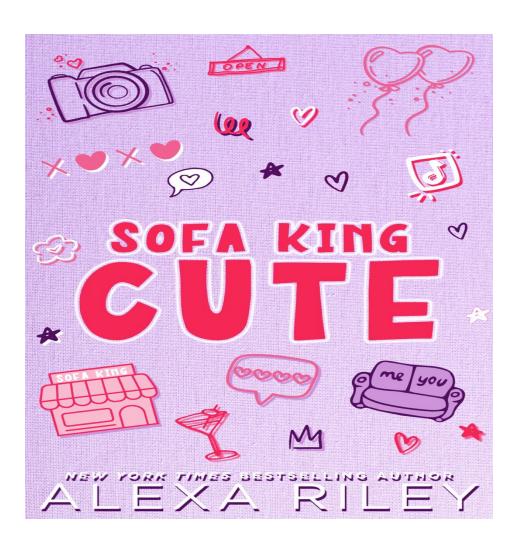
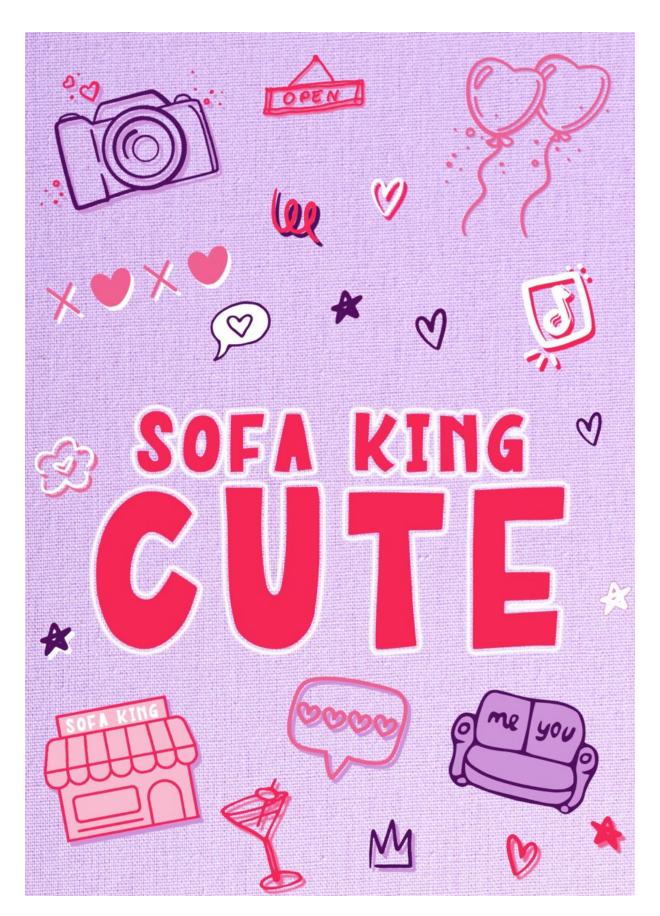


ALEXARILING AUTHOR





ALEXA RILEY

SOFA KING CUTE

ALEXA RILEY



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By Alexa Riley

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Read Me Romance

Stalk the Author

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By Alexa Riley

Liv Thomas and her twin sister Lane run their dad's furniture store now that he's retired. While some people might call Liv's pieces tacky, the big and burly town electrician has taken a shine to them. She finds Julius' quiet nature adorable, but after he witnesses another man kissing her on the cheek, he's no longer quite so shy.

Julius Mills is obsessed with Liv. It's too bad he can't get his brain and mouth to work together when he's around her. Every time he tries to ask her out, his words get twisted and he shuts down. But when he sees the local player try to make a move on his woman, he realizes there's no time to waste.

Welcome to The Sofa King Series! It's small town romances galore with obsessed heroes and the women they love. Jump in for all the best tropes, and we'll keep you safe. No cheating, no cliffhangers, and always with a happily ever after.

For those of us that love a good pun!



Chapter One



LIV

I don't have a clue what to make of Julius Mills. That doesn't stop my mind from thinking about him every second of every day. It's a bit sad, really. I'm pining over a man that speaks in grunts. It's hard to get his attention, and boy, do I try. Embarrassingly so at times. I'm shocked he still comes in here.

"Oh, pink." My sister Lane goes straight to the coffee maker to get her morning fix.

"'Oh' as in bad or 'oh' as in cool?" I run my fingers through my hair.

"It's cute on you. I couldn't pull it off."

"We're twins," I remind her once again. She takes her big sister role a little too seriously for someone who is a whopping two minutes older than me. Lane has an old soul, I'll give her that, but still, two whole freaking minutes!

"But you have that vibe thing going on, so it works for you." She nods like she's agreeing with herself.

"Now I don't know if you're making fun of me."

"I'm not making fun of you." She grabs the creamer out of the fridge and gives me a soft, reassuring smile. "I think pink hair is my favorite on you."

I want to ask if it screams *look at me*, but I already know that she will say yes. It's not a wild bright pink; this time it's softer. It was easy to put over my blond hair and should wash out in a week. I don't know why I thought this was a good idea, but I randomly thought Julius might like it. Or at the very least get his eyes to linger on me a few moments longer. The more I think about it, the stupider it sounds.

Julius Mills is big and burly with a no-nonsense attitude. He wears jeans and boots with a simple flannel or T-shirt because it's functional. He always looks clean and sharp, with his beard neatly trimmed. I bet he's got one of those morning routines that he sticks to every day and does the whole list. The second his big caveman feet hit the floor, he's on the clock. Yeah, he's the complete opposite of me, but the man's dark brown eyes sucked me right in.

The color of his eyes reminds me of my childhood teddy bear that I slept with every night. Okay, it might still be in my bed, but no one knows that. Only my sister goes into my room, and she doesn't count.

"Thanks." I grab the box of Lucky Charms and add more to my bowl. No need to let the extra milk go to waste. "How is your day looking?"

"I've got a lot of orders to work on." Lane lets out a breath, but I know she's happy about it.

This is what we wanted when we took over our father's furniture shop. He all but tossed it into our laps before he and our mom took off on a cruise. After that, they landed in Florida and have been staying there the past few years. I'm thrilled for them. Dad never liked the snow or the cold, so it wasn't surprising that he persuaded Mom to move there.

We don't run the shop the same way he did. When we took over, we added our own style to it. Lane is the powerhouse who can build anything with her hands. She always pushes off compliments when I gush over how good she is, then redirects, calling me the artist. Lane's creations are art.

Sure, I can paint or create the odd piece of small furniture, but they aren't selling like hotcakes. Our little shop's success is largely due to Lane. People even travel from other states to get pieces from her.

"You know I'll take care of the front of the house." Being stuck in the back all day sounds like the worst, but Lane seems to thrive in that environment.

"I feel awful that you always handle all the other stuff."

"I'm just glad I'm helpful," I tell her, and I mean it.

Plus, when I work in the front of the shop, that means there's no way I'll miss seeing Julius if he pops in. Even if he doesn't come into the store, at least I know I'll see him a few times a week. He passes by when walking into town. On Mondays he goes to the grocery store, Wednesdays the post office, and Fridays the diner. I know far too much about a man that might not know my last name.

Julius moved to Cottonwood a few years ago. We're not a tiny town, but we're not giant either. Most people know each other or know their family members. He's got a nice piece of land with a cabin on it. I picture him out there chopping wood all the time, but that's TikTok taking off with my brain, per usual.

"Helpful?" Lane scoffs. "You're more than helpful, Liv. You're the only reason people know about us. Your social media skill is freaky good. It's because of you we get most of these orders."

I want to point out that without her work, there would be nothing for me to post. I do have fun with it, though, and I enjoy crafting my own pieces and designing them up. Lane keeps to only woodworking and creates every piece of furniture she can think of. I like being creative with them and adding my own small touches. I'll spend more time painting a piece than crafting it.

Julius gravitates toward my items. He's bought more than a few, which I'm not sure what to make of. I picture his cabin in shades of browns, grays,

and blacks. My stuff would stand out strangely against the interior of his home that I've envisioned. At first I assumed he would favor Lane's items more, but every time he proves me wrong.

I adore my sister, but people usually tend to favor her in general. She's got it together, whereas I'm a hot mess. Maybe that's why I'm on the verge of stalking Julius. There's not much dirt to be found on my lumberjack, but that doesn't mean I'm going to stop searching.

I'm thinking Julius could benefit from a little chaos in his overly organized life.

Chapter Two



JULIUS

thought I told you to cut the power." I place my tools down and walk over to the main breaker.

"I did." Troy looks up from his phone and then back at me. "Oh, you mean that one?"

I press my lips together in a tight line and remind myself that Troy isn't trying to kill me. He's just a fucking idiot. After I flip the correct breaker off, I go back to the wires and unhook the water heater.

When my grandma asked me to move to Cottonwood, I was hesitant, and now I remember why. It's because she thought I'd be a good influence on my cousin Troy. Turns out, no amount of good influence is going to get that little shit to look up from his phone.

After my mom passed away two years ago, my grandma started asking me to move closer to her. My mom had a brother that stayed here after high school, and his son Troy is a constant pain in my ass. I should have known my mom stayed away from this town her whole life for a reason.

I'd had a successful business as an electrician back in Springfield but was feeling like it was time for a change. I should have gotten a dog or something. I'm used to working by myself and not really talking to people.

Other than asking people what they want done, I do my thing and stay quiet. Maybe that's part of the reason my nerves are shot at the end of every day. Troy's phone fills the silence with bursts of loud music on the videos he watches.

There used to be a rhythm to what I do, but now I'm all thumbs, and it's pissing me off. I'm a simple man that doesn't need much, but clearly asking for him to put his goddamn phone down is where the line is drawn.

"Hand me the needle nose pliers," I say while holding the wires in one hand and reaching out with the other.

"Hmm?" Troy once again doesn't look up from his phone.

An annoyed huff leaves me as I stop what I'm doing and go to the toolbox to get what I need. If he wasn't scrolling through videos, I could almost pretend he wasn't here.

"Hell yeah, Liv has a new TikTok." He hums appreciatively. "Her tits are so fucking hot."

