nine-thirty at the latest.

From my position on the floor in front of him, I rested my cheek on the thigh that wasn’t jiggling, but I still felt the tremors.

Time stood still. When I last checked the clock, we had an hour and fourteen minutes to kill. Now we had an hour, thirteen.

The Sophia on his Brighton’s left upper arm glared at me like a harsh fluorescent light. As much as I’ve accepted that woman as part of his life, I’ve grown to despise the tattoo. His ex-wife isn’t one-hundred-percent evil, for she birthed an absolute angel. But if I’d held onto Brighton the first time I had him, I’d have saved him a boatload of pain—and the

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eyesore of his permanent body art.

When I laced my fingers into Brighton's hand, his gaze met mine. Strong fingers on his opposite hand raked through my hair, massaged my skull, nudged my head closer to the apex of his legs.

My deceased great Aunt Lacey, whose voice had recently become that of my conscience, cheered me on. *::Now that's what I call killing time!::*

He wasn't hinting at what it would take to help him relax as much as he was pulling me closer, but when I brushed my lips against his fly, I extended an offer he couldn't refuse.

His breathy sigh accepted on the spot. His knee stilled.

A few seconds later, I lowered his zipper. My fingers stroked the still-soft flesh of his cock as I shoved aside his boxer shorts. I began with a tight suckling of his head and a teasing tickle of his testicles with the pads of my fingers. He swelled in my mouth as I took him in deeper and licked the clean flesh of his shaft.

My lips strained, signaling he'd hardened to his full length, and down below, the walls of my cunt began to quiver. Blowing him has always turned me on. I love that he heats up instantly, and I adore it's my mouth doing it to him.

He's long, nearly eight inches, and just thick enough to fill any of my crevices to capacity. On rare occasions, I've buried him deep in my throat. Rare only because he prefers attention to detail on the smooth underside of his tip, despite my ability to deep-throat him. Now I had my entire tongue like a taco shell, enfolding the most sensitive part of him, kneading,

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rippling.

His fingers knotted in my hair, while his palms trapped curls. “Cherry.”

His voice is sexier than all get-out when graveled with sex.

“Cherry, I want you to come.”

Did I forget to mention he’s incredibly generous in the bedroom?

A few moments later, after much writhing and the rip of a wrapper, he coaxed a condom between my mouth and his dick. I secured the tip with my tongue and rolled the latex down the rest of him with my hands.

His callused fingers gathered my shirt and whisked it from my body, as I yanked the t-shirt from his. He shoved off his shorts, then discarded mine.

Over my bra, he palmed my breasts, urging me to stay on my back on the plush carpeting. His body melted against mine, his prick hard and twitching against my damp silk panties.

With heavy-lidded eyes, he rutted between my legs, tongued my nipples through lace, tucked fingers beneath silk.

My hips lifted involuntarily. God, how I wanted him. Always. “Fuck me.”

His lips thinned into a line, and his brow took on a determined crease before his eyes closed.

“Fuck me.”

For a moment, his eyes opened a slit. “Where?”

My breath caught in my throat. He wanted to be where no man had been before him. Not a commonplace practice

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between us, but we'd done it often enough. I wasn't surprised; still, the fire in his eyes alarmed me. I'd never seen him as unyielding. I swallowed hard. "Anywhere you want."

A twitch of a smile illuminated his eyes. He flipped me, as if I were a feather pillow, and he were looking for the cool side.

The carpet burned against my elbow, but his mouth was instantly there, sucking away the pain.

As his hands maneuvered the panties from my body, his mouth worked its way up to my shoulder, then down my spine. His tongue nestled in the crevice between my buttocks, and I lifted up, opening for him.

He entered my rectum orally, at the same time pressing a thumb into my vagina and rolling his index finger over my clit.

Some, like my mother, would say it's wrong, this kind of pleasure, but I prefer to believe God gave us all the tools with the expectation we'd use learn to use them. Brighton was born knowing what to do with his good stuff, and he can play me like a piano.

The sensitivity of nerve endings back there rival that of the acceptable pleasure center—the clitoris. I'm surprised anal sex is still taboo in most social circles considering the first time you come anally...yikes...you think the world might be ending in a utopian bliss.

He tongued me with patient strokes, forcing the probe deeper. Naturally an exit, everything feels forced with the anus, but that, too, turns me on. Fingers replaced his tongue. I

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shivered with the bluntness inside me. Soon, the head of his cock pressed alongside his digit, and still working me in the front, he entered me one inch at a time.

“Ahhhh.” His sigh lasted as long as his descent, but his patience wore out quickly.

He neglected my frontal folds to pull me up on my knees, gripping both my hips. His pelvis slammed into my ass before I’d become used to his girth. My cheek braised against the carpeting. “Ouch.”

“All right, baby?”

My anal cavity hummed with numb pleasure. “Mmm-hmm.”

“Touch yourself.”

I did as he commanded, circling my clit with two fingers, plucking at it, pressing and relenting in time with his thrusts.

“You’re mine.”

“Brighhhton, yes.”

“Say it.”

“I’m yours.” My nipples brushed against the floor with every beat and the stimulation heightened my senses.

I was wetter than a river, my juices gathering under my fingernails. His thumbs rubbed deep circles into the plentiful curves of my rear, as if he were determined to leave his mark on my body. However, he’d already made a million impressions on me, and not all of them physical. Some of the deepest grooves exist in my mind. He loves me.

“Come, Cherry.”

As usual, the gruff request gave me a jump start, yet his

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voice was already strained. He was closer than I.

“Brighhhton.” I braced myself up on an elbow. “Wait.”

His sweat rained down on my back, while his grumblings became more and more elementary. It was a red-letter day when he went at it with such abandon; then again, this day was tenser than most by a long shot.

His hot fingers tightened against my flesh, as he slipped in and out of my rectum with speed and accuracy.

I exhaled in pleasure.

“Cherry.” With a final grunt, his cock swelled, stretching me. After a moment of intense pressure, he collapsed. Our skin became a mingling of sweat in the aftermath.

He pulled out and rolled me over. “Sorry.” His mouth landed on mine in a soft, patient kiss. “Didn’t mean to be so...I don’t know what got into me.”

I did. His brother was coming.

The last time Brighton and Miles were in the same room together, they were fighting over a woman. Neither won that battle.

As I saw it, it was a no-brainer. He was staking his claim one last time, no matter how unnecessary it was. Add to it the uncertainty about Kennedy, and it was no wonder he hadn’t been fucking out his frustrations for the past two days.

For a split second, he took his eyes from mine, probably glancing at the clock. “Let me make it up to you.” His mouth began a gradual descent, stopping first at my breasts, which he pressed out of my bra with gentle hands.

Ding, dang, dong.

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Usually, I enjoy the sound of his old-fashioned doorbell, but I sighed impatiently then.

With his mouth fastened to a nipple, he opened an eye and again checked the clock. He groaned.

I reached for a discarded garment.

His mouth traveled to my other breast, as if we still held time in our hands. "Did I mention he's early wherever he goes?"

He'd revealed little besides the Sophia incident, but this news came as no surprise. Twins had to have something in common.

When I stood, my rectum began to fold back inward. A strange sensation, and one I doubt I'll get used to any time soon. I gathered the rest of my clothing and headed for the bathroom. "I'll be right out."

With only one leg into his shorts, he caught my elbow, and pulled me in for a kiss. "I *will* make it up to you."

"Damn right you will."

He chuckled me under the chin.

Ding, dang, dong.

"Coming already!"

I was just starting down the hall when the door opened, but curiosity got the better of me. I shrank against the wall and, stepping into my panties, peered around the corner for a glimpse at Brighton's estranged twin.

The first person I saw was a woman of the class of girls I refer to as tiny chicks. Thin, petite, no need to spend money on a quality bra. Pretty and blonde, Joanna reminded me of my

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sister. Likely we'd get along just fine, but we were the depiction of complete opposites. I staved off feelings of inadequacy I hadn't felt in years. Brighton enjoys my curves, and I'm proud of what I am, but I couldn't stop thinking Miles might rib his twin about dating the big girl on the block.

Joanna lifted red-framed sunglasses to the crown of her head and revealed bright blue, kind eyes. "Hello." Her voice was pure alto, not the soprano so many tiny chicks boast. "Nice to meet you."

"You, too." Brighton's mouth was a thin line again, and he gave her a curt nod.

Attached to her hand, Miles followed her into the vestibule.

For a moment, I swear, my heart stopped. It's strange to see a carbon copy of the man you love in the flesh. Naturally, I found Miles attractive. It would've been strange not to. What I didn't expect, however, was to feel as if I knew him intimately. The instant attraction mellowed quickly, but may God damn me if I didn't immediately imagine sexy moments sandwiched between them—Brighton's cock in my back door, and Miles on his knees in front of me, tonguing my slit.

What an erotic scenario, and one, I confess, I'd imagined countless times in the past. When you've got a great thing on your hands, it's natural to want more of the same.

My gaze drifted back to Joanna. At first sight, had she wanted to fuck my man?

She lingered at the perimeter of the foyer, and the twins stood toe-to-toe, wearing expressions as identical as the rest of

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them.

“Hey, Brigh.” Only the inflection of Miles’ voice was different than the one that had begged an orgasm of me minutes ago. More casual, not as burdened as Brighton’s, less strained.

“Hey, Miles.” Brighton straightened the now-wrinkled t-shirt he’d pulled on too quickly.

After an awkward moment of shifting weight, they embraced.

“You look good.” Miles patted Brighton’s back.

“You, too.”

Never before had I seen such an unrestrained physical exchange between two manly men. They held each other longer than I expected, and for a split second, Brighton’s eyes closed, as if he were savoring their reunion.

They both looked better than good to me. So good, in fact, that I forgot I ought to have been dressing in the bathroom.

Brighton backed off first and clapped his brother on the shoulder. “Come in. Cherry’s getting ready. She’ll be right out.”

I hurried to the nearest door, the image of their embrace held fast in my mind. How they’d allowed a woman to come between them was beyond me.

CHAPTER 2

In the confessional with Brighton

As far as Sophia goes, I've never elaborated on the subject. If Cherry asks a question, I answer it, but with plain facts. Sophia had a wandering eye. Miles came onto her. She accepted his advances. Miles moved away, and I married the mother of my child, period.

Long story short, Cherry didn't know Miles did what he did to protect me. Had he known he was playing with a potential ex-wife, instead of a soon-to-be ex-girlfriend, he likely would've played his cards differently. But Cherry doesn't know this because I never told her. When he walked

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through my doorway, however, I wondered if I'd done him a disservice. How could I expect my soul mate to accept my brother, knowing only what she knew?

I figured she'd need some time to compose herself after I'd ravaged her rather savagely—which, if she didn't tell you, is uncharacteristic of me—but I didn't expect her to disappear for more than a few minutes. She's the type of woman who looks great after a good roll in the hay. Her cheeks flush, and her hair frames her pretty face, no matter how out of control her curls might be by the end of it all.

She knows this. In our early days, we'd fuck fiercely in a bathroom stall, and she'd be back on the dance floor after a quick splash of water on whatever parts of her needed refreshing.

Furthermore, she feels good after sex. Emotionally, I mean. Some women—Sophia—withdrew after, perhaps out of some repressive guilt, but Cherry's never been like that.

When five minutes had passed and I'd run out of things to say to my brother's girlfriend, I found myself staring down the hallway, needing Cherry to get through this. Great partnerships are like that, you know. I knew I *could* handle the situation on my own, but I didn't *have* to, and thus didn't want to.

"Nice place," Joanna said. "Great woodwork."

"Thanks." My gaze went to the flaking section of five-inch cornice in my living room.

"Needs a fresh coat of paint." Miles, true to form, pointed out what I'd hoped no one would notice.

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Without looking at him, I knew he was teasing and trying to smile, and while part of me appreciated the effort, bigger parts of me wanted to throw his back against the wall. Sophia wasn't enough? He had to belittle my living space, too?

"I'm aware, but some of us don't rely on a landlord for repairs." I left it at that.

Silence hung in the air like the scent of elephant ears at the county fair. I drummed my fingertips on the arm of my favorite leather recliner—the one Cherry says is hitting the curb when she decides to move in—and I became conscious of the rhythm of my heart.

Sometime over the next few seconds, I had the feeling someone was looking at me. For a few moments, I managed to fight the urge to meet the glance, but in the end, I couldn't resist.

Joanna, nestled in my brother's embrace on the sofa, burrowed a stare right through me. I challenged her. Her left eyebrow peaked, and a smile touched her lips. So different than the woman I'd chosen, I couldn't help thinking she was beautiful, exactly what Miles deserved, physically speaking.

We'd never gone for the same types of women before, which was another reason the Sophia situation was so out-of-whack. He's always liked petite girls. In our younger days, he called them spinners because he could rotate them to reverse cowgirl position without pulling out. I, on the other hand, have always been attracted to women as full-bodied as fine wine. I like a woman I can navigate for days on end.

"Twenty-nine hours of traveling ahead of us, and here I am

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taking my time.” Cherry waltzed into the room, glowing in her post-coital calm. “Sorry to keep you waiting.”

Instantly, I was on my feet.

So was Miles, and after a moment, Joanna followed.

“It’s about time we meet.” Miles took a few steps toward Cherry.

My heart went into overdrive.

“I’ve been dying to meet you, too.” My girlfriend extended her hand.

Miles sandwiched it in both his and leaned in to kiss her on the cheek.

Joanna and I locked gazes again, but only for a moment. I hadn’t shaken her hand, or fully acknowledged her at the door for fear I’d cross some sort of line. Now, however, I felt as if I’d brushed her off, or treated her as if she weren’t as important as she probably was, given her inclusion in the trip we were about to take.

My discomfort ended a few seconds later when Cherry looped an arm through mine and nudged me with her hip. “I’m famished. Anyone else hungry?”

“Always,” Joanna said.

“Let’s make breakfast our first stop.”

“I guess we’ll follow.” Miles lead us toward the door.