Anger burns through me, and I can feel my neck heat. "Watch your fucking mouth."

Troy's head snaps up, and I've finally got his attention. "Whoa, she's the one putting them out there."

He turns the phone around so I can look at the video, and sure enough, the cute little lady at the furniture store is showing off one of her sister's newest pieces. She's changed her hair to pink this time, and it looks so damn sweet. It suits her. She's wearing a pair of faded jeans and a vintage T-shirt. The shirt's not even a V-neck or cut low; it's fitted to her curves. Of course, her tits are fucking hot, but he's talking like she's naked.

"You need to learn to control yourself," I warn. My glare makes him swallow hard.

"Sorry, didn't know you had a thing for her." He goes back to scrolling on this phone. "Jeez, it's not like she puts out, anyway."

"What the fuck did you say?" I toss the pliers in the toolbox and take a step toward him.

"Easy," he pleads while holding his hands in front of him. "Everyone knows her and her sister are prudes. They were always too good for any of the guys in high school."

"I can't imagine why." I look him up and down and don't try to hide my repulsion. He's wearing a pair of cargo shorts that are ratty and stained, and his faded Budweiser shirt has a cigarette burn on the stomach. "With guys like you lining up, I'd imagine it was a hard choice."

"Right?" He smiles like I'm not *this close* to wrapping my hands around his throat.

He goes back to his phone, and I shake my head. God, give me strength.

I grab the pliers once again and go back to work. The sooner I get this done, the sooner I can dump him at his dad's garage. I promised to let him come work with me two days a week, and it's still too damn many.

Once I've changed out the wiring, I hook it up to the water heater and turn the power back on. When I'm finished cleaning up, I shove the toolbox in Troy's chest, and he grabs it as a whoosh of air leaves his lungs.

"Take that to the truck."

"Okay," he grunts and fumbles out the door.

"We're all finished, Mrs. Nelson," I say as I walk into the kitchen. "It was a quick fix, no charge."

"Julius Mills, I won't have that," the older lady huffs and puts a hand on her hip. "You'll charge me or I'll tell your grandmother you stole my silver."

I tuck my chin to hide my blush. I hate how my cheeks burn every time I get shy. It's not that I don't charge for what I do, but when it's something quick, I usually don't. It's served me well in the past and brought me more business than I can keep up with. I'm not hoping Mrs. Nelson is going to

send thousands of dollars in business my way. I'm doing this because she's on a fixed income and friends with my grandma.

"Yes, ma'am," I tell her and nod toward the counter. "We're running a special right now on taking payment in the form of pound cake."

"You keep being sweet to me and I'm gonna scoop you up. You know I'm a widowed woman?" She wiggles her eyebrows at me, and I blush again. I stay quiet as she wraps up the pound cake and makes me promise to come back next week for another.

I get in the truck and put the pound cake on the center console between us. While I'm buckling up, Troy reaches for it.

"Oh, hell yeah."

"When you do some actual work, you can get a cut of the profits," I tell him and smack his hand away.

He slouches in his seat like a teenager and sulks the whole way to his dad's shop. The second I pull up, he jumps out like his ass is on fire. It's the fastest he's moved all day. Good. Maybe if I make it miserable for him too, he'll stop coming around.

Glancing at the dessert, I can't help but wonder if Liv likes pound cake. It's Wednesday, which is usually when I walk by her shop to check my post office box. Maybe I could go in and ask her if she'd like a slice.

The thought of her makes my cheeks heat and my shoulders slump. Why would someone as beautiful and charming as her want to settle for a shy nobody like me?

I must like making myself miserable because I turn my truck in that direction.

Chapter Three



 $T_{
m when\ I\ see\ it's\ Sawyer\ strolling\ in.}^{
m he\ small\ bell\ over\ the\ entry\ door\ chimes,\ and\ I\ perk\ up.\ My\ face\ falls$

"You're hard on a man's ego, Liv," Sawyer laughs. I don't think I or anyone could dent Sawyer's ego.

Girls from all around town are constantly chasing the man. I get it. He's charming, down-to-earth, and handsome in a classic kind of way. He's one of the good ones, and thankfully not banging every girl in town. Although it's not for *their* lack of trying.

I've managed to stay out of the Sawyer fan club. He's not hairy or growly enough for me. I suppose we all have our types, though mine is central to one man.

"I think your ego is fine." Too bad mine isn't doing so great.

Bored after making my TikToks this morning, I hopped over to do some busy work, thinking it would make the time pass by quicker. It did, but it was also rather depressing. Not for the shop as a whole but my own shortcomings. Numbers don't lie. Unless I'm standing on a scale, in which case those numbers are bullshit and mean nothing.

The truth is, I've spent more money on the supplies I need to make my creations than I've made. The store is doing well, but my projects are costing us money at this point. It makes me wonder if I should stop. The thought makes my heart heavy because I enjoy making them.

"Is your sister here?" Sawyer asks, running his hand along one of the new benches Lane put out here to showcase our stuff.

"You really do want someone to hurt that ego of yours, don't you?" I laugh.

Sawyer is always poking at her, but my sister doesn't pull any punches. She might be the quiet type, but when she lets loose, everyone better stand back. Lane can land a verbal blow if needed.

"It's good for me." He winks, making me laugh. "So?"

"She popped out, but—" I stop talking when the bell rings again, and my sister comes through the door.

"Why are the What's the Stitch ladies hovering out"—Lane stops when she catches sight of Sawyer—"side," she finishes and rolls her eyes. "Oh, that's why."

What the Stitch is a group of ladies who get together and sew. At least that's their cover for what they do. They've always got needles and supplies, but I've never seen so much as a doily come to full creation.

Obviously, I think they are a group of well-trained spies sent from the government that surreptitiously eavesdrop on us to get the best gossip. I've tried to wiggle my way into the group, but no luck yet. Oh, they'll chat you up to get the tea, but you're not getting into the inner circle.

"Do you always have a fan crew?" Lane sets her bag down on the counter next to me, and I peek inside. Not surprisingly, there isn't anything tasty to eat in there. Lane is one of those healthy dieters. Although she would call it a lifestyle.

One I sure as heck don't understand because I eat terribly and we're still built the same. Lane's food is always plain and kinda sad. I'd be depressed

if that was all I ate. I wonder if I should sneak candy into her food like parents sneak in vegetables. How do you slip a Skittle into something?

"I can't help how adored I am." Sawyer places his hand over his heart.

"This is a cross I must bear."

"They all have bets on who's going to snag you up at the auction. And if you're going to fall on your ass."

"It is a rather nice one, though. Don't you think?" He turns to give us a side view while he looks back at it.

"I have heard them call it Cottonwood's Ass," I tell my sister. The What the Stitch ladies can be on the dirty side when it comes to sexual innuendos.

"Cottonwood's Ass? What does that even mean?" Lane rolls her eyes again. It's a side effect of being near Sawyer.

"You know, like Captain America has America's ass." The Captain's ass isn't bad, but Julius's is better. I'm keeping that to myself because I don't need everyone else paying attention to it.

"The Captain does have a good ass," Lane says with a smirk.

And there it is, my sister hitting Sawyer where it hurts.

"What?" All the teasing leaves Sawyer. "You think his ass is nice?"

"I said good," Lane is quick to correct him, and Sawyer folds his arms over his chest, appearing annoyed. "I need to get to work." She grabs her bag off the counter.

"No food for me?" I ask.

"You're always welcome to my food." Lane starts to pull it out of her bag, but I stop her.

"I'll pass."

"Suit yourself." Lane heads toward the back but pauses at the door. "See you around."

"At the auction!" Sawyer shouts, making sure she can hear him. My sister doesn't respond as the door to the back swings closed behind her. "She's going, right?"

"At least to drop off the pieces she donated."

"You don't think she'll stay?"

"I think you'll be too busy to worry about my sister." I'm not sure if she'll stay to watch or not, but I'm not about to help him out.

"I'm never too busy to irritate your sister."

"You're the main attraction for the auction." Every single woman in our town, and the ones around us, will be there for the chance to have a date with Sawyer.

"Don't remind me." Sawyer runs his fingers through his short hair, appearing frustrated. It's out of character for him.

"You okay?" I ask, but I miss Sawyer's response because the bell chimes over the door and Julius walks in.

My heart jumps into my throat as his brown eyes lock with mine. It's only for a heartbeat before he quickly glances away. Does that mean he doesn't like the pink hair?

"See, why can't she look at me like that?" Sawyer mutters to himself.

"What?" I ask in confusion. To be honest, I kinda forgot he was still here.

"Your whole face just lit up."

"Shh." I hit him, and he chuckles, sounding more like himself. "Maybe you should...ah..." I nod toward the door.

"You Thomas girls really are tough on the ego."

"Get out," I say, not moving my mouth. Julius glances our way, and for a fleeting second his eyes narrow.

"Fine, but—" He kisses me on the cheek, taking me by surprise. "You'll thank me later," Sawyer whispers. "I'll see you, Livvy!" Sawyer says loudly before heading out the door.

Who the hell is Livvy? Never in my life has anyone called me that before.

When I turn my attention back to Julius, his eyes are on me again. Only this time he's not glancing away, and there's an annoyed expression on his face.

It's the hair. He hates it.

Chapter Four



JULIUS

Sawyer fucking Logan. So he's after my girl now? The thought makes my scowl deepen. He can have any woman in town, and it's not enough. I have the urge to chase after him and beat his ass, but I'm not sure Liv would like that. She's got a tender heart and probably hates the sight of blood.

I saw him kiss her cheek, and she didn't seem happy about it. If anything, she looked confused and then agitated. Still, he put his lips on her, and I won't have it. I've been telling myself that I'd work up the courage to ask her out, and I'll be damned if I let him swoop in and take her from me.

"Hi, Julius," Liv says sweetly as she tucks her pretty pink hair behind her ear. It's the color of cotton candy, and I have the urge to touch it and see how soft it feels.

"Liv," I manage to say and then swallow hard. I feel my face start to flush, and I clench my fists. My boots are heavy on the hardwood floors as I walk up to the counter.