As if we were heading to some local haunt instead of Santa Monica, California, he was suggesting we take separate cars, probably because he couldn’t imagine spending days amongst the tension, crammed into a car together driving cross country. I exhaled a relieved breath, thankful he’d suggested it. Still, it

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was a long drive. Why hadn't he begun a direct route west, if we weren't going to spend time together?

"Ridiculous." It was Joanna who voiced what I'd begun to think. "It's a long drive. Gas prices alone should—"

"We'll take Brighton's car. He has an enormous SUV. Plenty of room." And just like that, our girlfriends joined forces.

* * *

In the confessional with Joanna

Talk about tension.

After a warm entrance, the McClintock brothers put up cold fronts, as if they'd suddenly remembered they were supposed to hate each other. I could've frozen ice in Brighton's living room.

Furthermore, I may have been holding Miles' hand and playing the part of the supportive girlfriend, but when I set eyes on his defeated twin and witnessed Brighton's hurt, I considered returning to Chicago immediately. Miles had made his own bed, but that didn't mean I had to sleep there alongside him.

It was strange, recognizing embers of pain in Brighton's eyes, solely because he looked exactly like Miles. Had they been only brothers, or even fraternal twins, I might not have registered his long-time suffering. It might not have been as weird a sensation to look into a stranger's eyes and find pain there.

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You're thinking Brighton *was* a stranger, and you're right, by way of definition. However, with identical twins, familiarity breaks through the walls we all put up around us. For example, because I'd recently learned Miles squinted when he was trying to avoid tender emotions—i.e., crying—I knew Brighton's motivation behind the squint, too.

I talked myself out of rubbing a consoling hand up and down his brother's muscled arm. I was still angry, I suppose, about Miles neglecting to tell me about his twin, let alone the reason for their distance. Heaven help me, I found myself rooting for the underdog. Give me a B, give me an R, give me an I, G, H...

For a split second, I considered an eye for an eye. In biblical times, Brighton would have had to seduce me to even out the sins. As miffed as I was that my boyfriend had kept a colossal secret, I wouldn't likely have objected. That is, until Cherry walked in.

How do I begin to describe Cherry?

She's vibrant, confident, and cool. I felt inadequate in about twenty different ways the moment she entered the room—so inadequate, I shrank against the sofa and felt like disappearing.

She smelled like money, like designer perfume and expensive shampoo. From the sleeveless, red Ralph Lauren polo, collar turned up, to the burnished toe ring adorning the second toe on her left foot, she was the epitome of attention-to-detail. It was then apparent that every ounce of style in Brighton's abode—which obviously excluded the ratty

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recliner—came courtesy of Cherry's influence. You can't acquire taste like that. It's pure, inbred.

Her skin looked like rich cream sprinkled with nutmeg. So unlike my pale, blue-veined complexion, hers begged for a caress. Her hair was as red and wild as her name, and I found myself pulling at my fine tresses, wishing I'd opted for volume-enhancing mousse that morning. In what world do blondes have more fun? Only in places where Cherries don't exist.

She and Brighton touched each other with ease. When she planted a kiss onto his lips, followed by a brush of her index finger over her lips, envy tugged at my heartstrings. She rested her cheek against his upper arm and gave him a little squeeze. I wanted that, and I wanted it with Miles.

We'd nailed intimate contact long ago. He'd fucked me from behind standing up in the men's room at the Home Depot. Pinned me, nude, to the walls of an elevator en route to the gym. Tackled me at dawn just off the Lake Shore jogging path and gave the seagulls something to talk about. But when it came to touching one another the way Brighton and Cherry were...we aren't like that.

It's all right not to cuddle twenty-four/seven, and truthfully, I'd probably tire of the constant doting. I thought I was content with the state of our relationship, but watching the couple across the room, I wondered if they were more committed to one another than we. Call me a typical girl—when faced with something mysterious, something new, I wanted what I didn't have.

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Furthermore, I wanted to hate her for her confidence, but how could I? For one thing, she was a soothing presence in an otherwise uptight environment. For another, it was because of her Brighton had found a reason to smile again after Miles' betrayal.

"Waffle House." She slid onto the front passenger seat. "I'd kill for a pecan Belgium."

"I second that." Miles reached across the immaculate back bench seat, and I allowed him to rest his hand on my thigh.

We'd eaten a sufficient continental breakfast at the hotel—a muffin, yogurt—and while I knew Miles preferred heartier items on the menu, like ham and eggs, I saw his agreement as a means to get on Cherry's good side. Probably my imagination. Likely, she didn't have a bad side.

"Kennedy should have the results of her biopsy by Tuesday morning." Miles cleared his throat. "Think we can make it there by Monday night?"

Brighton glanced at us via the rearview mirror. "Sure, if I take us directly to the airport."

"All right, make fun of the guy who doesn't spend his life climbing trees." He squeezed my thigh. "I'm not getting on a plane."

"No one's going to force you, Sally....I mean Miles."

In the rearview mirror, I met Brighton's glance. I smiled at the sibling banter, which reared its head just when I'd begun to wonder whether it existed between these two.

"My brother's a rough-and-tumble kid," Miles said. "He's a climber, obsessed with trees. Trims the high parts for a

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living.”

“Heights don’t bother him?” I asked.

“Not even a little bit.” Cherry spoke over her shoulder. I caught a glimpse of pink-tinted sunglasses perched on her up-turned nose. “Brighton climbs *everything*. Walls, mountains, ropes, you name it.”

“Hey, I’m not the only one. Miles used to do it, too.”

I turned to Miles with the speed of lightning. “You? Up high?”

“Long story.”

“We’ve got twenty-nine hours to kill.” God bless Cherry.

I wanted to hear the story, too. The only thing Miles had climbed on recently was me. The Miles I knew wouldn’t climb a two-step ladder to lick a ripe pussy. If you knew how orally-oriented he is, you’d know that’s saying something.

“Maybe later.” Miles looked out the window. “I’m just glad to be back home, take in the sights, eat the eats.”

Chicago had been his home since I’d met him. I knew he’d been reared elsewhere, but when I thought about him, it was always with the Sears Tower as a backdrop. In my mind, the big-city boy didn’t fit here, on these back roads winding alongside the Mississippi, yet he appeared calm in the midst of it, despite the situation with Kennedy and the lump. I realize now his peace had little to do with our geographical location, but rather with the company we kept.

His twin hadn’t said more than a handful of words, yet he fulfilled Miles where I’d been failing. Don’t get me wrong. Likely, there was nothing I could’ve done—now or ever—to

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fill the empty spaces in Miles' heart. Those gaps were reserved for family, and only family could sate those parts of him.

This haven of his intrigued me, reminded me yet again he was deeper than I usually gave him credit for, and reeled me in when I'd begun to drift away. I took his hand then, and my squeeze prompted him to meet my gaze. He flashed a weak smile and mouthed, *Thanks for coming*.

"We should come more often," I said.

* * *

In the confessional with Miles

I'd seen Cherry once before.

On the night I left town, I'd detoured to the other side of the river. She'd been easy to find, as most trust-fund babies were. Look for the biggest bank in the fanciest neighborhood, and follow the scent of tofu. Naturally, there's more to it than that. A cop-friend of mine looked her up, and minutes later, I knew the model, make, year, color, and location of her parked car. Given a few more hours, I would've known where she'd planned to eat dinner, but I didn't have that kind of time.

At a safe distance, I'd followed her on foot, aiming to beg for help in stopping my brother's intent to marry Sophia. "You can't let him marry her," I'd planned to say. "Even if you don't love him anymore, you can't let him marry a woman who doesn't deserve him. Do what no one else can. Show him how happy he can be, if only for an hour or two—just long

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enough to bring him to his senses.”

The rain poured down in sheets that night and the street lights seemed dimmer even than my mood. Yet Cherry walked slowly along the sidewalk, the handle of a pale purple umbrella in her grasp.

She wore a shiny black raincoat—unbuttoned—and stylish, high-heeled boots. The edges of her flared-bottom jeans were soaked, but she paused, looking up at a recently renovated building as if she had nowhere to go. It was the kind of place that housed trendy shops and cafés on the street level, and too-wealthy tenants on the second and third.

She dropped the umbrella to the side and raised her face to the storm. As water washed over her cheeks, I stopped in my tracks, mesmerized with the sight of her and confused by her actions.

The scent of her hairspray carried on the wind, along with a quiet whimper. A slight shake in her shoulders told me she was crying. I suspected she wanted the rain to mask her tears, and if I were a better man, I might’ve learned the reason for her sadness. Furthermore, maybe I would’ve brought her to my brother’s side. They could’ve consoled one another.

But my back met the brick wall behind me, where I stayed hidden. Usually, I feel powerful and focused on-the-job, which was what I’d convinced myself this trek was. But watching her fall to pieces like that...I became just as unglued as she.

Long minutes later, after regaining her composure, she jabbed at a doorbell with a still-trembling finger.

“It’s me, Vic,” she said to the intercom.

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“Come on up.”

The buzzer admitting her resembled a tone I once heard in an ICU—the sound that accompanied a flat line.

I couldn’t help thinking it was rather indicative of the fate of Brighton’s and my relationship. Finding her was to be my last attempt to help him, but I realized, watching her, I wouldn’t be helping as much as interfering.

A thunderous pounding rattled my chest. I didn’t notice right away that it was only my heart breaking. Breaking for her, for whatever reason for her tears, breaking for Brighton, breaking for the fetus in Sophia’s womb.

It broke for me, too, but I didn’t know it until I was long gone, making out at the materials drive for Habitat for Humanity with, of course, Joanna Robinson.

Oh, she told you about the Depot? In that case, I’ll admit we were doing more than kissing.

When I met Robinson, I knew I didn’t have to be alone anymore. I wanted nothing more than to tell her everything, and not just the bit about Sophia. I wanted to tell her about my mother, the saint who loved jazz music, but couldn’t sing. My father, the dirty cop, who’d objected to naming his twin boys Miles and Davis. My sisters, the first girls I’d learned to cherish. She would’ve understood, I think, my necessary seclusion, my reasons for hiding out in Chicago.

To boot, Brighton would’ve liked her on the spot, and I wanted him to know her. But driven by the testosterone-induced desire to be strong, unaffected, and—let’s face it—always right, I clammed up. Besides, I was reluctant to flaunt

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my happiness, since I'd had a hand in the impending doom that was my brother's marriage.

Thus, this amazing woman became my sometimes-girlfriend because you can't be the be-all-end-all for someone if you don't allow her to know you. Often, I tried to let her in, but after a while, the shame of it all was too much to bear. I showed her she was special the only way I knew how—by claiming her any time, anywhere. I took her body in places we were sure to get caught...although we never did.

Warped, I know. But it made rational sense to me at the time. I had to have her, and I didn't care if we were at the Field Museum. Let the world watch. I'd show them what was mine.

The trouble was Robinson didn't see it that way. She loved the energy we shared, adored the urgency, and judging by the fingernails digging into my back, she thought the sex was pretty damned good. In showing emotions solely through sex, however, I'd given her the impression I was incapable of anything else.

Maybe I was...for a while. I'd begun to sit back and wait for things to happen for me, instead of going after what I wanted. It was by a stroke of luck that what I wanted—passionate, intimate moments with Robinson—had a way of happening, regardless of my failure to act.

I thought of Cherry often, of the way she'd moved on, when I couldn't stop haunting myself with my mistakes. I wondered what she was up to, whether she'd made a habit of crying in the rain. Had she and my brother found their way

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back to one another's arms?

A few months ago, Moms called with a weekly update on my twin. "The divorce is final. He bought a place in Rampage Falls, and do you remember Cherry?"

It was then I realized Brighton and I had to make amends. He'd dealt with marriage, fatherhood, and divorce on his own—without my input, without my support. This might be commonplace among other families, but considering there was a time he wouldn't get dressed without consulting me, it never seemed right that he should carry on as if I were dead. I couldn't imagine his falling in love again without sharing his joy, and I couldn't fathom taking things with Joanna to the next level without his blessing.

I now looked across the breakfast table and met my brother's glance. Over his shoulder, I noted Cherry and Robinson weaving their way through the restaurant on their way back from the ladies room. "Kennedy says this trip is unnecessary...told me we were blowing this out of proportion."

"You know Kennedy."

I did. Never wanting to be the cause of worry, I'm surprised she'd told Moms about the lump in the first place. My heart kicked into high gear again. I suspected, from the moment Brighton called, Kennedy had known about the lump for ages. Maybe she shared the unfortunate news only when she could no longer deny the truth.

Brighton tossed a twenty onto the check.

I did the same. Twin Andrew Jacksons stared up me. We

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believe in over-tipping. I'd forgotten we had that in common. "She can't expect we wouldn't come. She might have breas—" Although I'd participated in charity events up the yin-yang in the name of finding a cure, I couldn't bear to utter the words. Instead, I shrugged a shoulder. "She might."

His lips became a thin line, and he gave an abbreviated nod. "Have you talked to Eliza?"

Eliza, our other baby sister. "She's busy."

He didn't reply, but I knew what he was thinking—too busy to answer the phone? Not likely. Rather, the mess in her head—acquired during childhood—kept her occupied. Of the four of us, Eliza had endured the worst.

"We'll meet you at the car," Cherry said as she and Robinson slipped past us. "We're going to grab some refreshments in the gift shop."

Brighton stood in time to peck her on the cheek, and I gave my girlfriend a wink. When they were out of earshot, and we began walking toward the parking lot, I said, "Have you told Cherry about...you know..."

The look he gave me could've ignited a forest fire, but he answered, nonetheless, "A little. Does Joanna know?"

"I didn't tell her about *you*. You think I'm going to tell her about Dad?"

"Why mention him at all?" My brother shook his head. "Asshole's better off wherever the hell he landed."

"I disagree. I think we'd all be a lot better off if he'd paid for his crimes."

"Are you suggesting we hire someone to find—" Brighton

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shut up. He looked at me out of the corners of his eyes, and his shoulders went lax. He coughed, and after a few steps, he said, "You know where he is."