"What brings you to the shop today?" She looks over at the shelf and then back at me. "I've got some new candlesticks that match the fruit bowl you bought the other day." "It's pink." I wish I carried around a shovel so I could dig myself a hole and hide in it. Why do I get so tongue-tied around her? I'm not great with people, but I trip over all my words with Liv.

"Yeah." Her smile fades a little as she touches the ends. "I was trying something new, but I don't know if—"

"It's pretty."

"Really?" Suddenly her smile is a million times brighter, and she bounces on her toes.

She must really like compliments. Maybe that's why she likes Sawyer fucking Logan. He's not good enough for her.

"I like pink." Maybe it would be better if I turned around and walked into traffic. Everything about this woman ties me in knots.

"Oh, then I should show you what else I've got." She comes around the counter, and before I know what's happening, she grabs my wrist.

Liv might have lots of soft curves made for a man to hold, but I'm at least a foot taller than her. Hell, I've probably got more than a hundred pounds on her too. But when she tugs my wrist, my feet follow. I'm pretty sure she could pull me around the world and I'd never want to stop.

The touch of her delicate fingers around my wrist feels like being held by a handcuff made of flowers. Glancing down at the sight of it, all kinds of dirty thoughts enter my mind. The first one is of her holding it while I bury my face between her legs. I have to look away or she's going to see how big my dick can get, and then I'll really scare her off.

"What do you think?" She releases my wrist when we get to the shelf in front of the window, and I look down at her hand.

I want to tell her I think she should hold me again, but then I realize she's talking about what she made. I'd noticed the coffee table earlier and knew immediately it was hers. Not because it was pink but because it's got so much love in it. Liv's twin sister Lane makes beautiful furniture and is an excellent woodworker, but they aren't the same.

If someone walked into my old house back in the city, they'd probably say it was boring. It was straight to the point with zero color. Since moving to Cottonwood and seeing Liv's pieces, I've started to change my mind. At first I bought them because I liked her and didn't know how to ask her out. But the more I look at them every day, the more I think about how happy it makes her to put love into them. I get to have a piece of her love with me all the time, and if filling my house with the things she's made gets me one step closer to her, it's a win-win.

"It's beautiful," I tell her, and I mean it. I can see the delicate white flowers along the edge, and I can imagine she took her time to get each one perfect. I bet she even did that cute thing where her tongue pokes out at the corner of her mouth when she concentrates. "Do you deliver?"

"Deliver?"

She looks at the small coffee table and then back to me. Her eyes slowly move up and down my body, and I have to fight not to fidget or get embarrassed. The coffee table is probably the size of my thigh, but I need an excuse to get her to my place.

"I'm, uh, on the way to the post office, and I don't want to leave it in the back of the truck." That might be the most words I've ever strung together in front of her.

"That's a good point. It could rain." We both glance at the sun pouring in.

"I was thinking I don't want anyone to steal it."

"In Cottonwood?" She waves me off like I'm being ridiculous. "I don't think you have to worry about that."

"Or, like you say, rain," I rush to say. "I'll pay double the delivery fee if you can do it today."

Her eyes widen a little, but when she smiles, it's the biggest and brightest I've seen. Even brighter than when she was talking to Sawyer fucking Logan.

"Sure, I can do that. What time?"

Am I imagining she's leaning closer to me?

"Whenever is good." I'll go straight home if I have to.

"Why don't you give me your number and I'll text you when we close up?"

I get out my phone, but before I can do anything, she takes it out of my hand and starts tapping on the screen.

"Here you go." She hands me my phone back, and I see she sent herself a text that's a row of little pink hearts.

I feel myself smiling as I tuck my phone in my back pocket. "Thanks."

"You can text me when you're ready for me to come."

My throat nearly closes when I think about telling her to cum. I cough into my hand and then straighten.

"Any—" I have to clear my throat again. "Anytime is fine."

"Perfect. Let me ring you up." She doesn't really walk, but more like tiptoes back to the register.

After I tap my card, I think about Sawyer fucking Logan kissing her on the cheek. "Will your boyfriend be okay with you coming to my house?"

I don't know what in the fuck possesses me to say it out loud. Maybe it's the jealousy I've been feeling this whole time, but I couldn't hold it in.

Her brows pull together in confusion before they rise up her forehead in shock. "Sawyer isn't my boyfriend. He was here to see my sister."

I nod as I tuck my card back into my wallet. "Good."

That's all I can get out before I turn around and head to my truck. Is it me, or is the sun shining a little bit brighter?

Chapter Five



LIV

I got his number! Not only that, but I'm going over to his place. I can't wait to take a peek inside, unless he doesn't invite me in. Crap, I could just end up dropping it right at his door. I could ask to use the bathroom, but that's not exactly sexy. I don't want him to think about me peeing.

"You okay?" my sister asks. "You're focusing on that phone really hard."

"I'm fine." I hop down off the front desk. Okay, I might not be totally fine, but I got this. Maybe. "I have a delivery." I try to sound super casual.

"As in, you're the one taking it?"

Usually we have people come and pick up their orders, but there have been a few times I asked Sawyer for help. It was for local deliveries only and because Lane and I couldn't handle it alone.

"I am. It's the pink coffee table I made. I think I can do it myself." I'm proud of myself for being so chill, but Lane cocks her head to the side.

"Who bought it?" When heat rushes to my cheek, she gets a knowing look. "Ah, you're blushing. So tell me, how was Julius today?"

Does it count as blushing when it's my entire body that's heating with excitement and desire?

"He's perfect." I let out a dreamy sigh. My sister is well aware of my crush on Julius, but at this point, it's well beyond something so trivial. It might be a bit of an obsession. "I'm going to try and get into his house, so don't wait up for me." Lane laughs like I'm joking, but I'm totally trying to get into his place. One way or another.

"I'm going to stay late tonight. I brought food."

"Are you behind on orders? What can I do?" Guilt hits me. I'm leaving her to work while I go and try to sneak into Julius's house and maybe snag a kiss. Hey, a girl has to dream.

"I'm not behind. I just have a good audiobook I'm listening to, so I might as well keep on working."

"Or you could listen while soaking in a relaxing hot bath," I suggest.

The girl always has to be doing something. Sure, the same could be said about me. I'm always moving around, but I do fun things. Lane will stay locked up in her shop forever, and I wish she would get out more.

"Baths are gross." Lane makes a face.

"You can shower first!" We've had this argument countless times.

My phone dings, and I almost drop it. I know that sound because I programmed it a few hours ago. I gave Julius his own ringtone and text alert sound.

"I'll leave you to your delivery unless you need help carrying the table out."

"I got it."

I unlock the screen to see the text, and I pray he's not canceling on me. Maybe I'll pretend I didn't see the text and just show up. If he's not there, I can take a peek around his place. I have these thoughts, and I know there's something not right with me. But I also know I'll still do it. My control is zero because Lane got it all.

Julius: You still coming by?

I do a little dance when I see he's checking in to make sure I'm still coming. Is there a chance he was worried I wouldn't show up?

Me: Yes!!!

I hit send and follow it up with more pink heart emojis. Crap, I might sound too excited. I should have done one heart and one exclamation mark.

Not wanting to dwell on my texts and overthink them, I grab my bag and close up the front of the shop. After a quick once-over in the mirror, I put on some lip gloss and grab the small table. I carry it through the back, and when Lane sees me coming through, she opens the back door for me.

"Later," she says and kisses me on the cheek.

"Lock the door behind me," I sing-song sarcastically because Lane is always saying that to me. She shakes her head before doing exactly that, and I load the table in the truck.

Once I make sure it won't roll around in the back, I hop into the driver's seat and send Julius a text that I'm headed his way. I'm practically bouncing in my seat at not only getting to see Julius outside of the shop but also his home. I know where he lives but have never driven down the road that leads to his house. It's a private driveway that gets lost out of sight through the thick trees, and he has "no trespassing" signs.

My heart gives an excited flutter when his road comes into sight. I turn down his driveway, following the path that weaves through the trees and then over a cute little bridge with a creek running under it.

The trees open up to reveal the wood cabin, and a small gasp leaves me. It's the cutest A-frame house and not at all what I was expecting. Especially with all the glass in the front. It lets in a full view of the trees and the mountains that surround our town.

Now I'm dying to see the layout and how the view is inside. I put the truck into park as Julius steps onto the porch.

"This is so cool!" I tell him when I hop out.

"Do you like it?" Julius shifts on his feet, and I wonder how he can doubt how awesome it is.

"Like?" I shake my head. "I love it." Julius comes down the porch stairs, and I swear I see a half smile for a second. "I can get it."

"No, I've got it." He beats me to the bed of the truck and damn it, I wanted to carry it in. I curse my short legs for being slow.

"Oh, well. I guess—" Julius cuts me off before I can do my lame goodbye.

"You want to see inside?"

"Really?" I perk up.

"You're welcome to come inside anytime you want."

"Be careful what you wish for," I tease before heading up the stairs. I open the door for Julius even though he's carrying the table with one hand. Clearly, he doesn't need my assistance.

"I'm always careful," Julius says softly as he enters the house with me hot on his heels.

That's funny because the last thing I will ever be called is careful.

When we get inside, he suddenly stops, and I run right into him. I don't get a chance to steady myself, and when my body collides with his, I start to fall backward. Julius moves quickly, and before I know what's happening, he turns around and swoops me into his arms.

The table isn't as lucky, and when it lands, I hear a small crack. Right now, I could care less because I'm in Julius's arms. He's tucked me in close, and when I look up, he's staring down at me.

"Shit, I'm sorry. Are you okay?"

I'm so close to him that I can't help but stare at his mouth.

"This is like a movie," I say and then laugh.

I lean back and let my arms fall behind me to prove my point. It's the exact position people would be in after a song and dance, or when the prince is about to go in for a kiss.

Julius stares at me with his brows pulled together, thoroughly confused. I think it's fair to say I'm not getting the kiss.

Chapter Six



JULIUS

A movie? Does she mean like the one where the woman gets kidnapped and then she's held hostage until she falls in love because if so, yes.

I stare at her mouth, her smile bright, but the longer I look at her, the more it fades. Worried that she doesn't want me touching her, I put her on her feet and quickly step back.