I didn't have to answer.

"How long have you known?"

"Two months, maybe three."

"Why?"

"I had to know he wasn't out there ruining some other kid's life." Truthfully, knowing where he was, what he was doing, was part of mending our family circle, but I didn't want to get into all that in the Waffle House parking lot.

Brighton brushed a thumb across an eyebrow. "Is he?"

"He's working security in Oklahoma City. He lives alone."

"Drinks alone."

I opened the passenger door. "For the time being." Soon, he wouldn't be drinking at all. The worms crawl in, the worms crawl out. Maybe the little buggers were already playing pinochle on his snout.

* * *

In the confessional with Cherry

The plan was to drive the quickest route without stopping for the night. We'd take turns driving, and two would sleep at a time. However, after nine hours and nineteen minutes in the car, not one of us was comfortable enough to cut any Zs, and we were all pretty irritable.

I managed to doze off for a few minutes around seven-

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fifteen, but I awoke at seven-twenty-seven. If Brighton and I had been traveling alone—or at least next to one another—there were several dozens of ways I could've imagined we'd pass the time.

::Road hummer,:: Great Aunt Lacey suggested. *::A driver deserves to be pleased.::*

On the other side of the backseat, Joanna lay, a folded sweatshirt beneath her head, against the window. A bar of light passed over her figure amidst an otherwise dim space. Her eyes were closed, but I doubted she'd sleep for long—if she were sleeping at all. Something was going on between Miles and her. Often, the tension between them was unbearable, and it was only magnified by the often-too-formal interactions between the brothers.

From behind the wheel, Miles glanced at me over his shoulder. The radio played a low combination of static and classic rock. “Is she sleeping?”

“I think so.” When I yawned, the cottony staleness of my mouth demanded a piece of gum, and I began to search my purse for a stick. “Is he?”

“Yeah.”

“We should get a room after dinner.”

“Yeah? That sounds interesting.”

His teasing tone prompted me to wonder if he and Sophia had ever joked or flirted. “Can I ask you something?”

“Sure.”

“It's about his ex-wife.”

A quiet moment passed, then he cleared his throat. “Oh.

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Okay.”

“I don’t get the impression you were interested in her.”

He shook his head. “I wasn’t.”

That was enough for me. I could put the rest of the pieces together on my own. Much to my surprise, however, he continued to explain.

“I would’ve done anything to save him the heartache, you know, and I’d do anything to take it all back now.”

“I think he knows that.” I reached for the closest part of him, his upper arm. He tensed beneath my touch. “Regardless of what happens with Kennedy, this trip is going to be good for all of us.”

His jaw tightened, and he nodded again.

I gave him a squeeze and retreated.

“Can I ask *you* something?” He hit a button on the dash, and the static from the radio ceased. “Is he happy?”

“We’re happy together, if that’s what you’re asking, but...” I inhaled deeply. “He withdraws when it comes to you.”

A guttural sound—half-laugh, half-sigh—escaped him. “Can’t blame him.”

“What about you? Are you happy?”

He hesitated. “You’re sure she’s sleeping?”

I glanced at Joanna. “I think so.”

“I can be.”

“But you aren’t?”

“Not lately.”

CHAPTER 3

In the confessional with Joanna

At three in the morning, while Brighton was driving and Cherry was sleeping, I unzipped Miles' pants and took his erection into my mouth. It wasn't something I expected to do, but while lying in his lap, with his fingers raking through my hair, the urge crept over me.

Never known for his tendency to shut up during sex, he sighed in obvious pleasure. His fingers tensed in my hair before traveling to the waistband of my gauchos. He wiggled his way into my pants and traced my rectum.

He was obsessed with my ass, loved to eat it, finger it,

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enter it, but I suspect he touched me there because it was most easily accessible in the cramped quarters of the back seat. I shuddered with joy and pulled my tongue along the length of his cock. Did Brighton know what we were doing?

I sucked hard and moved my tongue in a frenzied motion against him. Somehow, the possibility Brighton was aware of our consorting heightened the urgency of the moment. With my eyes pinched shut, I imagined Miles' twin stationed across the room, watching as we made love. I wondered if my body would turn him on, if he'd be content to pleasure himself, or if he'd want to come a bit closer and touch me.

I wanted to know the intimacy of Brighton's kiss while Miles took me like an animal, from behind. This scenario shocked me more, perhaps, than the realization I wanted to explore both their bodies at once. If animal lust were a varsity sport, Miles and I could've lettered in it at the starting blocks. I'd been yearning for a more personal connection with Miles, yet in my fantasy, I was content to keep him banging away in the most impersonal sexual position, while his twin bestowed on me patient, intimate kisses. Shouldn't it have been the other way around? If anything, shouldn't I have craved the intimate connection with Miles and the animal side of Brighton?

Miles stroked the tender place between my rectum and pussy with patience, as if he couldn't decide which hole to explore. His indecision left me quivering with need, and I shifted to give him more immediate access. He splayed a hand across my cheeks and drew a line with a finger—his middle one, I think—from bottom to top.

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In the end, he opted to enter my cunt. One finger, then two, then three. He'd had his entire fist up there a few times, and I couldn't help but wonder if Brighton would've found such a feat as titillating as Miles did.

As I massaged his shaft with my lips, I pretended the fingers inside me were Miles' cock—and that the prick in my mouth was Brighton's. God, I couldn't shake the desire to demand attention from both of them, to pleasure them simultaneously, to suck the cream out of one, while the other shot his load into my body.

Miles' fingers searched me rampantly, and his dick thickened a fraction of an inch. I sucked harder, slid my mouth over the length of him, and rippled my tongue in just the right spot.

"Fuck," he muttered. He hit my g-spot, and I tensed. Knowing my body well, he hit it again and again, and for added measure, he massaged my rectum with the pad of his thumb.

I suppressed the need to cry out, instead channeling my pleasure into the blow job.

He bucked up into my mouth. His fingers jabbed into me like a well-oiled piston. My clit tingled, wanting to be part of it, as did my nipples.

In my mind, they were. I imagined Brighton's lips puckered over the three in turn, treating each pleasure nub to deep kisses, as Miles worked my insides.

I came within seconds, feeling a gush in my panties.

"Jesus," Miles whispered, still probing, perhaps wanting to

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coax a second helping.

But after teetering over the brink, embarrassment crept over me. By then, I was certain Brighton knew exactly what was going on, and the entire scene seemed disrespectful. What was I? Some horny teenager? I needed to get off in the middle of a desolate highway in the wee hours of morning?

What an impression I was making.

I moved my tongue faster against Miles' cock, but only to finish him off more quickly. His release flooded over my tongue moments later, and I sucked every last drop out of him.

"Joanna." There it was again—my first name. He touched me on the cheek, and our gazes met. His look conveyed what he'd yet to admit. He was falling for me, too. A hint of doubt registered in his eyes the next moment.

I felt his hesitance, too. Was it—were we—all about sex? Would we ever jump the next hurdle?

His hand slid out of my pants.

I crept to my side of the back seat.

He took my hand.

It was a start.

* * *

In the confessional with Brighton

I pulled into the parking lot of a roadside motel, the type of place Cherry and I used to frequent in our younger days, and I rented two rooms.

After about eighteen hours on the road, no one objected,

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least of all, the soldier in my pants, who'd been standing at attention for at least twenty minutes.

Illuminated by a humming fluorescent light above the sink, Cherry readied herself for bed, while I undressed.

"Well, well." She raised an eyebrow at my condition, and even with a toothbrush sticking out of her mouth, she looked sexy in a tank top—no bra—and sweat shorts.

I stepped out of my boxer shorts and nuzzled up behind her.

She finished with her teeth. "I thought you'd be exhausted."

"I am." Images of my brother's interlude with Joanna flashed in my mind. Although I tried, I couldn't forget the catch in her breath when she'd reached orgasm. Call it one of those weird twin connections, but I hardened the exact moment I realized she was unzipping his pants. It turned me on, as if I were to be the object of her affections.

Maybe it should've irked me, their getting it on while I drove mile after mile toward Santa Monica, but the only thing frustrating about it was Cherry wasn't awake to take part in it. I'd grabbed her hand, but couldn't awaken her without interrupting the scene in the backseat. Thus, I'd enjoyed it—as crazy as it sounds—alone.

Cherry turned toward me and tossed her arms over my shoulders. A spearmint-scented kiss met my lips.

"What do you think of Joanna?" I palmed a full breast and delighted in the instant budding of her nipple.

"She's cute."

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I kissed her neck. "Would you kiss her?"

"Sure."

I smiled. "With tongue?"

"Is there any other way to kiss?"

I'd never asked her to entertain another man before, let alone a woman, but she's a gamer. She'll do anything I ask.

Her hands combed through my hair. "But I doubt she'd kiss me."

"Assuming she would...would you touch her?"

"Where?"

I thought of her small, perky mounds. "Her breasts."

"Yes."

"Would you lick them?" My mouth traveled to Cherry's abundant cleavage.

"For you?"

"Mmm-hmm." I stretched the tank top and revealed a rosy nipple, which I sucked instantly.

"Oh, yessss."

I tucked a hand into her pants and grazed against her shaven folds of skin. "Would you go down on her?"

"Yes. Would you?"

"Yes, if you're straddling me at the same time." My cock twitched against her, as I imagined Joanna sitting on my face, Cherry grinding on my stick, and the two of them making out over me.

"You want to do her together?"

"It's a thought." I rubbed her clit between my thumb and forefinger. She purred. I stroked faster.

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“Her? Or any tiny blonde?”

“Her.”

“Is this revenge for Miles and Sophia?”

I shoved at her pants as we made our way to the bed. “Not about Miles.”

“I disagree.”

“I don’t want to talk about him.” Anger rose in my gut at the mention of his name, but I fed it into a gruff kiss. “Would you fuck him?” I tore at her panties.

“Would you want me to?”

“If I’m going to fuck her, it’s only fair.”

“Do you want to fuck her?”

I shoved her to the mattress, and she pulled me along for the ride, nipping at my mouth, stroking my dick with four fingers, once we landed.

“Do you want to fuck her?” Cherry guided my naked cock to her pussy.

I stroked her clit with it. Her labia cradled my shaft, and the heat of her hole tempted me to dive in unwrapped. A heady sensation sent the world spinning out of control. “Yes, I want to fuck her.”

Her breasts burned against my chest. “I want to watch.”

I thought of the glimpses I’d caught in the back seat—the curve of Joanna’s white ass, Miles fingering the daylights out of her. “It’s quite a sight.”

Cherry’s fingernails dug into my shoulders. “Fuck me.”

“Tonight, here, and now.” I rubbed against her externally, reluctant to stop for a condom, which was in my duffel bag

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across the room. “Will you let me fuck her tomorrow?”

“Anything you want. It’s *your* birthday.”

His, too.

I entered her then, condom be damned. “Oh, you feel good.” Hot, wet, inviting. Seldom had we braved the terrain without a raincoat, and I’d forgotten the feel of her insides gripping my naked pole. Despite my spoken desire to bed my brother’s girlfriend, I hadn’t wanted to experience sex of this personal nature with anyone but Cherry since before my divorce was finalized.

She looked up at me and smiled that sly smile of hers. Her pelvis rolled against me, and I lowered my lips to hers.

One of her legs locked around my waist.

Slowly, I dipped deep into her cunt, and patiently, I withdrew. With every stroke, she tensed. Perspiration broke on both our bodies, melting over us like morning dew. Our mouths never lost contact, and my hands continuously cupped her curves.

A muffled cry slipped from between her lips as her walls quivered. She opened her mouth a fraction, and I swept my tongue against hers in a languid motion.

Her fingernails dug deeper into my flesh, but the pain only convinced me to continue to my leisurely exploration. Pleasure swirled in my balls, building.

She whimpered again.

“Baby,” I whispered against her lips.

Her juices coated my cock, and her breasts heaved against me. “Baby.” Her voice was strained. If she wasn’t coming

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already, she was close.

I peppered her with a few quick pumps, determined to unleash those muffled cries, slammed into her pussy, bit into her lips. “Come, Cherry.”

“Brighton.” Her brow furrowed, and although she was so close to falling over the edge that the scent of her orgasm lingered around us, she’d yet to let go.

I palmed and massaged her from chin to cheek, a juxtaposition to my relentlessly pounding between her thighs. “Come on, baby.”

“Brighhhhton!”

A storm broke in her cunt, drenching my cock in a hot shower. I reveled in the heat, reluctant to leave it, although my own release was imminent. I couldn’t finish inside her, but I didn’t want to pull out yet.

My balls tightened, and she reached around to tickle them.

“I’m so wet,” she whispered.

The world faded to black for half a second, but I came to my senses just in time. I pulled out. She closed a fist over my cock and kneaded cum onto her belly.

Spent, I collapsed atop her, my semen a sticky mess between us.

She playfully yanked on my hair. “You still want to fuck her?”

I chuckled.

“Do you?” she persisted.

I know what you’re thinking—there’s only one right way to answer this question, and I’d answered incorrectly once

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already. But she'd heard my instinctual reply, and I believe in sticking with the truth. "Sure, but I don't have to."

"Oh, I think you do." Cherry grinned.

It was a hypothetical issue, anyway. I drifted off to sleep knowing there was no way on God's green earth it would ever happen.

* * *

In the confessional with Miles

The walls were paper thin. If Robinson hadn't sucked me off this side of twenty minutes ago—*how fucking sweet was that?*—I probably would've perked up below the belt when I first realized what Brighton was talking about in the next room.

"You should do it." I sat on the edge of the lumpy mattress and discarded the last of my clothing.

Robinson was nude, too, lying beneath only the top sheet. When she turned toward me, a smile touched her lips. "Are you pimping me out?"

Her hair was a golden cloud about her face. I couldn't resist touching it. "I'd be there the whole time. I'd hold you, kiss you, whisper nice things. Make you feel safe and comfortable. Pimps don't do things like that."