"I'm sorry," I say again, but it's a blanket apology for holding her too long and for breaking her table.

"It's okay, it's not that bad." She kneels down to inspect the table, and I do too.

"How can we fix it?" There's a crack on both the legs, but where it's connected to the table is split. I don't know much about woodworking, but this seems bad.

"Search me." Liv shrugs, and my eyes automatically move down her body. What I wouldn't give to have my hands on her again. "My sister is the one that deals with this kind of stuff. I'm more of the creative type."

When her cheeks flush a pretty pink, I can almost feel the heat of them. I stand up abruptly and take a step back. *Don't get hard. Don't get hard.* Fuck.

"Um, it's late. Why don't I bring it back to the shop tomorrow?" It's an excuse to see her again, but her smile fades as she stands. "Or not," I try again, not sure why she's upset.

"Yeah, that's fine. You can bring it by tomorrow." Her shoulders sag ever so slightly. "I guess I'll get out of your hair."

"Wait!" The word comes out too loud, and Liv flinches. "Sorry," I mumble and shove my sweaty hands in my pockets. "I just, um, didn't want you to leave." Her smile is back, and it does something to the center of my chest. "You should come take a look at your stuff."

When I take another step away from her, she can see more of the living room. The quiet little gasp she lets out makes me wonder if that's the sound she makes when she's excited. I try not to imagine it in my ear while being on top of her.

Fucking shit. Do not get hard.

"I can't believe it." She walks into the living room and touches the lamp she made. "It's kind of magical seeing all my brightly decorated things in your home.

Magical? More like perfect, I think as I watch her walk around. She pokes her head into the kitchen, and I hear her hum appreciatively before picking up the fruit bowl she made.

"So how did you guys come up with the name of the store?" I say after she comes out of the kitchen and starts walking down the hallway toward my bedroom.

Liv is exploring my house, and I can't say I don't love it. Seeing her here within these walls is something I've imagined. It's why I keep buying up everything she makes. I like seeing her things here, but now that she's actually here too, I have a feeling her things won't be enough anymore.

"Our dad." She rolls her eyes, but I can tell from the way she's smiling it's an affectionate annoyance. "He loved to make dad jokes even before he

was a dad. When it came time to name it, he thought it would be hilarious to name it Sofa King Cozy."

"So fucking cozy," I say, and she turns her smile in my direction.

"Not too bad for a furniture store. Is this storage, or—" She stops talking when she pushes the door open, and then she lets out another little gasp.

Goddamn it, do not get hard.

"No." I have to clear my throat and try again. "That's my room."

The room is on the south side of the house and gets a lot of evening sun. Orange light makes the room glow as she steps in, and I kind of forgot how many of her creations I have in here.

"It's beautiful," she tells me as she turns around and takes it all in. "This might be my favorite room in the house. Is it yours?"

I nod because I'm not sure if I can speak. Seeing her fingers trail along the footboard of my bed has me imagining all kinds of dirty things. Mostly her gripping it while I bend her over the edge and take her from behind.

Great. Now I'm hard as fuck. I walk over to the dresser and pretend to do something so I can adjust myself. It's no use, though; my cock was already snug in these jeans before she came over. At this point I'm so goddamn hard there's nowhere else for it to go except to swell down my thigh. Reaching up, I grab a picture off the dresser and put it in front of my crotch.

"Julius?"

When I turn around, the picture is in front of me, and I pretend like this is totally normal. "Yeah?"

"Oh my god." Her eyes widen in shock, and I feel heat flame down my neck. "Is that you as a baby?"

Does she mean the baby's arm in my jeans? I glance down and realize the picture I'm holding is of me as a toddler on a wooden rocking horse. "With a cowboy hat?" She squeals with excitement as she hurries closer, and then to my horror, she bends down to get a closer look.

"Um, Liv," I try to say, but she's not listening to me.

"This is the cutest thing I've ever seen in my entire life."

I close my eyes and once again wish for a shovel so I can dig a hole and bury myself. Maybe imagining her calling my cock cute will get it to go down.

"Look how chubby you are."

Okay, nope. Definitely not going down.

"Can I see it?" Without waiting for me to respond, she goes to take the picture from me.

"Wait, I—" Before I can stop her, she's got the picture out of my hands, and then her eyes land on my crotch. Her eyebrows rise up, up, up her forehead, and then her mouth falls open. "I, um..." I stammer and try to put my hands in front of myself, but it's no use. The problem is going down my leg, and I'd have to use several hands to cover it.

"Is that..." She doesn't finish her sentence before her eyes slowly lift to meet mine.

"You're in my bedroom," I say and then shrug like that explains it.

Yeah, that shovel would be great right about now.

Chapter Seven



LIV

I t's not often I'm left speechless, but right now I'm struggling. Not only with what to say but also making sure it's not wildly inappropriate. Julius would probably hurry me out of the door and never come to my store again.

It's so big, and I'm so small. The more I stare, I swear the bigger it gets. "You're hard," I blurt out. Dang it. I think I went too long without speaking so my brain shot out words.

"You're in my bedroom," he repeats.

My tongue darts out, wetting my bottom lip as desire blooms in my lower belly. Heat settles between my thighs, and I wonder if I could even spread them wide enough to fit him. Hell, he couldn't fit in me so probably not.

"Me being in your bedroom causes what's happening down there?" Is he thinking about us having sex? Now I'm imagining him tossing me onto his massive bed and having his way with me. I'm grateful he can't tell that I'm turned on. Although I can feel my panties getting wet and sticking to me.

My eyes drop to his dick, and the hard outline in his jeans is unmistakable. My fingers itch to reach out and touch it. I want to know just how hard his cock is and what it feels like.

"Ignore it. I'm sorry." Julius runs a frustrated hand through his hair.

"It's not like you can control it, right? It happens." I lean in, wanting to hear whatever he says clearly.

What I really want is for him to say it's all because of me. That he's having filthy thoughts about me that he can't control. That he's lured me out here to have his way with me. God, I really need to lay off the romance books.

"I wouldn't say that," he grumbles under his breath, and I notice his ears are turning slightly red.

"And it's not really something you can ignore, I mean, it's kind of, um, huge."

"Fucking hell." He drops his head and closes his eyes tightly.

"Hey, that's a compliment too, right?" I could be wrong. "At least I think it's huge. I've never seen one in person. Not that I'm asking to see yours!" I rush to add, although I wouldn't exactly stop him.

Julius's eyes pop open, and he's staring at me, not saying a word.

"What I'm saying is, I've seen them on a screen a couple of times. A girl gets curious, you know? I read about it and saw a couple of sneak peeks with the Max subscription my parents had."

I'm rambling, and I don't know how to stop. Julius stares down at me, blinking slowly.

"I think it matches you, you know. It's proportionate."

I stupidly move my hand up and down like I'm one of the girls on *The Price Is Right*, and his dick is the prize. I quickly jerk my hand back, and Julius's brow pulls together, his expression unreadable. The silence is too much for me. I can't stand it, so I keep going.

"But it's like a compliment, right? That I can make it like that." *Do not point at it, Liv. Don't do it.* "You know." Even as I'm telling myself not to do it, I point right at his dick.

"What you're doing right now isn't going to help it go away."

"Right!" I drop my finger and decide to shove both of my hands into my pockets for safety. This is where I should tell him that I'm leaving, but I don't want to. I bite the inside of my cheek so that I don't ask whether it's ever done that around me before or if it's because I'm in his bedroom.

"Do you want a strawberry soda?"

"Strawberry soda is my favorite!" Anything is better than telling me it's time to go, but I really do love it.

"I know." Julius steps past me and walks out of the bedroom.

"How do you know?" I follow behind him, and my eyes linger on his backside. It totally beats Captain America's ass. Sorry, Steve Rogers, you'll have to be second. America's Ass vice president.

"You get it at the diner," he says.

"I only let myself get it there. If I keep it in the house, I'll drink all of it."

"You can drink all of it. I'll get more." He opens the fridge to reveal two straight rows of strawberry soda. They all face forward, each soda can in the same position.

His fridge is packed full and perfectly organized. It reminds me of one of those videos where the people unload their groceries and line all the items up inside.

"I should have known," I laugh, snagging one of the sodas.

"That I'd buy you more?" That's sweet, but I think Julius is only being polite.

"That your fridge would be so organized. It's very you." I pop the top of the soda and take a sip. Julius glances inside the fridge and then back to me.

"You don't like it?"

"What? I didn't say that. I actually kind of love it. I could never keep it up because I cram everything in. But I do love watching organization videos. It gives me hope that maybe one day I'll get to it." "I could come organize your fridge," he offers. How does everything he says make me want to melt?

"You'd really do that, wouldn't you?"

"If you asked."

"As opposed to breaking in and doing it." I laugh. "That would be kind of funny. Someone breaks into your house to clean."

"I've never seen the organizing videos, but I like watching yours."

Whoa. He watches my videos? Honestly, I didn't think Julius would have TikTok. "You watch them?" I suddenly feel shy.

"Are you hungry?" he asks, and my shoulders drop.

"You don't want to answer my question?" I'm not letting him out of it now.

"I'll answer anything you like, but I thought I might do it while I make dinner." Is he asking me to stay or subtly suggesting that I should leave? Rather than dwelling on my own thoughts, I resolve to simply inquire.

"Are you inviting me to stay for dinner to be polite, or are you bringing up dinner to let me know it's time for me to hit the road?" I put it out there so now I have to deal with the consequences.

"I want you to stay." He's so matter-of-fact when he says it.

"Really?!" I can't hide my excitement.

"You can have dinner here every night if you want," he offers, and I laugh, thinking it's a joke. His face remains serious.

"I'd love to have dinner with you." A smile forms on Julius's handsome face. "I could help if you want. I'm more of a baker, but I can try."

"You can sit."

I don't get the chance to sit down before Julius lifts me by my hips and places me on the kitchen island.

"I guess I'll just sit here and be pretty."

"Gorgeous," Julius corrects before turning to grab items from the fridge. He thinks I'm gorgeous? Hmm, I suppose I did make him hard.

"So." I smirk when he turns back to face me, his hands full of items. "You watch my TikToks?"

What are the chances I could get him to do one with me? Scratch that. No way I'm sharing Julius. Right now, he's all mine.

Chapter Eight



JULIUS

I don't know why I thought having her in any other room in the house would make me any less horny. Wishful thinking, I guess. Turns out that I can picture fucking Liv on every surface in my home and not just the flat ones. When I showed her where the bathroom was, the shower wall caught my attention.

After making fajitas for dinner, Liv insisted on helping me wash the dishes. I tried to say no, but she used her hip to bump me out of the way, and I decided to shut my mouth. Instead, I stayed right beside her and dried everything.

One thing I love about being near her is that I don't feel awkward about being quiet. She doesn't make me rush to fill in the silence or say something for no reason. Liv seems perfectly content to do the talking, and when she asks me a question, I answer it. I love hearing her tell stories about growing up with a twin and all the times they tried to trade places, but their parents always caught them. The sound of her voice is soothing, and the more she talks, the more I want her to keep talking.

We moved to the living room after dinner, and I lit the fireplace. It's not really necessary this time of year, but she seemed to like the idea when I

suggested it.

"So I don't know how much longer I can justify doing my stuff. I want to contribute, but maybe it's time to call it quits."

When she talks about her art, she gets a passion in her eyes that makes me want to buy her a craft store. Now she's telling me that she's thinking of giving it up because it's not worth it? Fuck that.

"I understand wanting to pull your weight," I say and lean closer. "But I'll buy ten airplane hangars and make you fill them with your pieces before I let you quit."

Her laughter settles in my chest, and it's like I can feel her happiness. "That might be the sweetest thing you've ever said to me."

Heat rushes up my neck, and although I have the urge to tuck my chin or back away shyly, I don't. Instead I hold her gaze and don't move an inch. The thought of Liv not giving her gift to the world makes me so damn mad. Sure, she's not for everyone, and that's fine by me. I'm willing to admit I'm greedy for her to only be for me, but if someone can't appreciate a little whimsy, then fuck them.

"I'd say sweet things to you all the time," I tell her, and her eyes meet mine. "If you'd let me."

I don't know where the words come from, but they are out of my mouth before I can take them back. That's the thing about Liv: I don't have a choice when I'm near her. My brain and my body disconnect, and I'm nothing but urges and need.

"Would you?" She's serious as she glances at my mouth. Ever so slightly, she leans closer, and the distance between us begins to shrink.

I cup her cheek with my hand and push my thumb under her chin so she tilts her head back. "If you don't like kissing me, I can get better."

She licks her lips, and I see uncertainty in her eyes. "Why wouldn't I like kissing you?"

"I've never done it before." I wish I wasn't so damn inexperienced, but my shyness has kept me from a lot of things in life. When Sawyer fucking Logan put his lips on her cheek, I was filled with jealousy and rage. I wanted to be the one doing that to her, and I think that's when I realized if I don't, someone else will. "I promise I'll keep working to get it right."

There's a playfulness in her grin as she puts her hand on my chest. "I guess there's only one way to find out."

I keep my hand on her cheek as the other goes around her waist and I pull her to me. When our lips connect, it's unlike anything I could have imagined. Her lips are so fucking soft and sweet, and when she parts them and lets me taste her, I groan for more.

Hot need ignites in my veins, and I can't get her close enough. Without realizing what I'm doing, I've pulled her into my lap so she can straddle me. My cock is harder than it has been all night and straining against my pants. I can feel how hot she is when she sits down on it and I almost cum.

"Fuck." I pull back, and her eyes pop open.

"What's wrong?" She's panting like she's out of breath, and I realize I am too.

When was the last time I gave my brain oxygen? "Nothing." I shake my head to try and clear the fog of lust between us, but it's no use. "Trying to, um..." I swallow and then take a deep breath. "Go slow."

Her smile is teasing as she grips my shoulders and scoots forward. The motion feels like she's rocking against my dick, and I have to squeeze my eyes shut. My head falls back on the couch, and I pray for mercy.

Do not cum.

"What was that?" she says, and when I open my eyes, I realize I must have said that out loud.

"Nothing." My hands go to her waist and then around to her ass. I make her fit snug against me, and she lets out the breathiest little gasp. "Will you let me kiss you again?" "You can kiss me as much as you want." Her pretty blush goes all the way down her neck, and I wonder where else she'd let me put my mouth.

This kiss is needier than before, and I can feel her hands exploring me while I taste her. I can't get over how soft her lips are and how good it feels to have them on me. The kiss builds and builds, and then she starts moving her hips.

Every time she rocks forward, I push up, and pretty soon we're humping against one another without breaking the kiss. My hands have a mind of their own, and I don't realize I'm pulling the cups of her bra down until she whimpers against my mouth.

"Let me touch you," I whisper against her lips. Liv whimpers again as I gently pinch her nipple and her breath catches in her throat.

I'm about to ask her if I can taste them when there's a pounding on my door. Liv immediately stops moving, but my hold on her is too tight for her to jump off my lap.

"They'll go away," I tell her, not giving a fuck who it is.

"Julius, I know you're in there."

I close my eyes and rest my forehead against hers. "It's my idiot cousin."

"Should I go?" She bites her bottom lip, and I can see her indecision.

"No!" It comes out a little louder than I intended, but I'm not ready for this night to end. "Sorry, let me get rid of him and then we can get back to this."

I give her a quick kiss before reluctantly lifting her off me. When I stand up, I'm so fucking hard it's obscene, so I grab a magazine off the table by the door and put it in front of my crotch. I jerk open the door just enough to see my cousin Troy standing there.

"What?" I snap because I'm out of patience.

"You don't know how to answer your phone?" He waves his hand in front of me, and I realize I don't even know where my phone is. I haven't

thought about it since Liv arrived. "I tried calling you a dozen times. There's an emergency down at the old folks' home. Someone blew the power box, and they need it fixed tonight."

My shoulders sag with disappointment. I signed up on the city's registry for volunteer emergency services. At the time I didn't imagine getting a call while Liv was grinding on my cock.

"Give me five minutes," I tell him, but then Logan tries to come inside. "Wait in the truck."

"Why?" He looks around and then sees Liv's truck next to mine. "Oh shit, is she here?"

I slam the door in his face before I turn around and look at the woman of my dreams. She's on my couch in front of the firelight with freshly kissed lips.

It's my literal fantasy come to life, and somehow I have to walk away from it.

Chapter Nine



LIV

My eyes keep wandering from the pages of my book over to where my phone is sitting on the coffee table. I haven't been home long, so I don't know why I think Julius would be texting me already. He'd asked me to let him know when I got home and was safely inside, which I did. His only response was when he put a heart on the text letting me know he got it. I mean, that's way better than a thumbs up.

I toss my book on the table beside my phone and grab the remote. Almost as soon as I turn the television on, I turn it off. I can't even pretend to concentrate on something else right now. I'm tempted to play one of those fake fires on the screen, but I know it won't be the same as the one with Julius.

My sister and I live in an apartment over a set of offices near the center of town. The place is new and modern but on the smaller side. The walls are brick, and as much as I love being able to peek out the window and see everything in our little town or walk to a lot of places, it doesn't beat the view Julius has. This apartment feels cold compared to his place. It would be a dream to wake up in that house every morning. Especially with Julius beside me.

At one point we had a working fireplace, but my sister sealed it off and placed a set of candles inside. She didn't say it out loud, but I know she closed it off because of me. She doesn't trust me with fire after my one small accident. She's never going to let me live that down.

Unable to sit still or stand the silence any longer, I put on music and make my way to the kitchen. Julius made me a yummy dinner tonight, so the least I can do is make him dessert. Especially since I was hoping I'd end up being the dessert tonight. With how things quickly progressed on the couch, I was sure that's where we were headed.

Would he think it was weird if I showed up and dropped it off? He might ask me to come inside so we could finish what we started. My body is still humming with need and desire. I brush my fingers across my lips, remembering the feel of his pressed to mine. Julius is a big man with rough hands, but his kisses had been sweet and soft.

The man is working hard right now. Surely he could use something sweet when he gets home. Then we can practice kissing more since apparently it's new to both of us. At the thought, I do a happy dance. I still can't believe Julius has never been kissed before.

After checking for ingredients, I decide on a chocolate cake. It's quick, and people always love it. Once I start, I get out my phone and record myself making it. While it's cooling, I post the video and then change into my favorite summer dress. It's lavender and has small white flowers on it. I love the way it flares out when I spin. Plus, it's got pockets.

I'm in my room when my phone chimes, and I make a mad dash for it. Not paying attention, I miss the apron that must have fallen off the chair, and my foot gets caught. I let out a small scream before hitting the ground, and then I yelp in pain. My elbow took the brunt of the fall, and I groan.

"Why do they call it the funny bone?" I hold on to it as my phone chimes again.

Slowly, I make my way to my feet and grab it. When I see several pictures from my sister, my shoulders sag. She's crafting a table, and I asked her to send me pictures so I could use them for social media.

My elbow throbs the whole time I put icing on the cake, but when it's done, I carry it out to my truck. Once I'm inside, I debate if this is a stupid idea. He hasn't texted me anything else, but I tell myself I can leave it on his porch if he's still not back.

Before I can talk myself out of it, I head in the direction of his home. When I pull up, I see Troy digging through the trunk of his car. I know he works with Julius, and I figured that's who knocked on the door earlier.

He was older than me in school, and we never spent much time together. But when you live in a small town like Cottonwood, everyone knows each other to a degree.

"Hey," I say when I hop out of my truck.

"Liv." Troy slams his trunk and gives me one of his smooth half-smirks.

I ignore it and grab the cake from the passenger seat.

"You're not still working with Julius?" I ask, but clearly his truck is still gone.

"What do you got there?" Troy skips right over my question as he stares at the container in my hands.

"I made Julius a cake."

"Damn, Liv." Troy shakes his head. "Are you really into my cousin?"

"He's sweet." Why wouldn't someone be into him? I find it hard to believe a girl hasn't already scooped him up.