She realized I wasn't serious, and in hind sight, it was a ridiculous request—even as a joke. How many guys do you know who'd beg their girlfriend to sleep with his twin?

"Would you want what he wants? To watch Cherry and me

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first?”

I crawled between the sheets alongside her and leaned down for a kiss. “I wouldn’t turn away from it.”

“Miles?” Her arms curled around me, and the soft skin of her breasts teased my chest. “How do you feel about me?”

“Come on, I think you know.”

She nodded, her lips trailing up my jaw line to my ear. “But considering you just asked me to sleep with your brother—”

“I implied it, never asked.” I wanted to be clear on that point because, while I entertained the possibility it would make things right again between Brighton and me, I sure didn’t want the scenario to come to fruition. Like I said, I’m a greedy bastard.

“Why don’t you tell me?”

There was so much she didn’t know about me, about my family. Those secrets were walls between now and my I-love-you. She deserved to hear the latter, but until the former were broken down, it was futile.

My childhood replayed in my mind like a broken record—often the same scene...the night the old man kidnapped thirteen-year-old Eliza, with his gun to her throat. Brighton and I were fifteen then and maybe we could’ve stopped him. But we hadn’t dared to try. Something he’d said, something about her not being one of us, had paralyzed me. I didn’t know what to make of it then. He’d stunned me into silence and stillness. How could our own sister not be one of us?

“There are so many other things I should tell you first, and

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I don't know how to begin." I neglected to admit there were holes in the story, things I didn't know. I can learn anything I wish by tracking down the right sources, but the truth was I didn't care to know everything.

"I want to know you." Her breath at my ear was like a summer breeze. I took the hint and put my mouth to her neck. "Oral boy."

"You know me," I murmured against her skin.

"I want to know, McClintock, if we're more than quickies in broad daylight on the el."

"Hmmm, that was awesome."

She giggled. "Yes."

I contemplating telling her I knew my father hadn't left us of his own volition. After several fruitless attempts—you can't easily take legal action against a cop with connections—Moms had succeeded in forcing him out after he'd taken our sister that night, but she'd allowed us to believe he'd fled in the middle of the night. Some may criticize her for not taking responsibility for the situation, but unless you've been an abused child, you won't understand the warped way we place blame. I understand her motivation now, but if I'd known back then, I may have resented her for it.

I wanted to tell Robinson all of this. I wanted to admit I'd once had the file in my hand, the unofficial record of what the asshole had put Eliza through that night, but in the end, I hadn't been man enough to open it. Some things are better left to mystery.

Eliza had returned home the next morning in a squad car,

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courtesy of the old man's colleagues. Safe and with vaginal wall intact. That's all I'd heard, and that's all I'd cared to know at the time.

"Tell me something about you I don't know." Joanna wrapped her legs around my waist.

"I'm a coward."

"No, you aren't." The soft, curly hair on her privates caressed my rod, and the headboard on the other side of the wall, reminiscent of prom night, was rattling like mad. "You're just a manly man who's afraid of heights."

And that was because of the old man, too, but she had a way of making me forget things like that, if only for a few hours.

My brother's name filtered through the plaster, and Robinson, wearing a delicious grin, nudged her hips up against me. "Did you consider you'd want to fuck her?"

"No." Even as I said it, my pole began to harden.

"But you want something."

I did. I wanted my brother back, and if I thought sharing my girl would do the trick... But it wouldn't, and we all knew that.

It was so late, and we were both exhausted. Of its own volition, however, my mouth began a slow descent to her breasts, where she trapped my head while I sucked at her nipples. First one, then the other, drawing widening circles with my tongue. I can't resist putting my mouth on her skin. Never could.

"I'll do it, if you want me to," she whispered lazily.

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I licked a line to her abdomen and headed lower still. “You’ll do anything I want you to.”

“Don’t get cocky.” She arched into me, when I darted my tongue out to taste her. She was on the sweet side, as women went, and I’m forever grateful. I dragged my tongue around the perimeter of her slit. “Ask me why.”

“I know why.” But I didn’t want her to say it until she had a chance to know who it was, exactly, she loved.

Over the years, I’ve learned what I am, what I have to offer, what I have to overcome in order to consider myself whole. For now, I’m a private investigator, philanthropist, lover to Joanna Robinson. I’ll have to deal with being the son of a dirty, drunken addict cop before I can be more.

As I made love to my girlfriend, with Oklahoma City—and thus, the old man—an obscure mark in the rearview mirror, I rested my forehead against hers.

It was slow, open-eyed sex, the kind reserved for the real thing. The fact I’m not giving you explicit details should speak volumes.

CHAPTER 4

In the confessional with Cherry

Brighton wakes up at the crack of sunrise. It's annoying as hell, especially when we go to bed just after welcoming the morning dew.

He hadn't meant to wake me at dawn, but the quarters at the Pull Inn—a little ironic, since he'd pulled *out* last night—left little to be desired as far as personal space went. I opened my eyes the moment his rock-hard body crawled over me.

“Good morning, baby.”

::*Hmm*:: Great Aunt Lacey's voice played in my brain.
::*Let's see how good it can be*:: First things first. I groaned.

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“Coffee.”

“Your phone’s chiming. I’m guessing it’s your mother.”

Double groan. After all this time, he should know conversations about Mother ought to be reserved for times post-caffeine.

“Coffee.”

“On my way.”

I was still in bed when he returned with a steaming cup of joe, complete with cream and three sugars, and he used it to lure me from the tent of cheap sheets. Perched on the vanity top, wearing a torn t-shirt and faded jeans, he would’ve enticed me without the coffee, truth be told. And the moment he struck up a conversation, the hot beverage was completely unneeded, in regards to keeping my eyes open.

“Last night...wow.” He rubbed a hand over his bicep—the one with the freckled birthmark—and reached for his toothbrush. “Twisted thought, but I can’t get it out of my head.”

I pulled on Brighton’s too-large, hooded sweatshirt and zipped it over my naked body. “Sleeping with Joanna?” The cool teeth of the zipper nestled between my breasts in a welcome distraction from the humidity hanging in the room.

“Not just that. All of it.” He fiddled with the faucet, more hot, more cold, and slipped his fingers under the stream.

“Watching Joanna with me?”

“Not that I’d actually...you know...pursue it.” He hopped down and turned toward the running water. “But I thought a lot about it last night—being with her, watching you with

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him—and I couldn't help thinking things might be better now, if I'd had a different point of view years ago." Just before the toothbrush hit his mouth, he paused. "He's the only brother I've got."

"Maybe you're ready to move on."

His jaw clenched, proving what I feared. He was so used to being angry, he didn't know how not to be. He shoved the brush full of Colgate into his mouth. "She was pregnant with my kid."

"You'll find a way."

"For Moms, maybe." He shrugged. "For Liza and Kennedy."

"Or for you."

He met my glance in the mirror, then bent to spit.

"Happy birthday, Brighton." After a peck on the back of his tanned neck, I reached for my cell phone, which I'd discarded on the vanity top last night, and headed outside to the second-story mezzanine, where I'd check the million messages I was sure my mother had left.

"Morning."

I glanced to the right, where Miles leaned his forearms against the metal railing, steaming insulated cup in hand. Suddenly aware of my nakedness beneath the sweatshirt, I straightened. Last night's semen, now dry and cracking on my stomach, stretched my skin. The morning breeze wove under the thigh-length garment and tickled my naughty parts. I gave him a nod and pocketed my phone. Apparently, now was not the time to tend to Mother. I ran a hand through the mop of

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curls on my head. “Hey, happy birthday.”

“Thanks.” He brought the cup to his lips, and I couldn’t help but wonder at his mouth’s power. Did he kiss like Brighton? Did he combine the pleasure of a kiss with deep, animal sex? Did he enjoy kissing all parts of a woman, even those generally neglected, such as the arches of her feet?

“I was thinking.”

After a slurp of my coffee, which washed away some of the staleness in my mouth, I met his gaze. “Popular thing to do at this ungodly hour.”

“Once we know Kennedy’s okay—and, God, she *has* to be—we should plan on Route 66 for the reverse trip.”

“That’ll take forever.”

“I know it’ll take a while longer.” He sipped again. “But I don’t know when we’ll all be together again, you know?”

“Yeah.” It struck me then that in knowing Brighton, I knew Miles. I’d yet to learn specific things about him, but there were times it seemed the two of them were one and the same.

“Think you can talk to him about it?”

“Sure.”

“What about work? Can you miss some?”

“I’m a Realtor. I don’t have set hours.” I guessed, as a P.I., Miles likely set his own schedule, too, and Brighton’s crew at A-1 Tree and Backhoe could handle things for a few days. “What about Joanna?”

“She took a week of personal time.”

“Cheers.” I offered my cup. “To the two-lane dinosaur.”

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He bumped his coffee against mine. "To Oklahoma City."
"Why Oklahoma City?"

For a moment, I was unsure he'd heard me, as he gazed out silently at the parking lot below. An occasional car whizzed past on the interstate beyond. "Can I trust you?"

The breeze carried a curl to my eyes, and when I yanked it back, I found he was looking intently at me. "I won't keep a secret from your brother."

"He'll fight me tooth and nail, but we should stop in Oklahoma City." His Adam's apple bobbed with a gulp of coffee. "Someone we used to know lives there, and he might not be around much longer. He's sick. Liver damage."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be." His brow furrowed—so much like Brighton—and he licked his lips. "The son-of-a-bitch doesn't deserve to live as long as he has."

Their *father*? Yikes. "You're right. He'll fight you."

"Too bad. I'm going to win this battle." He caressed the cup, as if it were a woman's breast. "Time to kill it all, you know what I mean? Put it all to rest."

I didn't know much about the man who'd fathered them, but what little I knew left little to be desired. An impending sense of fear crept over me. I didn't want to meet the monster. Yet curiosity bubbled under the surface. I wondered what he looked like, whether his boys resembled him. "Haden has Brighton's eyes." A breath of fresh air wandered beneath the sweatshirt. "Yours, too, I guess."

Miles nodded. "Moms sends pictures. He's a good-looking

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kid.”

“Yes, he is.”

“The one good thing that ever came out of Sophia. Literally.”

I chuckled, although I’m certain he hadn’t meant to be funny.

“How’s he doing at that special school?”

“I hear good things.”

“That was a good thing you did for him, for Brighton, too.”

A few months ago, I’d formed a charity on behalf on Brighton’s nearly deaf son, and the proceeds paid the tuition at his special school. “Anyone would’ve done the same.”

“I saw him a few months ago, our dad. But I didn’t talk to him. I went all that way, and I just...didn’t.”

I tapped his elbow with mine. “That’s understandable.”

“Yeah, but the things there won’t go away until I face him. It’s holding me back, and Robinson’s starting to notice.”

My tongue twitched to ask the obvious questions, to probe beneath the surface, to learn deep-seated secrets neither twin was sharing. I took a deep breath, and chickened out. “Why do you call her by her last name?”

“Because I’m sure no other man has.” He grinned. “It’s very us.”

“Does she like it?”

Instead of answering my question, he cleared his throat. “We’re a good team, Robinson and me.”

“I can see that.” I leaned on the railing alongside him and

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guessed at what he was studying. The blue-gray sky boasted the potential to burst into a crisp, clear day. Cadet blue, right out of the Crayola box, provided an ideal backdrop for the burnt sienna hills in the distance and the marigold rays of sun poking through the heavens.

“This land is your land,” Miles sang in a low tone and very off-key.

With a quick glance, I joined him. “This land is my land.”

By the time we were halfway into the next line of Woody Guthrie’s tribute to America, each of us was laughing. As we sang, he took my cup and set it aside with his own, then whirled me into his arms.

I’d guess he’d never had formal ballroom training by the way he spun me around as if I were a basketball on his finger, or maybe it was a product of the confined space, but nevertheless, I couldn’t stop laughing.

Teeth yet to be tended, hair an awful mess, and no panties or bra on. Yet there I was participating in some freestyle version of the waltz-slash-foxtrot-slash-whatever with a man who was, by definition, a stranger.

“...that ribbon of highway—”

We simultaneously stopped when a door opened behind us. Joanna emerged with hair pulled into a high ponytail. She was naturally gorgeous first thing in the morning—just like my sister—although not a dab of any cosmetic touched her skin. She wore a red tank top and tiny black shorts. One corner of her mouth turned upward in the type of grin you wear when you’ve walked in on your boyfriend masturbating—kind of

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embarrassed, kind of amused. "I'm going for a run."

"Hey, I'll go, too." Miles slipped away from me.

"If you can keep up." A teasing smile appeared on her lips.

He pecked a kiss onto her forehead.

A terrible silence hovered in the air once he disappeared behind door number two-twelve. "He's fun," I finally said.

She crossed her arms over her chest and leaned against the army green stucco of the building. "So's Brighton."

"He's more subdued, but yeah." I retrieved my coffee. "Miles wants to take Route 66 back home."

"Do you think that's a good idea?" She didn't look at me as she spoke. "It's strange, isn't it? They're so different, yet so alike...and sometimes they act as if they don't know each other at all." The deep inhalation told me she wasn't done talking. Not by a long shot. "How long have you two been together?"

Well, that was a difficult question to answer. Dare I go through the entire soap opera with her? "This is round two, but a few months now."

"Months?" Her arms dropped to her sides, and her eyes widened. Still, she stared into the great horizon, not meeting my eyes. "You act as if you grew up together."

I felt a smile coming on. "In a sense. But if you knew my mother... We grew up on opposite sides of the river."

"Has he met your mother?"

"Yes." He used to climb the trellis into my bedroom window. Mother dislikes our past, but she's coming around. "Has Miles met yours?"

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“Not yet.” She shook her head.

If her mother was anything like mine, I might’ve called that a blessing.

“I met Miles a year-and-a-half ago, and I thought I knew him. Until now.”

“That’s the thing about them.” I was grinning full force by then. “They keep you guessing, don’t they?”

“At least he knows my parents exist. I didn’t know he had a twin until a few days ago.”