"I wouldn't say that," Troy huffs, and I shift on my feet. His expression is one of pity. "I know I shouldn't rat my cousin out, but you can't really be buying into his nice guy act. Because that's all it is." I shake my head, not believing him, but he rolls his eyes. "Liv, I'm telling you. This morning he was talking about looking at your tits on TikTok."

"That he liked them?" Wait, no, bad Liv. Obviously, I don't want him talking about my boobs with other people. But the thought of him liking them isn't so bad.

"I mean, we can all see they're pretty good."

"Thanks, I think," I murmur. This conversation is veering off course and becoming strange. "But he's still working, right?" I should leave the cake on the porch and get the hell out of here before this gets weirder.

"I hate to be the one to tell you this, but he texted me to show up and say he was needed at work. I was late getting the message, so it took me a little while to get out here."

Oh god. Is this like when you're on a date and you have a friend call with an emergency?

"Like I said, sorry to have to tell you. I didn't know it was you he was with this time."

"This time?" I whisper mostly to myself, but Troy nods.

"Yeah, it's kind of his thing."

"I should go." Tears sting my eyes, and I shove the cake toward Troy. It almost falls, but he manages to grab it in time.

"Shit, Liv, wait," he calls after me, but I ignore him. I've got to get the hell out of here as quickly as possible.

Chapter Ten



JULIUS

I t was so damn late last night by the time I got home I never texted Liv. I wanted to—hell, I even started to type out a message, but then I worried about waking her up. Once I knew she got home safe, I focused on working and kept at it until it was fixed.

The old folks' home can't operate without electricity, and when the box blew, so did their backup generator. When I got there, it was a mess, and I ended up calling emergency services. Between helping the nurses and first responders, hours went by before I could get in there and actually fix the problem. After I replaced the old, outdated box, I fixed the generator free of charge. Seeing how necessary it was, I knew they didn't need to be in a position like that again.

When my alarm went off, I'd only gotten about an hour or two of sleep, and I must have hit snooze by mistake. The second time it went off, I had to hit the ground running to get ready. I had just enough time to swing by and get Troy before my first appointment of the day.

I'd scheduled several appointments today not knowing I'd be up all night working, but it was too late to cancel.

"I'm starving," Troy complains as we load up the truck.

We've been at the insurance office downtown for the past couple of hours. They wanted some extra outlets installed, but I swear the longer we were there, the more they kept adding work. It's not that I minded doing it, but I'm running on empty and still haven't gotten a chance to text Liv.

"Yeah," I say, glancing at the diner. It would be good to take a break and talk to her. "Let's eat."

We walk to the diner, and I can see Sofa King Cozy nearby. I'd love to go in there and see her face to face, but I don't want Troy with me. He's an asshole, and today my fuse is shorter than usual. If he starts popping off at the mouth about Liv and her tits, I'm liable to choke the life out of him.

Troy says hey to the waitress when we walk in and grab a booth. She hurries over and is extra bubbly, but she's probably directing it at him. He's the one looking at her like he's never seen a woman before.

"If I didn't know any better, I'd think you were ignoring me," she says, and I glance up, seeing she was in fact directing her attention in my direction.

Troy grumbles something under his breath about being invisible.

"And for you, Julius? I bet I've got something you'd like." She leans closer, and the front of her uniform parts. If I didn't look away in time, I'd probably have gotten an eyeful of her cleavage.

I rattle off my order quickly then take out my phone so I have an excuse not to look at her. A second later she's gone, and Troy is sulking.

"It's like you don't even give a shit." He stuffs the menu back in the holder like a child.

I reach over and straighten it before I pick up my phone again. I want to text Liv, but I'm trying to think of the perfect thing to say.

"Pussy just landing in your lap left and right and you don't care."

Okay, I think I should start with an apology, but if I say I miss her, will that be too much too fast? Maybe I should keep it simple for now. Just breaking the ice.

"Now I'm glad I ate that chocolate cake."

I have no idea what he's talking about, but I type a message and text it to Liv.

Me: Sorry about last night. Thanks for the delivery.

Maybe I should have said something flirty? I didn't want her to think I'm a creep. I'm staring at the screen when I see bubbles pop up like she's typing. It makes my heart jump in my throat, and I realize just how much I've missed her.

How can I feel so strongly about someone in such a short amount of time? Maybe it's because I've never felt this way about anyone so I know she's special.

"Here's your drinks." The waitress places them in front of us, and I look up to thank her. It's a mistake because she's bending down again.

Suddenly my drink becomes very interesting, and I concentrate on counting the ice cubes.

"Don't waste your time," Troy tells her, and the waitress scowls at him before she walks away. "Why are bitches sweating over you and not me?"

"Probably because you call them bitches," I say, and he huffs.

When I see Liv still hasn't responded and the bubbles are gone, my heart sinks. I haven't had a chance to check her TikTok yet, so I go over to look at it. She's the only account I follow, so it's easy to find her most recent one.

My brows pull together when I see it was posted last night. She's baking a chocolate cake, and the caption says, *Late-night special delivery!* Something sweet for someone sweet.

Late-night special delivery? Something sweet for someone sweet? The words roll around in my head, and I'm wondering why she was making a cake so late. And why was she going out when she told me she was home safe?

"Maybe I'll get a slice of pie," Troy says while he scrolls his phone. "I ate so much chocolate cake last night, I need a taste of something else."

The waitress comes back, but I'm so hung up on what Troy is saying that when she leans over to put my food in front of me, I'm nearly blinded by her cleavage.

A loud crash has all of us turning to the front of the diner. That's when I see Liv standing at the entrance of the diner a second before she takes off running across the street.

"Shit," I whisper because she must have seen what happened.

"Guess the golden boy isn't so golden." Troy smirks before he takes a giant bite of his burger.

Chapter Eleven



LIV

I will not cry. I will not cry. I repeat the mantra as I make my way back to the shop. It's too bad I'm still starving, because there's no way I'm going back to the diner. I doubt I'll step foot inside that place again. If the memory of seeing Julius's face deep in Lola's breasts wasn't enough, when I stumbled back from shock, I managed to knock over a display rack in the process. When it crashed to the floor, everyone turned and witnessed my humiliation.

Why would someone put a display right when you walk in the door? Sure, it's convenient and has been there for years, but that's not the point right now!

"Whoa," my sister says when I come bursting back into the shop. "Are you—" She trails off when she sees my face. "Who made you cry?"

"I'm not crying." I touch my cheeks to verify.

"You're about to burst."

She's right, I am. There is a weird pressure in my chest that wants to explode, but I'm scared that if I let it out, I'll never stop. Why did I ever let myself fall for Julius? I should have known his handsome face and growly nature were going to be nothing but heartbreak.

"I ran into the display and made a mess," I sniffle.

"That's not it." Lane shakes her head. She's not buying my excuse. "I've seen you fall on your face and laugh right along with everyone else."

This is true. I'm not one to embarrass easily, but this time was different. "Julius isn't who I thought he was."

Lane's face softens. She knows how deep my crush on him goes and has busted me doodling his name more than a few times when I'm bored.

"Don't move," she orders.

I watch as she goes over and turns the sign on the door to closed before locking it. Lane even pulls the curtains shut so no one can see into the shop.

"What are you doing?"

"We are long overdue for sister time." Lane gives me a warm smile.

"Really?" I perk up. Since we took over this place together and her orders exploded, Lane lives and breathes work.

"Yes, really. I think I've missed a couple of things, and I need to be filled in." It's not normal that she doesn't already know every detail of what happened last night.

"Will you make spring rolls?" I might as well milk it.

We both freeze when we hear the door handle wiggle like someone is trying to enter the shop. I grab Lane by the wrist, and we duck behind the counter.

"Why are we hiding?" she whispers.

"It could be Julius." Would he chase after me? Doubtful, but either way I don't want to know who is at the door. Of course I want him to chase me; what girl doesn't want that? But if it's not him, the disappointment will sting, so it's best not to know at all.

"Maybe I should have a word with him." Lane starts to stand, but I jerk her back down.

"No!" I hiss. "It might not be him. He probably still has his face buried in Lola's boobs."

"Lola's boobs?" Lane's eyebrows rise.

"Not that I can blame him. They are nice, but he was kissing *me* last night."

"You two kissed!" she says way too loudly.

"Shh!" I glare at her to shut the heck up, and she mouths a *sorry*. The person starts knocking.

"Liv?" I hear Julius call out.

My bottom lip starts to tremble. It is him! Last night I told myself maybe Troy was full of crap and that I should talk to Julius. That was my plan until I saw his truck outside the diner.

"It's okay," Lane whispers into my ear before wrapping her arms around me in a hug.

I'm not sure how long we're like that, but after a while, Lane checks to make sure the coast is clear. When she doesn't see anyone waiting for us outside, we leave the shop and then head home.

"I'd take everything Troy has to say with a grain of salt," Lane says as she makes the spring rolls. As soon as we got home, I unloaded about what happened last night and at the diner.

"I was thinking that too until the diner stuff, and look at this lame text!" I show it to her and Lane cringes.

"That is pretty bad after the whole make-out session."

"Right." I plop down in one of the chairs at the kitchen island that doubles as our dining room. We actually have a small table we can eat on, but I use it for painting or filming TikToks.

"Well, we can have spring rolls and do whatever you want tonight."

"Really?" I cast her a skeptical look.

"One TikTok," she amends, and I clap my hands together.

"Oh gosh! What if you record one as me? I wonder if people would notice. I've seen other twins swap and try to trick their kids. Those are always fun to watch."

"Did it work?" Now it's Lane who has the skeptical expression. Back in the day, we might have been able to trick a few teachers and a couple of friends, but never family.

"I haven't seen one where it works. Even when the kids are super young."

"But the hair," she points out. Oh crap. I hadn't thought about that.

"Wear a hat."

"Fine. If it's going to cheer you up, I'll do it."

It's not going to cheer me up, but it'll be fun and distract me from thoughts of Julius.

Once I get the idea together, we record it. Then it takes me twice as long to edit it before uploading.

"Anyone said anything yet?" Lane asks, settling down on the couch beside me. We just finished destroying the spring rolls.

"Nope, but I only just posted it." I open my phone to check but pause when a text comes in from Julius. I swipe at the notification to clear it off my screen.