I was about to tell her I hadn’t known right away either, but she hit me with—

“Twins! You and I should be shopping together, planning their birthday parties, saying oops-I-kissed-the-wrong-one.” Her gaze met mine.

I felt my cheeks flush with the thought of accidentally kissing the wrong man. Sophia had claimed this defense, although Miles and Brighton were easily discernible. Perhaps the eroticism of it was too much for Brighton’s ex to handle.

Or maybe she simply hadn’t known how to work the situation to her benefit.

“We can do something special for their birthday today,” I offered.

She smiled. “All right.”

Neither of us looked away until Miles joined us on the balcony, still shoving his head through a white tank top.

Two Brightons. Yum.

* * *

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In the confessional with Miles

I followed Robinson to a patch of dry, itchy grass in the middle of the parking lot, where she stood with legs a bit more than shoulder-width apart, and bent in half.

The woman's ass is incredible. It took more self-restraint than I could muster not to slap it as I slipped past her.

"Ouch!" She retorted with her best attempt at annoyance, but I saw her smile shining through.

After a thorough stretching—more necessary than usual, as I'd strained a calf muscle with back-to-back ejaculations last night—she led me in an easy jog along the frontage road.

There was nowhere to run, as we weren't in a town per se, so when she kicked up her pace, I took it as a challenge—a straight run up the road and back, and whoever crossed the line first won.

I pumped past her.

"Greedy bastard," she said and sped up. What she lacks in size she makes up for with stealth. When she inched ahead of me, she glanced over her shoulder. "What happened to make you fear heights?"

Her question did what the run had thus far failed—knocked the wind out of me. It wasn't something I liked to think about. I lengthened my stride to catch up, then matched her pace. "I fell out of a tree fort when I was fourteen."

"Were you drunk?"

I swallowed hard. "Why would you assume that?"

"You're too coordinated to fall under usual

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circumstances.”

I didn’t want to talk about it. I inched ahead.

She kept abreast. “Miles?”

“I was pushed.”

“Oh.” Out of the corner of my eye, I saw her jaw went slack for a second. “Was it Brighton?”

My heartbeat clamored in my ears. I shook my head.

“Jealous boyfriend?” She giggled.

It would’ve been easy to lie to her, and the situation had, in fact, involved a half-naked woman. For reasons I still don’t understand, I muttered the truth. “My father.”

“What?”

I licked sweat from my upper lip and trudged on.

“Miles! Did you say your *father* pushed you?”

I didn’t answer. Rather, I focused on the never-ending road ahead. This was going to be one hell of a long run.

“Talk to me, Miles.”

I bit the inside of my cheek until it hurt.

Pound, pound, pound went my heart, in time with my feet hitting the shoulder of the road. I heard her breathing next to me. Flashes of the scene appeared in split-second frames in my mind. Every time, I shooed the memories away.

“Can’t take the heat?” The crunch of the gravel beneath her feet took on a more staccato sound. “Pussy.”

Like a red-and-black streak, she darted out ahead of me, giving me an unmerciful view of her ass in action. The sight distracted me, but only for a moment. I soon remembered I couldn’t let her win any more than I could leave the

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conversation unfinished.

In a few strides, I was at her heels again. My left arm hooked around her waist, and together, we tumbled to the brush on the roadside. She landed atop my chest, which she punched with a small fist. “I hate it when y—”

I stole the rest of her words with a deep kiss, and while she struggled to free herself from my embrace, I held her captive with one hand on the back of her head and the other pasted to her ass.

“Fuck you,” she said against my lips. “You can chat it up with Cherry, but you won’t trust me?”

“I trust you, Joanna, but I also trust you won’t like the details of that story.”

“You’re right. You *are* a coward.” She had one knee on the ground, ready to climb off me, but I caught her just in time.

“I’m glad you finally agree.” I squeezed her hip and held her tight to my body.

Her eyes glinted with a subtle fire. “I’m about to meet your family.”

“It’s a big step.” I licked my lips, and drew her mouth to mine.

“If this hadn’t happened with Kennedy”—her dreamy voice sounded between kisses—“would you have wanted me to meet them?”

“Of course,” I whispered into another kiss.

“What was it like?” Her pelvis rocked over me. “Seducing your brother’s future wife?”

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I wiggled a hand into her pants, splayed it over her moist flesh, dragged a finger along her crack. “Seduction implies some sort of artistry was involved.”

“You”—she kissed the hollow of my neck—“are definitely a master of that art form.”

“Right. I may as well be Picasso for balling you out of your mind on the side of the road.”

“You certainly know how to speak to a girl.”

The tip of my index finger pressed into the heat of her anus. It was nothing I hadn’t done dozens of times before—once on the docks at Navy Pier during Fourth of July fireworks—but something happened this time that had never happened before.

“I’ve given you free access to my body.” The grinding of her privates against mine was enough to roll my eyes back into my head, and the strain in her voice told me I was on the right track. “Whenever and wherever you need it, want it, or demand it.”

As my finger delved deeper, I realized she’d never denied me a damned thing. She’s a firecracker, and she often makes me work for it, but in the end, I know she’s mine. The pole between my legs stiffened.

“You’re a good man.”

“I think I can be.” I fought the urge to fasten my mouth to her neck. My finger retreated from her ass.

Her mouth fell open a fraction of an inch, and her eyes dimmed. Suffice it to say, it’s a rare moment I don’t finish what I start, especially when it comes to Robinson’s body, and

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I guess she was surprised when I didn't continue to violate her.

"We made the fort ourselves, Brighton and me."

She dismissed my comment with an impatient sigh. Either she didn't believe me—it's no big secret I can't hang a picture on a wall—or she didn't understand why I'd mentioned it. "Well, more Brighton than me, I guess. He always had a mind for stuff like that—fixing bikes, building model airplanes. I was more the destructive type. Used to cut school, make bombs with bleach and sulfur."

The flesh between her eyebrows crinkled into a tiny V. She was confused. Even I didn't know why I'd begun with this information, but I couldn't hold back now.

"I started the garage on fire once, too."

"And yet they let you carry a gun."

"Any asshole with proper training can own a weapon." My gut clenched. "Take my father."

Her pink tongue appeared for half a second on the center of her lower lip, but she didn't say anything.

"I had a math test the day I fell, and I hadn't studied. So I played hooky."

She rested her head against my chest, and somehow, not looking her in the eye made continuing easier.

I'd spent most of the morning at the river, trying to catch carp with a pair of pantyhose I'd found in the woods, but those warm, innocent memories were clouded by the rest of the story. "I came home when I got hungry, and on my way through the backyard, I heard something rustling around up in

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the fort. I climbed up, expecting to find a mouse or a squirrel I'd hoped to pester with a pocketful of acorns."

A sickening feeling rolled up the walls of my stomach, as the scene again appeared in my mind. The burn of the knotted rope we used to scale the tree was as fresh now as it was the day it all happened.

The silky texture of my girlfriend's running shorts now helped to soothe my palms, to rid them of the seething memory.

Robinson's soft fingers met my cheek. Slowly, with the tips of her fingers, she drew four lines on my face.

"It was my dad up there," I said. "Fucking around with the lady down the block." She'd been on her knees, and the old man had been shoving at her head, likely desiring a deeper blow job. Neither of them had heard me at first, but it was the woman who'd acknowledged me first.

Fear had registered in the adulteress' eyes, when she'd backed away from my father's demands. I'd seen her a thousand times around the neighborhood, but I knew her intimately in those few hurried moments before he became aware of my presence. She was beautiful, in a mysterious sort of way. Jet black hair mussed and falling over one eye, the black lace of a bra peeking out from beneath her housedress, legs slightly parted, granting me my first view of panties with an actual woman inside.

My gaze had locked with hers, and she'd swallowed past the lump in her throat before yanking at her clothing to cover herself.

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“One of my feet was propped on the floor of the fort.” I briskly rubbed Robinson’s back. “And I was clinging to the rope, but I wasn’t paying attention to anything but the woman. He growled something at me.”

I squinted into the morning sky. This part was always fuzzy. I couldn’t remember what he’d said. I’d been too preoccupied, thinking this woman, amassed with shame, looked like someone I knew.

She’d looked like Eliza.

“His palm whipped upside my head, and I lost my footing.”

“Oh, Miles.”

“But it was a kick to my chest that sent me falling.”

Robinson lifted her head, and though I wanted to look away, the solace, understanding, and acceptance in her eyes mesmerized me.

“It was a long way down.”

Again, she caressed my cheek.

“High ropes courses, trust therapy...I can’t shake it.”

* * *

In the confessional with Joanna

A shove was a shove—appalling on its own—but a kick brought the scenario to an unparalleled low. It’s amazing Miles has managed to maintain his compassion and hope for the human race, after all he’d been through.

I kept looking at him across the backseat of the car, where

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he slept, thinking, *This is the strongest man I know*, and I'd prejudged him when we'd met. I'd thought he was a shallow playboy, but he had more layers that I'd yet to explore. There were reasons he acted macho and detached—good reasons.

Brighton caught my eye from the driver seat. I wondered what had happened in his childhood to keep him strong, yet subdued. And, like Miles, so friggin' sexy...in his own way.

Considering what had happened with Sophia, I can't explain why the prospect of taking them both to bed appealed to me, but I couldn't forget hearing Brighton's fantasy through the wall. Furthermore, after standing witness to Cherry's very vocal orgasm last night, I imagined her lover was just as adept as mine. Would I have been as obsessed with fucking them simultaneously had he been not a twin, but a regular brother?

I thought of the brothers I'd known.

No, the appeal of the brothers McClintock came in their matching packages. The thought of two perfect cocks on this planet—

“Hey.”

With Brighton's word, I blinked away the haze. I'd been staring...how embarrassing! Heat crept up my neck and over my cheeks, as Brighton met my glance over his shoulder. “I...I'm sorry,” I said. “I—”

“We get that a lot.” He shrugged. “Used to anyway.”

Cherry continued to punch numbers on her calculator—one of her clients had called several times that morning, and she was working a deal—as if my conversation with Brighton hadn't affected her at all.

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I shifted and pulled one of my feet up to the seat. “We covered a few miles yesterday.”

“Yeah, I bet the next ten hours fly.” He smiled. Such an easy smile. Different than Miles’. Not as sly, less cocky.

“Can I ask you something?” I fiddled with my ponytail out of nervousness, but I’m sure I looked like one of those brainless twits who couldn’t stop twirling her hair. “Your father...do you have any good memories of him?”

“Sure.” A noncommittal answer and it came quickly, as if he’d programmed himself to answer without thinking. After a moment, he cleared his throat. “Thing is, when something leaves a bitter taste in your mouth, you tend to forget the sweets you ate just before.”

Cherry’s hand crept across the consul, and she squeezed his thigh.

After a moment’s pondering about the firmness of his quad, I wondered if his and Miles’ relationship could be reduced to something akin to sour milk. Miles would do anything to mend what he’d broken—*anything*.

“This is it!” Like a pogo stick Cherry popped up in her seat. “This exit!”

Brighton veered, but sent a questioning glance her way.

“I have to use the ladies’ room.”

I couldn’t see her expression from my position in the backseat, but I’d bet she was batting those long, thick lashes at him. I wondered what she was up to. We’d passed a rest stop a few miles back, and unless the urge hadn’t crept up on her suddenly, she would’ve asked then, as opposed to now, when

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there wasn't a rest stop at this exit.

Still, Brighton drove over the hilly terrain under his girlfriend's direction to a humble-looking Aztec-style building, complete with dark yellow stucco and arched windows reminiscent of the Alamo. A southwestern weave hung from a rack on a terra cotta patio near the front door.

By the time we parked, Miles had stirred. He squinted out the window. "Where are we?"

"*La Casa de Blanco*," I read off the sign.

"I lied." Cherry was halfway out of the car and dialing her phone. "But welcome to your birthday party."

* * *

In the confessional with Brighton

It had been a long time since Miles and I said the same thing at the same time. Hell, we'd gone years without *speaking*. But standing in a graveled parking lot, surrounded by rich, reddish soil and viewing the occasional tumbleweed in the distance, we shared a look.

"Not on your life," we said together.

Phone at her ear, Cherry spun toward me, her eyes wide and surprised.

"We can't celebrate," I reminded her. "Not until we know Kennedy's—"

"Kennedy, hi." Cherry pivoted away. "How are you feeling today? Good."

Leave it to my girlfriend to cover all bases. By doing so,

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she'd made it nearly impossible for us to refuse her plans.

"Listen," she continued. "We're getting close. We'll be there by tonight. Pardon? Oh, sure." She held her phone out and pressed a button. "She'd like to wish the birthday boys a happy day. Go ahead, Kennedy. You're on speaker."

Our sister sang to us in her beautiful, clear soprano. Instantly, the tradition warmed me from the inside, out. Because we'd never had money for gifts, we became Little Drummer Boys as children and gave of ourselves. Miles had been known to give chore coupons, and Liza for preparing incredible breakfasts in bed. Kennedy woke us with song every year on our birthdays and sometimes at Christmas. She always chose a different tune. This year, it was "Hey, Jude."

I glanced at my twin, who was staring at the stones at his feet, smiling. I realized then I'd missed sharing the experience with him, and while I knew laws of nature would've prevented our living together forever, I was suddenly struck with how special an opportunity it was to share Kennedy's song now—and every time in the cramped quarters we'd called our bedroom.

The urge to hug him—or at least to give him a friendly punch on the shoulder—might've overcome me, if not for Joanna's linking her arm through one of his, and resting her head on his shoulder.

A strange emotion tugged at my heartstrings. We'd grown up together, fighting for one another. Now we each lived a life that didn't involve the other. I'd taken for granted moments like these, encompassed with Kennedy's serenade, which, by

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the way, sounded nothing like a funeral hymn. She seemed to be in good spirits.

I stood like a soldier at ease, but with focused attention, until she sang the last note.

“See you tonight.” Kennedy’s noisy smooch sounded through the phone. “Love you.”

“Love you, too,” Miles and I said simultaneously. Our glances met.

Cherry closed the phone.

“She’s incredible,” Joanna murmured.

I agreed with a nod, and this time held my brother’s gaze.

“What did she sing to you last year?” We asked one another in unison.

“‘Like a Prayer.’” And answered the same way.

My hand found Cherry’s, and together we led my twin and his sometimes-girlfriend Joanna into the dim building, as if we were on a double date, going to a place we’d suggested.

Cherry’s low-heeled shoes—mules, she called them, although they looked nothing like donkeys—clicked against the wide-planked floor inside, and the scent of corn tortillas wafted in the warm space. Music, heavy on the acoustic guitar, akin to flamenco style, played softly in the background.

A few rudimentary tables dotted the otherwise empty space, completely void of patrons, and Cherry selected one smack-dab in the middle. Atop the table was a deck of cards, for which I reached and began to shuffle.

“Four margaritas on the rocks,” Cherry said over her shoulder to the sole waitress in the place. “Each with an extra

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bucket of gold on the side.”

With nine hours on the road ahead of us, tequila was the last thing any of us needed, but after a tentative trading of glances, we all nodded.

“That’ll hit the spot.” Joanna yanked the rubber band from her hair. The golden sheets settled against her shoulders, and a twinkle came to her blue eyes. It was easy to understand what Miles saw in her. Easygoing, cute. “When does Kennedy receive her test results?” And sensitive to the situation at hand.

“It’ll be all right if we don’t get there until late tonight.” Cherry’s knee rubbed against mine. She opened a menu. “Don’t you think?”

Miles and I glanced at one another.

He was thinking what I was thinking—that we’d jumped over a hurdle, that we had a reason other than our birthday to celebrate.

The waitress slid four over-sized shot glasses onto the table, each filled to the brim with tequila. “You want training wheels with that?”

“Yes.” Cherry didn’t look up from her menu or confer with the rest of us. “Limes all around.”

“Rookies,” the waitress teased.

We’d yet to call a game, but I began to deal the cards anyway.

“Not at all.” Beneath the table, Cherry’s hand settled high on my thigh. “But we do like to suck on things.”

* * *

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In the confessional with Miles

The margaritas, which were strong *without* the extra shot, necessitated our renting a room a few miles from *La Casa de Blanca*. None of us had been over-served exactly, but each of us left the place feeling fuzzy, a little numb. I attribute the feeling to the repartee at the restaurant. Brighton and I had teamed up against the girls in a game of Hearts. It was the first time since Sophia that we stood on the same side of the playing field.

It was fun, to say the least—exactly what our lives should be like—and I could’ve hopped in the SUV and driven all the way to Santa Monica on the high I got from it.

But Robinson, feeling heady, begged for refuge.

A quick showering off, we’d all agreed, to wash the grime of the highway off our backs, and maybe a wink or two of sleep, would be enough to rejuvenate us for the rest of our trek out west.

My girlfriend showered first—although she chose to ignore the “quick” part of our plan—and was, after a twenty-minute hiatus, now resting on the far side of the king-sized bed.

My brother lounged just right of center on the same mattress, far enough away so as not to disturb her, but close enough to touch her, if he wanted to. He looked so big next to her, bulky. I didn’t doubt he’d continued to frequent the gym we used to go to together, and it was evident his everyday life kept him in excellent shape.

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I envisioned my girlfriend straddling him, nude, and his spinning her around to reverse cowgirl, nudging deeper into her slick, hot channel.

A shrink would probably have a field day with such a daydream, but if you think about it, our looking the same gives me an excuse to entertain the thought. I hate watching myself on video—yes, we’ve taped sex—but I love watching Robinson in action. Who better to serve her than someone who looks just like me?

I sighed, when I remembered it was the reverse of that scenario that had landed us in this pickle.

When Cherry emerged from the bathroom with a wet head, she wasn’t wearing a bra. Her extra-full melons sprouted tips and stretched the living daylights out of her black tank top, which was dampened by her dripping hair. I’m a big proponent of size-doesn’t-matter, but all I’d had for the past eighteen months barely filled my hands. Cherry’s no more beautiful than Robinson, and I see the latter as the most ideal woman...ever. But Cherry...I’d bet she’s borderline between a C- and D-cup. I forced my mouth to close.

If you don’t know this about men, I’m sorry to be the one to break it to you: we wonder about the things we don’t have. Those breasts had wheels turning so fast in my mind I was dizzy for a second.

No one seemed to notice the focus of my attention. *Thank God.* I didn’t want to offend anyone. Not Robinson, not Cherry, and I sure as hell didn’t want a repeat performance of the Sophia issue.

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But once on a mission, my brain had a way of staying on track. *Baseball, Moms, Kennedy, Eliza, Aunt Deb.* Nothing could stop me from wondering about the weight of my brother's girlfriend's breasts, and her reaction to his touch.

The sounds of her reaching orgasm last night echoed in my ears, and I couldn't help pondering the circumstances of her climax. Had Brighton been down on her with a hand on her tit? Or buried in her cunt, with those remarkable nipples causing friction against his chest? Or even in her ass? There was never a time Brighton would've offered the details, and given our recent distance, I wouldn't have asked, even if the girls weren't in the room with us.

She rolled onto the king-sized bed, next to my brother.

"Thanks for the party." He spoke to her in a sleepy tempo, the one I recognized from days of old as the voice he used with his girlfriends. Not cutesy. Calming.

"Mmm." She leaned into his embrace and closed her mouth over the tip of his chin in a brief, playful kiss. "You're welcome. Hope you had fun, too, Miles." She didn't look at me.

"I did. Thanks."

"I'm going to get a bottle of water. You want anything?"

"No, thanks," we said together as she rolled off the bed and headed toward the door.

"I think we used most of the hot water." She flashed a grin on her way out. "The Hilton this place ain't. Sorry."

The door closed with a definitive click.

So, as I said once before: I'm sure you were wondering

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what my brother and I were doing in the shower together in the first place. Sorry to disappoint, but nothing kinky, nothing experimental.

I was shaving at the sink.

Brighton was in the shower.

“Where’s Miles?” I heard Robinson ask from the bedroom.

“In the shower,” Cherry answered.

I stepped in as he was stepping out, and the next I knew...

CHAPTER 5

In the confessional with Joanna

I hadn't meant to fall asleep, but I'm not much of a drinker, and that margarita was definitely for the seasoned imbiber. After a twenty-minute doze, I awoke with a clearer head. Clearer, but hardly crystal. An alcoholic haze kept me drifting in a cloudy bliss.

Well, my entire body was buzzing for sex. The tingle of desire teased me from my innermost core, and my shirt was pulling across my nipples in such a way that made me groan with pleasure. It would've been an opportune time to find Miles next to me, as his mouth gravitates to my special centers

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at times like these. *Oral boy*. But he was nowhere in sight.

Cherry was sitting at the small, round table and filing her toenails. Her open bottle of water looked as refreshing as a dip in a cool water lake on a sweltering day. It was then I realized how hot I was—uncomfortably hot.

“Where’s Miles?” I asked.

“In the shower.” Cherry took a sip of water.

Desperately in need of a cool cloth or a glass of water of my own, I made a beeline for the bathroom door and collided with a dripping wet man—nude—just across the threshold.

I didn’t look at more than a glistening hip and a fist clenching a cheap, white towel covering only his privates—nothing I hadn’t seen a thousand times before—but I pressed my body to his.

In hindsight, I should’ve remembered there were two of them before I’d backed him against the wall. The moment my breasts squashed against his chest, I realized something was different. Hard pectorals, strong abs. All things Miles, but just different enough. I glanced up.

Sophia glared down at me from Brighton’s upper arm, as if an accusation, but Brighton’s eyes, while holding a surprised expression, softened the moment I met his gaze.

“I’m sorry.” With my deep inhalation, my nipples surged with need as they grazed against his wet chest. Droplets bled through my shirt and bra, intensifying the sensation.

The right corner of his mouth threatened to turn upward. “It’s okay.”

To my left, I spied Cherry standing in the doorway; to my

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right, Miles, peeking out of the shower curtain. Yet I didn't back away from his twin. Miles wasn't looking at me, and neither was Cherry. They were looking at each other, as if gauging one another's reaction to what I'd done.

Brighton touched my chin with a calloused finger—quite different than Miles'—and I was glued to him. Involuntarily, I compressed my pelvis subtly against him. His wet hand raked up my cheek and laced into my hair half a second before his lips met mine.

"It's okay." His other arm was around me now, which meant the union of our bodies was the only thing holding up his towel. If either of us moved, it would be on the floor.

"Don't do it," Miles whispered.

Brighton parted his lips and swept his tongue—softer than Miles', more patient, more tentative—against mine in a lime-flavored kiss. I backed away then and caught sight of Brighton's cock—just as tan as the rest of him, as if he worked outside in the nude—standing upright. There *are* two perfect penises on the planet.

The moment I realized I was staring at him, which spurred the realization I'd brought him to such a condition, I inched toward the door. It would've been a great escape had his girlfriend not been blocking the route.

"I'm sorry," I said again and brushed past Cherry. I wanted to disappear. What were the odds I could find transportation to an airport and take the next flight to O'Hare before any of them spoke to me?

"Joanna, wait." It was Brighton who followed me first, but

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when I mustered the courage to face him, I saw the other two weren't far behind.

Miles dripped water over the carpeting and hadn't bothered to cover himself before he lunged at Brighton.

Cherry shrieked and jumped out of the way just in time. The table tumbled over as they wrestled on the ground like two madmen who didn't wear undies to the fight club. Her comforting arm draped over my shoulders.

"What the fuck?" Brighton shoved Miles off him and regained his footing.

But Miles only came at him again. "A mistake's a mistake, but you're *pursuing* her?"

"Miles, don't." Cherry stepped between them, and yanked me along for the ride.

In an instant, the twins halted, but the anger burning in Brighton's eyes was enough to toast his brother like a marshmallow. He nudged closer, smashing Cherry's fine endowments into me.

"Everything's personal with the two of you." Cherry didn't raise her voice, but her tone was enough to silence a battlefield. "Jesus, give her a break! You look exactly the same."

"The two of *you* sure don't!" Miles wrapped an arm around me from behind. It was a possessive grip, spanning across my breasts—not painful, but not comfortable, either. "He—"

"Did Sophia look like your girlfriend when *you* kissed *her*?" Cherry raised a brow.

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The twins opened their mouths, but before they uttered a word, she continued.

“Neither of you is any better than the other. In fact, the two of you... God, there are *two* of you! Do you know how that makes us feel?”

I began to nod. Although Cherry and I had never discussed our passion for our look-alikes, she understood how I felt.

“You are the carbon copies of one another.” Cherry rested one hand on Miles’ tense forearm and the other on Brighton’s chest. “From your ears to your testicles. Yes, Brighton, I looked at him from the waist down, and yes, Miles, he kissed her. The two of you are acting as if the thought of switching places never crossed your minds!”

Miles’ grip relented then.

“I’m sorry.” I slipped from the foursome and began to straighten the odds and ends that had fallen on the floor when the table toppled. Tiny bottles of Cherry’s nail polish: fullest to emptiest. Magazines stacked.

“Joanna, don’t.” Cherry pulled me to my feet.

Through the tears welling on my lashes, I saw Miles frown as he approached me. “Go ahead and touch her again.” His words were no more than a growl, and he directed his glare at his brother. “She’s only the love of my life.”

My head spun with his admission, but why had he chosen *that* moment? “Brighton, I—” I’d started it all. I knew I had to finish it. “I’m sorry. I—”

With the pressure of her index finger at my jaw, Cherry demanded my attention and silenced me with an open-lipped

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kiss.

If Miles weren't standing behind me, I might've backed away from her, but realizing there was no place to go, I relaxed against him. His hands wove around me and rested on my belly.

Her lips parted again, and this time, her tongue swept against mine. I'd never kissed a woman before. It felt awkward at first, and it required diligent concentration because, unlike kisses with Miles, I shared control over this one. A few seconds later, however, Miles fastened his mouth to the back of my neck, and I withdrew, my head falling to his shoulder.

Cherry's breasts—firm and pert, despite their dramatic size—flirted with mine. Amidst the cloud of the afternoon, the strange dynamic of our group fizzled away. Gone from my mind was the case of mistaken identity, the feud between brothers, the reason for our trek.

Her nipples were hard and grazing against me through the thin material of my t-shirt. She brought a hand to the place where our bosoms met and splayed her fingers over the contour of mine.

"Ohhh." I sighed in time with Brighton. This was what he'd fantasized about.

True to his promise, Miles didn't turn away from it either. His hands were instantly working at my pants, and moments later, he had a finger buried in my cunt, working it into a slick passage, while he sucked on my neck, my shoulders, whatever else happened to be in the path of his mouth.

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I felt exposed, like the dream when you're at school in your underwear, but only until the vision of two ramrod pieces of male equipment reminded me I wasn't the only one missing clothing.

I locked gazes with Brighton, who was murmuring in Cherry's ear and yanking her top up, putting her gorgeous breasts on display. I didn't touch them with my hands. Wanted to, if only to know how breasts like that felt, but I couldn't bring myself to do it.

When she maneuvered to her knees, I felt the fullness of them brush down the length of my torso. After a brief, hesitant moment, during which I felt her breath against my stomach, she worked her way out from between Brighton and me.

Staring intently at my mouth, Brighton draped hair behind my ear.

Miles worked my shirt up, too. His brother helped him to remove it, then reached around to unfasten the clasp on my bra. Brighton's fingers trembled over my nipples, while Miles shoved my shorts further down.

"Come here," Brighton whispered with a strained voice. He pulled me tight to his chest, cradled my head against his shoulder, and massaged the back of my neck with a capable hand. Despite the oppressive heat—his wet skin was sizzling—he shivered when I melted against him.