"You're not going to read it?"

"No." My mind goes straight to Julius and our kisses. "Do you think he was lying about never kissing someone before?"

"I don't know him, but from what I've heard, most men lie. Especially to get into your pants."

"Right," I whisper. It's not as though Lane has a dating past to relate it to.

"Come on, Liv, let's have some fun." Lane pops up from the couch. "It's ladies' night, right?"

"At Dixon's?"

"The one and only." It's also the one and only bar in our town. They serve food too, but at night, it turns more into a bar atmosphere. People will clear out some of the tables so everyone can dance.

"You want to go to Dixon's?"

"I want to cheer my baby sister up."

"Two minutes." I hold up two fingers and wiggle them. I'll never live down that she was born first.

"Still makes me older." Lane holds her hand out for me to take.

"I don't know." I do enjoy going out, but tonight I kind of want to wallow in it.

"I'll let you dress me up and do my hair." Oh snap. She is laying it on thick. "This offer is expiring in—" I grab her hand, and she pulls me to my feet. "That's what I thought."

"Don't get cocky. Remember, you said I could dress you up," I warn with an evil smirk.

"Liv." Lane's expression turns panicked.

"I'm teasing," I laugh and tug her toward my bedroom. "Come on."

I don't do anything too wild because I want Lane to have fun. It's not often we go out to Dixon's, so I let her keep her jeans and boots. I manage to put her in a frilly top that's snug and gives a hint of cleavage. As for me, I put on a dress and a pair of flats before touching up my light makeup and putting some on my sister too.

When we're outside Dixon's, I spin around. "Come here, take a picture with me." Lane leans in close, and I make sure to get Dixon's sign in the back before I snap it. Lane doesn't ask to see it. She does zero with social media and could care less. I post it, then tuck my phone in my purse before we enter the bar.

"Uh-oh, the What's the Stitch ladies are here." They are always a good time, even to watch from a distance. "And karaoke!" I squeal. My sister closes her eyes and takes a breath.

"I'm going to need a drink."

"That wasn't a no!" I loop my arm through hers to pull her toward the bar to get her drink.

"Hey, Liv." Marco the bartender gives me a nod before his attention swings over to my sister. "Sawyer know you're here?"

"Why would that matter?" Lane's brows pull together.

If Sawyer doesn't know, I'm sure he'll figure it out soon enough. Between the way this town can gossip and my social media posts, he'll know.

"If you say so," Marco chuckles. "What can I get you ladies?"

"The other day I saw a TikTok with people drinking espresso martinis," I tell him. I'm not a coffee fan, but they looked neat. Marco gives me a blank stare. "Okay, two vodka cranberries then."

"Coming right up." He taps the bar top twice before turning to make them.

"As if Swayer cares what I'm up to," Lane mutters under her breath, but I catch it.

Oh, he cares, and he's not the only one.

Chapter Twelve



JULIUS

My fists clench at my sides, and I stand there trying to figure out what to do next. I could set fire to Dixon's, and then it wouldn't be a problem. Although I could get arrested for arson. To be fair, if that man looks at Liv for one more second, I'm going to kill him. So I'll end up getting arrested anyway.

I went after her the second she left the diner, but when she was on the way out, she toppled the display, and people had crowded around to clean it up. It took me a second to get past them, and by the time I made it across the street, the blinds were shut tight and the door was locked. I know she was in there because I heard Lane.

The fact that Liv wouldn't hear me out broke my heart, but watching her now, I can understand. I'm having irrational thoughts about calling in a bomb threat because someone is looking at her. I can't say I would have been as clear-headed if I saw something that might have been completely innocent.

I tried texting her earlier, but she didn't respond. Then I was confused because Lane was pretending to be her on a video, and I texted her again.

She didn't answer me either time, and I should have probably taken the hint. But as soon as I saw her standing outside of Dixon's, I got in my truck.

"Well, look who showed up," someone says from behind me, and I turn around to see it's Troy.

"Mind your own fucking business." I'm not in the mood for his shit.

"Aw, come on, cuz, don't be like that." He tries to put his arm around my shoulder, and I shrug him off. He's drunk, but that won't stop me from kicking his ass. "Are you mad your girl made me a cake?"

I wish he wasn't right. I wish Liv was my girl, but I was a coward and let her slip through my fingers. A smarter man would take her silence as her answer, but I'm here to apologize. She might have feelings for Troy or someone else in this town, but I saw the hurt in her eyes before she ran out of the diner. I know that she didn't like what she saw, and I want to set the record straight.

Ignoring Troy, I go over to the bar where Liv and Lane just sat back down. They were on the dance floor earlier, and the sight of her swaying her hips almost brought me to my knees.

When I get close, I can hear her laughter, but as soon as she looks up and sees me standing next to her, she sobers. My heart squeezes in my chest, and I hate that I've caused her smile to falter even for a second.

"Well, hey there, Julius. Nice of you to drop by," Lane says, and Liv cuts her eyes at her. "Why don't I give you guys some privacy while I run to the bathroom."

"Lane," Liv hisses at her twin, but it's too late. Her sister has run off and left her with me.

"Liv," I say and then feel my words get stuck in my throat.

"All out of boobs?" she blurts out and then shakes her head. It's clear she's had a few cocktails already, and I look at the bartender.

He raises his hands like he tried to stop her before he moves to take another order.

"I mean, you can't find boobs to put your face in?"

My eyes go to the front of her dress, and I decide that being shy has held me back my whole life. It's stood in the way of me really living, and I'm not about to let it hold me back from claiming Liv.

"The only tits I want in my face are yours," I tell her and then bend down so we're eye to eye. "It's my fault for letting you think another woman on this planet could compare to you, but I won't make that mistake again."

"Julius." She says my name softly, but I'm so close I hear it. She licks her lips, and I don't miss the way she looks at my mouth.

"What happened in the diner wasn't what it looked like, but you thinking I could so easily be tempted is on me. I didn't make it clear from day one how goddamn bad I wanted you. How long I've been working up the courage to make you mine, and how I'll try for the rest of my life to be the man of your dreams."

"Holy shit," she whispers like she can't believe what I'm saying.

"For whatever reason, you like Troy enough to bake a chocolate cake especially for him, but I swear to you, I'll show you I'm worth that effort too."

Her expression changes to one of confusion. "Wait, what?"

"I saw your TikToks." It's funny that this confession is the one that makes me blush. "I saw you made a chocolate cake, and he said you gave it to him." I shrug it off because I don't like thinking about her being sweet on him. "And why did your sister pretend to be you in the video you posted today?"

"You knew that was me?" She seems pleased.

"Of course I did. I'd know you anywhere, Liv. There could be a room full of a thousand people with no lights on and I'd still know it was you."

"That sounds kind of scary actually." She hiccups and tilts a little on her seat.

On instinct I reach out and put my hand on her waist to keep her from falling. "Easy there, darling."

She looks up at me through her lashes, and I feel that heat in my chest like the first time we kissed.

"I didn't make that cake for Troy." She places her hand over my heart and I'm willing to bet she can feel it hammering.

"You didn't?"

She shakes her head, and I lean in closer. "I baked it for you." Her smile is sweet, and I feel her fingers playing with the button on my shirt. "I wanted to give you something sweet. Maybe talk you into letting me back in."

"Can you give me a second?" I tell her but don't move an inch.

"Why? What's wrong?"

"I just need to go kill my cousin real fast."

Her laughter is music to my ears as she grabs my shirt and pulls me closer. "Later."

"Later," I agree before I press my lips to hers.

Chapter Thirteen



I t's so easy to get lost in Julius's kisses because I don't think there is anything better than them. My body melts into his, and it's not until I hear a few catcalls that I'm pulling back.

I forgot we're in the middle of a bar for the whole town to see. How had that slipped my mind? Julius glares at everyone, and the sight of his annoyance makes me laugh.

"Hey, big guy." I tug on his shirt to get his attention, and Julius gives it to me without hesitation. "They're only teasing," I reassure him. "It's part of being in a small town." I wiggle my finger for him to come down closer so I can whisper into his ear.

Instead, his hands go to my hips, and he lifts me right off my feet. In this position, we're at eye level. My hands go to his shoulders to hold on. Not because I think he's going to drop me, but I rather enjoy having the excuse to touch him.

"This is a lovely view." A giggle bubbles out of me, and I glance around to see everyone from up here.

"What were you going to tell me?"

"Oh, right." I lick my lips. "Now that everyone saw us kissing, they know you're mine. Even Lola's boobs."

"I wasn't staring at her tits." A touch of pink lights up his cheeks. "I only want you."

"I should have asked you." And I never should have trusted Troy. "I'm new to this dating stuff, and I've been crushing on you for a long time." I let out a sigh, and Julius's eyes soften. "Also, I think I might be in love with you." My hand flies over my mouth. Why did I admit that?! I'm going to scare him off, but maybe I can blame the cocktails.

When Julius tries to speak, I cover his mouth too. I feel him smile behind it.

"Don't respond to that, okay? We're going to pretend I didn't say it," I tell him. "Nod if you understand." His body shakes with silent laughter, but he nods his head.

I let my hand fall away from his mouth, and he smiles at me. "We'll talk about it later."

"So you two make up?" My sister pops up out of nowhere.

"You left me," I accuse. I'm more teasing her than anything.

"I think it worked out for the best."

"I suppose." I wiggle, and Julius puts me back onto my feet. "I forgot I told my sister we'd have a girls' night."

"Actually, I think I'm going to head out. You two stay."

"It's late," Julius says before I can respond to my sister. "We should take you home."

Aw! He's worried about my sister. I never should have listened to stupid Troy. Oh, I'll be getting him back one way or another.

"I'll be fine." Lane grabs her purse off the chair.

"I'll walk her."

The voice comes from behind us, and I turn to see Sawyer standing there.

"Where did you come from?" I ask.

He's so damn tall I don't know how I could have missed him. I should have spotted him the second he walked in the door, but Julius stole all my attention.

"I'm always around." Sawyer shrugs, and I don't miss how his eyes move up and down my sister. I think he might be admiring my handiwork.

"I've noticed," Julius grunts, and his words hang in the air. I look between the two men, wondering what I missed.