Behind me, Miles had kissed a path to my waist, parted my legs, and presently was dragging his tongue from my pussy to my rectum. I arched toward his mouth, forcing him to choose a hole. He spread my buttocks and worked his tongue into my

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rear exit, all the while stretching my vagina with a few fingers—three and counting.

“Fuck her.” Brighton’s voice was strained, and his fingers tensed against my scalp. “Now.”

Miles pressed his thumb in when he withdrew his tongue from my ass. “She’ll tell me when she’s ready.” He proceeded to suck hard on my left cheek.

“She’s ready.”

Maybe it should’ve annoyed me—discussing me as if I couldn’t speak for myself—but instead, I bucked back in confirmation.

“Are you ready, baby?”

“Miles,” I managed.

“Fuck her,” Brighton said.

Finger by finger, Miles withdrew from my cunt. He licked up my spine. Soon, I felt the tip of his cock entering me, while Brighton’s twitched, hard and ready at my abdomen.

At the exact moment he filled my cavity, Brighton sighed, “Oh, baby.”

* * *

In the confessional with Brighton

As I held my brother’s girl in a protective embrace, he pounded her from behind. It sounds almost insane now, but it felt right at the moment, as if I were comforting her throughout an otherwise savage ordeal.

I recognized the look in his eyes, and furthermore, I

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understood it, as I'd been in a similar mood the morning he'd arrived, when I'd taken out my tension on Cherry's ass. He claimed what was his with force. Joanna proved she was his with her surrender, but she clung to me all the while, bridging the gap between us.

Her tits bounced against me, her fingers dug into my shoulders, and the soft skin of her belly tantalized the head of my erection.

With Cherry down below, massaging my balls and tonguing my ass as if it were her favorite flavor lollipop, I half-thought I'd expend a load against Joanna's stomach, but I knew where I wanted to make my deposit. It was a matter of waiting for the right time.

I felt the tremors of Miles' every thrust, like aftershocks of an earthquake.

Joanna whimpered through pretty pink lips, by which I was suddenly mesmerized. My tongue darted out to trace them, but it wasn't enough. Seeking a stronger connection, I closed my mouth over hers, felt her pleasure in her kiss. Her entire body quivered.

Cherry worked her tongue against my rectum, and her fingers padded my testicles expertly. My eyes fluttered closed, reveling in the pleasure. When I opened them again, I met my brother's stern gaze and again dipped my tongue into his girlfriend's mouth.

I knew he didn't like it, but I also knew he deemed it necessary.

I kissed her, open-eyed, in a staring contest with the man

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she loved, until passion overtook her and she bit my lip, at which time I backed off an inch or two.

Her brow was knit.

Miles was working her clit with his forefinger and thumb, and his cock was pistoning in and out of her cunt with a practiced rhythm.

She tightened her grip on my shoulders, and her breath caught in her throat. The scent of finely lubricated woman filtered through the air. I closed my eyes and savored the aroma, imagining all the while it was my stick she melted over, instead of my brother's.

Call it a weird twin connection, or a vivid imagination, but I knew every moist inch of the secret hollow between Joanna's legs, felt every plunge, gasped with every constriction of strong vaginal muscles around Miles' dick.

"Oh, baby," my brother and I said simultaneously. She was close. We both could feel it.

She held me until her orgasm broke with a shower of feminine juices and a throaty cry of satisfaction.

When she released me, I realized I'd taken to stroking my pole, which grew harder, it seemed, with every passing second. My knuckles grazed against her flesh as I did so.

In a quick movement, I spun and lifted Cherry up from her position on the floor by the underarms and pressed her back against the nearest wall. I owed her again, and I always repay my debts.

Of the four of us, she was the only one still clothed, save the thin tank, which I'd shoved up over her breasts. I yanked

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her shorts and panties aside and drilled into her.

She wrapped her limbs around me and began to shiver nearly instantly.

“Come, Cherry.” She had to. I was doing all I could to delay an eruption of my own. “Come on, Cherry.”

Like a good girlfriend, she obliged my every whim in the bedroom...and she’s always been easily orgasmic in my company. *Thank God.* I couldn’t hold it any longer.

* * *

In the confessional with Cherry

Not two seconds after I climaxed, he came inside me. Quickly. Inside the crevice known for reproduction.

Great Aunt Lacey was too surprised to speak.

Stunned, I pressed my palms to his cheeks and studied his smile. “Brighton.”

His lips met mine, and he spoke between kisses. “Don’t look at me like that.”

I counted days in my head. Were we okay? Or would I be pregnant in a few minutes—or however long it took the little whips to swim on up the tunnel?

That wasn’t the only awkward thought racing through my head. Miles and Joanna had fled to the bathroom, I assume to finish what we’d started, but we’d have to face each other sooner or later. How the hell were we going to do that?

::Let’s face it,:: Aunt Lacey finally piped in. *::The lot of you have gone above and beyond the definition of a close-knit*

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family...:

While it had all seemed logical in the heat of the moment, it felt strange now.

My rubbery legs barely supported my weight when Brighton lowered me to my feet.

“You could’ve kissed *him*,” he said. “It would’ve shut him up just as well.”

I nodded.

“But you kissed her.”

I’d thought it best to distance myself from any Sophia-like behavior.

“Thanks.” Brighton cupped my rear as he pulled out. Semen trickled into my panties.

“Have you...” I shifted my shorts. “Have you ever shared girls before?”

“No.” He wiped his cock with a discarded towel and grinned. “But it’s our birthday.”

“You think he’s going to be okay with it?”

The sounds of Miles’ release traveled through the closed bathroom door. Quiet he wasn’t. My recently entertained parts tingled when his rugged grunt caressed my ears.

“We can always blame it on the tequila.” Brighton sounded matter of fact. “It shouldn’t ruin Christmas.”

“And what about this?” I pulled at the crotch of my shorts, which were fast absorbing the shot of sperm.

“Aw, Cherry.” He brought the towel to between my legs. “Felt right, didn’t it?”

I couldn’t disagree.

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“I didn’t fuck her. Didn’t want to. There’s been no one else, there will be no one else. I’m donating the rest of our condoms to planned parenthood. You want to do something about it, we’ll talk, but I think you know how I feel.”

CHAPTER 6

In the confessional with Miles

Shortly before Moms' move to Santa Monica, Eliza overdosed on sleeping pills and slipped into a coma.

During my watch at the intensive care unit, she'd coded. At the very second she was revived, a frightened expression overtook her eyes, and she quickly slipped back into the deep sleep. Amidst her conscious moment, I remembered finding my father's mistress the day in the tree fort, when Dad kicked me. I remembered thinking she looked like Liza, and Liza, like her. I remembered the guilt I felt when I succumbed to his threats and kept quiet about it all.

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There were things, however, I couldn't remember, and those things had turned like wheels in my head for years.

Moms had the four of us within two-and-a-half years. While it's certainly feasible I was too young to remember it, or maybe the pregnancies had been so close, they'd amalgamated in my mind, I couldn't visualize my mother pregnant with Eliza.

In the ICU, I'd begun to believe Moms had raised Liza as her own, but that she hadn't borne her. Never had I mentioned my suspicions to another soul, although it would've stood to reason my mother would've forgiven her asshole husband for producing a child with the lonely housewife down the street because she'd excused behavior much worse for the sake of children before.

If Liza were indeed my half-sister, it would also explain why Dad had stolen her that night, and why he'd claimed she wasn't one of us.

Now, as I looked across a scarred pub table at Brighton, I wondered if he'd think me insane for such a pondering. More importantly, given all I'd done he'd yet to absolve, would he forgive me for raising the issue now—when Kennedy needed all of us to stick together—if it weren't true?

I caught his stare. If I could've avoided it, I would've, but there wasn't a diversion available. Robinson and Cherry—true to the form that is woman—had escaped to the ladies' room together at least ten minutes ago. What they could be doing in there for such a long time was beyond me.

Brighton raised his pilsner glass to his lips. "You haven't

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said anything since we got back on the road.”

“What do you want me to say?” Now I knew what it felt like to have your brother kiss your girlfriend’s lips, to know his hands had traveled to some of my favorite places, I realized forgiveness for my past indiscretion with Sophia was no simple feat. Because he was asking me to speak, I should’ve dropped to my knees and begged forgiveness for my years-old error. Maybe in forgiving me, he’d find the strength to apologize for what he’d done.

But, in the end, I said nothing because Brighton wasn’t made up of the same stuff as Moms. If I’d learned anything during those crazy moments in room three-eighty, it was that some lines are drawn for a reason, and crossing them is unforgivable.

“Kind of weird, this afternoon.” His hand slid up and down the length of the glass, chasing condensation. “But it doesn’t mean you have to be an asshole.”

“You kissed her.”

He nodded, but didn’t say anything.

“I guess I’d rather you’d fucked her.”

“I don’t think you mean that.” He shrugged—such a nonchalant, cocky gesture—and challenged me with a stare.

“Kissing is...” I couldn’t formulate a thought, let alone a way to express it. I fixated on that moment when he’d kissed her, soft and sweetly, staring me down the whole time. Kissing was more than physical. “It’s personal.”

He cleared his throat. “I know you don’t want to talk about Sophia.”

A FEW MILES MORE

I tensed. He was right about that.

“That one time she stuck her hand in your pants, what did I do about it?”

“You believed her. You said—”

“I didn’t believe her. I let it go.”

“That’s another thing. You forgave her time and again, but you can’t forgive me. I was acting in your best interests, and—”

“Christ, Miles, if she wasn’t pregnant, she would’ve been just another girl, and we’d have been over this a long time ago. She was never supposed to be permanent, but you were my fucking brother.”

“*Were?*”

“Are.” He reached for the bill. “And, yeah, I kissed Joanna. I wanted to know how it felt to be you. Just for a second or two.”

Despite the tall glass of water I’d swallowed, my throat remained dry. “You wanted to know what it felt like to kiss her.”

“It’s not like that.” He shoved a few bills into the case. “I wanted to know what it felt like to lure my best friend’s woman, to understand what you did with Sophia.”

“And do you?” I reached for the bill.

“It’s on me.” Brighton refused to hand it over. “And as it turns out, no.”

“I didn’t know she was pregnant, Brigh.”

“I know.” He drummed his fingers atop the table. “It doesn’t matter anymore.”

A FEW MILES MORE

A guttural noise escaped me, a disgusted sigh. Like hell, it didn't matter.

"It doesn't," he confirmed.

"Great." I despised the facetious tone in my voice, but I couldn't hide it. "Sophia was a passing fancy for you, but Robinson's the real thing for me, and now you've decided it doesn't matter."

"Passing fancy? Sophia's the mother of my child."

"Dick."

"Rat fuck."

I felt my brow furrow. "I still don't know what that means."

"Like I said, it doesn't matter anymore."

"Fine." I pressed my lips together, angry he'd risked hurting me to get over his own hurt. Angrier still that it seemed to have worked.

"I, um...I need a favor."

As far as I could see, we were even, but I nodded. "What?"

"You probably don't remember this, but a while ago, I asked if you'd be my best man."

Of course I remembered. My heart sped up.

"When it's time, can I count on you?"

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw our girlfriends emerging through the crowded pub, arms linked, laughing.

"The things she's done for Haden..." Brighton half-smiled. "You can't imagine."

Cherry's philanthropic gestures had done more than benefit my nephew. They'd given Brighton peace of mind.

A FEW MILES MORE

“Hold onto her.”

“You, too.”

Funny thing, forgiveness. The most monumental events prompt it, yet you never see it coming.

Joanna slid into the booth beside me and placed her hand on my thigh. Cherry must’ve done the same, but judging by the grin skyrocketing across my brother’s face, I’d guess her hand landed a square or two higher on Brighton’s thigh.

People call their spouses their other halves, but that’s because they aren’t mono-amniotic twins. I hadn’t answered Brighton’s request, but I had a feeling I didn’t have to. Just like that, he’d remembered I was the one wrapping the cord around his neck at thirty-four weeks’ gestation. He’d forgiven me for nearly killing him before we were born, and in asking this favor of me—such an honor to be a best man—he’d proven he could forgive me for Sophia, too.

CHAPTER 7

In the confessional with Brighton

Entering Moms' place was not akin to coming home. I'd never lived in Santa Monica, and the odd hours I'd spent there could hardly be construed as real visits, as we'd spent the majority of weekend trips at the beach. However, the sounds and smells were the same as those of my childhood home.

Big band jazz filtered out the open windows, along with Moms' off-key singing. She couldn't carry a tune in a briefcase, but it had never stopped her from enjoying a song. This had annoyed Dad, but even the memory of his verbal abuse on the subject wasn't enough to erase the smile from my

A FEW MILES MORE

face.

It was hotter than blazes in southern California—a humid eighty-nine degrees—but Moms was simmering her famous vegetable soup as if she were still stuck in the midwest at the onset of autumn. The aromas of zucchini, tomato, and corn wafted out the door when Kennedy opened it.

“Ah, my family! Together again.” Our sister threw her arms around my brother and me and squeezed hard. If I’d known seeing Miles and me together could make a girl forget she might have cancer, I would’ve forced Miles onto a plane and arrived days ago.

“You look great, Kenn,” Miles said.

And she did. Her sandy blonde hair was shorter than it had ever been—cut in a chin length bob—and her skin glowed with the effects of recent summer sun. I tried not to look at her chest, which wasn’t usually a problem for me where my sisters were concerned. But she looked vibrant and alive. It was hard to believe she might’ve been sick, and I found myself seeking a glimpse of the evidence.

“You can’t see it.” Kennedy tucked some hair behind her ear. In a semi-shocking but almost tender gesture, she cupped her left breast and dragged a finger along the contour. “It’s the size of a pinhead. We found it early, so hopefully...”

“How long have you known?” Miles asked.

“A few weeks.”

“*Weeks!*” we said together. “Kennedy—”

“Come in, come in!” Moms called between notes.

“Hi, Moms,” we said in unison.

A FEW MILES MORE

I was the first to travel down the terrazzo-tiled hallway, the coolness of the air conditioner caressing my skin. “Is Liza here?”

“No,” Moms called.

“Will she be?” I glanced over my shoulder to see Kennedy climbing onto Miles’ back for a piggy-back ride, as if she were still eight.

“Of course.”

“When?” Miles asked.

“In time for dinner.”

My mother appeared then, wearing pink pants too long to be shorts, but too short to be pants. She was drying her hands on a white towel and doing her best to murder Harry Connick, Jr. One glance was enough to know—she’d survived the hell her cheating, drug-addict dirty cop of a husband had put her through. Wrinkles creased in the corners of her eyes and blue veins popped on the backs of her hands, proving she’d put in her time in the working class, but she looked nothing short of amazing.

I said a silent prayer of hope. *Let Kennedy survive, too.*

* * *

In the confessional with Joanna

“Pink for the cure.” When Eliza arrived, it was with Aunt Deb in tow. They tossed pink t-shirts at we out-of-towners. The four California women, who were already wearing pink from head to toe, cheered us on as we—men included—

A FEW MILES MORE

donned our new clothes.

Miles had raced for the cure last summer—against me—and, cuddled in the crook of his arm, I was instantly reminded of his many layers. He'd exposed some more of them to me since our road trip had begun. How far we'd come over the past several hundred miles, yet nothing better depicts a man like time spent with his family.

While Kennedy was girl-next-door-cute, Eliza was dramatically beautiful, with waist-long, black hair and eyes the color of midnight. The only resemblance between her and the rest of the McClintock siblings resided in her smile, and that attribute, I'm sorry to say, she kept mostly to herself.

We'd gathered around a wrought iron-and-glass cocktail table in a screened porch, each of us swirling a glass of a fantastic California red, and that's where we ate dinner—a simple but scrumptious vegetable soup and a crusty sourdough bread. The dishes remained stacked in the center of the tabletop long after we'd savored the last morsel.

It was nearing two in the morning. Moms and Aunt Deb had long since excused themselves for the sake of sleep, but the rest of us were wide-eyed, as if our staying awake would somehow delay Kennedy's expected news.

Liza's penetrating stare darted to Kennedy. "Are you afraid?"

Kennedy glanced first at Miles, then at Brighton. "Not anymore."

With six mouths clamped shut, the sounds of a whispering breeze outside became more apparent.

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"I'm not." Kennedy pressed a hand to her heart. "Because it's early, and even if it's malignant—"

"It runs in the family, Kenn." Eliza leaned on her elbows.

"So you're just as likely to get it as I am. Are you afraid?"

With a slight shake of her head, Eliza took a deep breath, but she neither confirmed nor denied the inference.

"There are treatments." Kennedy sipped her wine. "It isn't a death sentence. Not anymore. It's why I cut my hair. Less to lose later."

"Oh, Kennedy," Cherry said on a breath.

Miles tightened his grip on my hand. "We're taking Route 66 home."

"That's still up for discussion." There was a hint of protest in Brighton's voice, but he didn't press the issue.

"Look," Miles said. "There's someone along the way we need to see. All of us."

"Dad." Eliza took one last sip before placing her glass on the table. "I haven't seen that man since...since that night, and I won't see him again. I won't."

"Liza." Kennedy placed a palm on Eliza's shoulder. "He's an old man now. Miles says he's sick."

"You might be, too. No, thanks. I'd rather stick it out here, wait for him to die, and watch you get better."

"If it's benign," Kennedy said, "I'm going with them."

"That's your choice." She swallowed hard and looked to each of her siblings in turn. "I had more peace to make than the three of you combined, but I made it. I'm done. If you feel you need to see him, be sure to tell him I managed to shake the

A FEW MILES MORE

pills he turned me onto.”

Brighton straightened. “Liza, now isn’t—”

“It isn’t the time? Because we have company? Because we’re on pins and needles as it is waiting for this phone call? I have no secrets. Not anymore. He took me that night and introduced me to a whole new way to block out the pain.” She stood. “But that was yesterday, and we have a big day tomorrow. We all survived. Let him go.”

Miles grasped her wrist. “I’m sorry I didn’t stop him that night.”

“You were just a kid.” Liza’s glance softened. “We all were.”

“Yeah, but... You should’ve been able to count on me. You’re my sister.”

She pressed a kiss to his forehead and whispered for his ears only, although I overheard, “I know you’ve always believed that, even when you knew otherwise.”

He held it together as long as he could, until she disappeared into the house. Then, with tears welling in his eyes, Miles led me outside, pulled me down onto the stiff grass, and rested his head in my lap.

“Joanna.” Tears choked him.

“It’s okay.” I raked through his hair. “They’re strong women. They’ll make it.”

He nodded. “Think *we* can make it?”

“I don’t know.”

He blinked a few tears away. At that moment, when he was bathed in moonlight and gazing up into my eyes, I

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believed we could.

“I love you, Joanna.”

“I love you, too, Miles.”

* * *

In the confessional with Cherry

The next morning, Brighton rolled me onto my back, parted my legs, and pressed his lips to my clit. His tongue showed no mercy as it darted in and out of my slit, and the heels of his hands pressed hard against my inner thighs.

::*Better than coffee.*:: Great Aunt Lacey nudged my brain.

“Mmm, good morning.” I tugged on his hair and bucked up to meet his thrusting tongue.

His mouth traveled to the far ends of my hips, only to return time and again to my vagina. Such a tease.

“Fuck me,” I said.

The smile in his eyes was devilish, delicious, and he came up for air. “Give me your hands.”

I offered them.

Click, click.

A moment later, I realized he’d handcuffed me to the brass headboard. “Where did you—”

“They’re Miles’.” His maple tree of a cock rested in his hand.

“What time is it? Kennedy—” I bit my tongue. I knew he didn’t have to be reminded of what news the morning might bring. The handcuffs were proof he needed a diversion.

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“We have time.”

I looked again to the pole in his hand. “What are you going to do with that?”

He climbed over me and nestled his rod between my breasts. “I’m going to shove it into your pretty little mouth a few times.”

“Oh.”

He pressed my tits around his shaft and groaned when, given the opportunity, I wet his tip with my tongue. His fingers plucked at my nipples, and his rock-hard penis was hot against my skin. My areolas zinged with his caressing and jolted pleased sensations in my pussy. He squashed my breasts in his palms and thumbed my tight nipples while slipping his shaft between them.

His eyes fluttered closed.

I parted my lips whenever his cock reached my mouth. The taste of pre-ejaculate only intensified my need down below. But I was handcuffed, unable to satisfy the urge. I crossed one leg over the other, stimulating my clit with the friction, but it wasn’t enough. “Touch me, Brighton!”

“Shh.” His fingers kneaded the sides of my breasts.

I closed my eyes to imagine his lips closing over my cones, his fingers filling the crevice between my legs.

“I need it.”

“You’ll wake my family.”

I giggled, but knowing our rendezvous occurred next door to his mother’s bedroom brought me back to the days when he’d climbed into my window past curfew, when he’d stolen

A FEW MILES MORE

me away for animal sex in cheap hotel rooms, or on the back lawn, or even in my closet, if we couldn't wait.

"Shh."

"Maybe if Miles hears me, he'll come to my rescue."

A playful smile touched his lips. "Still want to fuck my brother?"

I didn't, and he knew it. "Come on my throat," I whispered. "Pearls."

"What, and leave you primed for a guy who looks a lot like me?" After a few more thrusts, he snaked down my body. "I'm going to bury it in a safe place."

"Oh."

And he slid into my cunt—no condom.

"Hold me, Cherry."

I began to encircle him with my arms, but the clanging of metal on metal reminded me I didn't have the liberty. He chuckled. Instead, I wrapped my legs around him and instantly began to shiver with his patient stroking. "Where are you going to come?"

"My new favorite place." He nuzzled my neck with soft lips. "Is that okay?"

"Yeah." My insides tightened and gripped him as he withdrew and entered.

"Come with me."

I was already on my way. His kisses drowned my cries of pleasure. The handcuffs dug into my wrists. I bit his lower lip.

His cock massaged me in the perfect spot, and the way he struck down against me tantalized my clit. "Come, Cherry," he

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murmured against my mouth.

“Oh, yes.”

He erupted into my crevice, his spurting juices creating even more friction inside me. I pinched my eyes shut and gave in to the decadence.

It was bittersweet, feeling so close to him, sharing such pleasure, when Kennedy’s future lay on the line.

His cheek rested against mine. “Love you, you know that?”

I nodded. “Of course.”

Thankfully, Brighton had thought to cover me, even if he hadn’t freed me. Miles knocked once, then opened the door. “I want my cuffs back.” He raised his eyebrows. “And Kennedy just got the call.”

In an instant, Brighton paled and reached over me for the key to the handcuffs. “Does she know yet?”

“She wants to talk to all of us. Together.” He closed the door.

“That can’t be good.” Brighton rubbed my wrists, and we rushed to dress.

CHAPTER 8

In the confessional with Miles

Kennedy's tumor was malignant, but the doctors were optimistic about her prognosis, as the cancerous cells had been contained to the tiny area the size of pin's head. After a lumpectomy, chemo and radiation, there was no reason to believe my sister wouldn't live a long, healthy life.

Healthy.

It's my new favorite word. That and "yes," which is what Robinson said when, beneath the moonlight in Moms' backyard, I asked her to move in with me, to take our relationship to the next level. Like Eliza, I'd exposed all my

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secrets, and my girl had accepted me regardless.

Now my brother and I were standing in the breezeway of a rat hole of an apartment building in Oklahoma City, staring at the buzzer adorned with a block lettered McClintock, while our girlfriends waited in a locked car.

Girlfriends. I don't think we'd have come this far without Cherry and Joanna. They'd suggested our joint return to Santa Monica for Christmas.

It was because of Kennedy, however, I'd agreed to fly.

If I'm going to beat cancer, my sister had said, you can beat this phobia.

"I don't think he's home," Brighton said.

I glanced away from the buzzer for a split second to eye the doorknob. I could probably pick the lock. "Maybe he's home, but in no condition to come to the door."

"Maybe he's dead."

"Does it matter?"

Brighton nudged me with his elbow. "Hey, you wanted to come."

"Want is a strong word." Never had I *wanted* to see the asshole. "I felt compelled." I shifted. "What if he *is* dead?"

We looked at each other for seemingly the first time since we'd arrived. Our dad had been dead to us for years, but he felt gone right then.

Brighton cleared his throat. "He liked to go to the movies."

I nodded. "All genres."

A dull silence hung in the air. That was the beginning and the end of his epitaph. The place smelled like garbage and

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urine...like a holding cell at a city jail. *Appropriate.*

He'd given us Eliza, and I suppose either of us could've mentioned that as one of his best contributions to the planet, but our half-sister wouldn't have wanted us to think of her that way.

"Do you think..." Brighton brushed a thumb over an eyebrow. "Do you think, if he'd been half the man he should've been, we'd rely on each other like we do now?"

I felt the corner of my mouth twitch upward, and I gave Brighton a nod. "Yeah."

EPILOGUE

Brighton and Cherry are engaged to be married and, much to her mother's chagrin, are planning a small wedding in Jamaica next spring. Few guests will attend, and Miles will be the best man. While they anticipate having three more children someday, they enjoy frequent visits with Brighton's son, Haden. The "Sophia" on Brighton's arm has been masked with vibrant ink in the shape of twin cherries, adjoined by the stem.

Miles and Joanna are living together in the Lincoln Square neighborhood, not far from Wrigley Field in Chicago. Last weekend, after scaling the rock wall at their gym, they received some interesting news. Their recently recorded

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confessions, along with Brighton's and Cherry's, have been compiled for the script of an independent film, which will debut at the Sundance Festival. Should the project go mainstream and earn a few bucks, the entire proceeds will be donated to the race for the cure.

Eliza is moving to a north suburb of Chicago, where she will work alongside Joanna for the state of Illinois as a social worker for misdirected and suicidal teens. Enjoying her newfound purpose in life, she smiles more often now.

The five mid-westerners traveled via airplane to Santa Monica for Christmas. Upon their arrival, Kennedy serenaded them with "I Will Survive." While her cancer is in remission, she is active in local breast cancer support groups and fundraisers.

The brothers McClintock have vowed never to share a shower again.

PENNY DAWN

Penny Dawn began writing at the tender age of seven, and she's delighted to now call her favorite pastime a career. Romantic stories with passionate twists have become her forte! She has published several shorts, novellas, and full-length novels of varying degrees of heat...from simmer to sizzle.

Penny Dawn holds a B. A. in history and English from Northern Illinois University, and an M.A. in Creative Writing from Seton Hill University, where she studied under romance extraordinaire Leslie Davis Guccione, among others. When she isn't writing, Penny enjoys tap, ballet, and jazz dance, physical fitness, and renovating her 1906 Victorian Lady.

Drop by her website: www.pennydawn.com to discuss all things decadent. If you wish to contact Penny, please drop her a line, or request an invitation to join Penny Dawn's Romance...with a Passion!, at penny_dawn1111@yahoo.com.

* * *

***Don't miss Go For Miles, by Penny Dawn,
available at AmberHeat.com!***

Joanna Robinson and Miles McClintock have a history of mind-bending sex in public places...with no strings attached.

When they both qualify to compete in the annual Illinois Beach Race for Charity, Miles' cocky grin and not-so-discreet leering tempts Joanna more than ever. The heat between them threatens to shatter the thermometer, but each wants the prize as much as they crave another public romp. Unfortunately, only one can win the race, and Joanna is sure her cause is much more worthy than any Miles might support. After all, one can't expect much from an over-confident stud who carries a gun to work, and she's pretty sure he's competing for personal glory, more than charity.

Dirty tricks and steaming, private moments propel them through obstacle courses and logic puzzles. Somewhere along the way, however, Joanna discovers there's more to Miles than she assumed. He has passions...ones that don't involve his experienced hands, talented tongue, or the remarkable package between his legs. But will they survive the competition without losing their passion for one another? And if so, will he be man enough to take her to bed should she defeat him?

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