"I'm going home with Julius," I announce using my liquid courage.
"Right?" I turn my head to peek up at him. "I can go home with you?"

"Always." I can't help the giant smile that overtakes my face. I won't be shocked if my cheeks hurt tomorrow. "I've got their tab." Julius pulls out his wallet, dropping a hundred onto the bar.

"I can cover Lane's drinks." Sawyer goes for his wallet, tossing his hundred right on top of the other.

"Hey," my sister cuts in. "I can pay for my drinks."

Lane sways on her feet, and I realize we've both had more drinks than we're used to. Sawyer is there to wrap an arm around her waist to keep her steady.

"I've got mine. You got yours?" Sawyer directs his question at Julius.

"Yours?" Julius asks, and Sawyer gives him a firm nod.

"Wait, yours?" Lane's brow pulls together. "Are you talking about me?"

"Let's go, kitten." Sawyer doesn't answer her question as he guides Lane toward the door. I can see her snipping at him, but she doesn't pull away.

She can try and fight it, but I know there's something there. Something she's not willing to admit.

"Sawyer likes your sister?"

"I think so." I turn to face Julius. "I guess seeing him kiss me on the cheek bothered you the same way Lola putting her boobs in your face

bothered me."

His whole body tenses. "I didn't want to—"

"I know." I run my hands up his chest, pressing myself against him. "Are we getting out of here?" I wiggle my brows at him. "Maybe I'll show you my boobs."

"Liv." Julius lets out a low groan. It's then I notice something very hard pressed to my stomach.

"Are you—"

"We're leaving." He tangles his fingers with mine and pulls me toward the entrance. People move quickly to get out of his way, and I have to fight not to laugh.

"I've never left a bar with a man before," I tell him when we're almost to his truck.

"You don't need to leave the bar with other men."

"Because I've already got one?"

"You've always had me, Liv." Julius opens the truck door and lifts me into the passenger seat. He reaches over and pulls on my seatbelt, and I place my hands on his cheeks, stopping him.

I press my lips to his and then swipe my tongue along his bottom lip. The touch elicits another low groan, and it sends a hot shiver down my spine.

"I love when you make that groaning sound. It makes me feel sexy and like you can't control yourself."

"I can't control myself. That's the reason I ended up at Dixon's." My gentle giant kisses the tip of my nose before closing the door.

"Are we going to share a bed?" I ask when we're almost to Julius's home. The world tilts a little, but maybe that was me. I'm tipsy.

"I can take the couch," he offers.

"And I get your giant bed all to myself?"

"If that's what you want." His gaze slides to me for a moment before returning to the road.

"I want to find out if I'm a cuddler. I bet I am. I have a few childhood stuffies I haven't let go of yet, but I think I could replace them with you. Are you a cuddler?"

"No." He rolls to a stop in front of his cabin.

"Oh." I huff out a breath. That sucks because I think I could sleep on top of him.

"I mean, I don't know. I've never cuddled before."

"Really?" I unclip my seat belt and crawl over into his lap. "I bet I could turn you into a cuddler."

"Liv, you could get me to do just about anything," he admits, and then I feel his hands gripping my hips.

"Just about anything?" I tease.

Julius leans in, his expression serious, more serious than I've ever seen him before.

"Except let you go." There is a hint of a warning in his tone, but to me it sounds like a promise.

Chapter Fourteen



JULIUS

I t turns out I absolutely fucking love to cuddle. Maybe it's Liv and having her near me, but I couldn't get enough.

Last night when we got home, it was clear she'd had one, or five, drinks too many. I was planning on sleeping on the couch because I didn't want her to wake up with regrets, but then she said she'd come sleep on the couch with me, and that didn't make sense. Not when I had a perfectly good bed for the both of us.

The hardest part was when she came in and stripped out of her clothes and then asked me for a shirt to sleep in. I stood there for a full minute trying not to cum in my pants. As soon as she got the shirt on, she face-planted into the pillow and started snoring. It was pretty damn cute.

I managed to wake her up long enough to drink a big glass of water and take some medicine for the headache that was sure to come. After that, she passed out again. While she slept, I wiped off her makeup and then got myself ready for bed.

God, how I dreamed of waking up next to her, and this morning was like heaven on earth. I lay there for a long time watching her, memorizing her face, before I forced myself to get up. I knew if I stayed there much longer, I wouldn't be able to control myself.

There's a lot we still needed to talk about, especially after she admitted to falling in love with me. I knew that talk was for the light of day, and having that talk with coffee would be helpful.

I get us both a mug and add cream and sugar to hers with a sprinkle of cocoa powder. I've heard her order it enough times that I've got it memorized.

Walking back into the bedroom, I push open the door and see the sun streaming in. "Good morn—"

My words are cut off when I see Liv on the bed with the covers kicked off of her and my shirt bunched around her chest. Her lower half is completely exposed so I can see clearly she's got her fingers in her pussy.

"Whoops?" She says it like a question, and her fingers still.

Without taking my eyes off her, I place the mugs of coffee on the dresser and stalk toward her.

"Sorry, I think it was all the cuddling and then I woke up in your bed and with your scent, and I just got so horny and—"

She stops talking when I put a knee on the bed and press my hands to the inside of her thighs. I spread her open wider as I look down at her pretty wet cunt and lick my lips.

"Then I think it's only fair if I'm the one to finish you off."

"Julius!" She cries out when I lick up the middle of her pussy and hum at how good she tastes.

"Fuck," I groan before I settle down on the bed and bury my face against her. I lick her center and then down to her ass before I go back to her clit. I want to taste all of her, every inch, and then do it all over again. "You're gonna give me this for breakfast every day."

"Yes," she moans, but I shake my head.

"It wasn't a question." I suck on her clit, loving the feel of the little pearl while I flick my tongue over it back and forth. "You're gonna feed me this pretty pussy like it's the drug I need to live."

"Oh god." Her back arches off the bed, and her fingers go to my hair. She grips it tightly as her hips rock up and down, and I let her ride my face.

I push a finger into her, and when she moans, I add another. She's so fucking tight it makes my eyes roll back and my cock leak all over the bed. I'm so hard, it's come out of my boxers, and I wipe the wet tip on the sheets. We're making a mess, and I don't give a fuck.

"Tell me," I say, when I feel her thighs trembling. She's so fucking close.

"W-what?" Her breath gets caught in her throat when I suck on her clit.

"What you said last night." I nuzzle her clit with my nose. "You know exactly what I'm talking about."

"Julius." Her cheeks are flushed with need and now shyness.

"Say it, Liv. I want to hear it for the first time while you cum on my face." Her hips rock up, and I can feel her pussy clenching around my fingers. I curl them inside of her, and she's right there at the edge.

"I love you!" The words echo in the room as I suck her clit and she goes off. "I love you, I love you, I love you."

She repeats the words as her orgasm goes on and on, and I lick her gently, stretching it out. Her body is limp, and she's sunk into the bed as I climb on top of her.

I push my boxers the rest of the way down and grab the base of my cock. "I don't want anything between us," I say, sliding the fat head of my dick over her clit. "Not this first time. I want you bare, Liv. I want to feel what it's like to have you wrapped around me."

She bites her bottom lip, and I can see the hesitation in her eyes. But her hips rock up in invitation like she's trying to get me to enter her.

"I'm not on anything."

"Fuck," I groan as cum leaks out of my cock.

"I'm sorry, I—"

"No." I shake my head. "I'm so fucking turned on thinking about getting you pregnant." I push the tip against her hot little hole and feel her clench around it. "It makes me want it even more."

"It does?"

I nod and try to concentrate on not cumming. "It makes me want to breed you."

"Shit, that's hot," she whispers almost to herself.

My cock slips in another inch, and I feel her tightness stopping me. "Let me do it," I whisper back, and our eyes lock. "I love you, Liv. I'll take care of you and our babies."

"Julius, I love you, too." She touches my face, and I press my lips to hers.

I'm telling her without words that I've got her. I've got us.

I lower some of my weight onto her and then thrust all the way inside. Her body tenses under me, and she whimpers from the pain. There's nothing more I could have done to make it easier, but I do my best to distract her with kisses until it subsides.

My mouth moves lower to her nipples, and I take my time paying them attention. When I've got them wet and tight, she tentatively moves her hips. I'm trying not to cum, but I already know there's a trail of it inside her. I've been leaking nonstop since the moment she got in my bed last night. It was only a matter of time until we ended up this way.

"You're mine forever, Liv," I say and slowly thrust in and out. Her body relaxes, and soon enough she's raising her hips to meet me. "Look how good you're taking me."

I glance down to where my cock is disappearing inside her, and I brush my thumb over her clit. Her pussy squeezes my cock so hard I have to look away. It's too much.

"I'm close." Her nails dig into my shoulders, and she grits her teeth. "Don't stop."

"I'm going to fuck you two more times, and then I'm going to feed you. After that, I'm going to call your dad and tell him I'm marrying you. I'm not asking for his permission, and I'm not asking you to marry me. I'm not willing to take a chance on anyone telling me no."

"Are you serious?" Tears form in her eyes as she looks up at me.

I nod then thrust in again. "And after that, I'm going to take you thrift store shopping because I know that's your favorite thing to do."

Her eyes widen like I've just told her she's a billionaire. "If I wasn't already in love with you before, I believe I would have just fallen head over heels."

"That's the only thing I want from you, Liv," I say, bending down to kiss her again.

My thumb circles her clit, and her thighs try to close, but my big body won't let them. I thrust harder, and I can see the exact moment her orgasm hits.

Watching her lost in pleasure is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, and I never want it to stop. Good thing I'm planning on doing this for the rest of our lives.

"I love you," I groan and hold myself deep inside her. My cock throbs as I cum, and black spots blur my vision. It's an effort to hold myself up and not crush her, but to my surprise, she pulls me down, asking for my weight.

"I love you." She kisses my neck, cheek, lips, anything she can reach until my head stops swimming.

When I finally have control of my limbs, I roll us over so she's on top of me, my cock still buried deep.

"So what's this I hear about two more times?" she asks, sitting up.

"Fuck," I hiss at the sight of her naked body on top me, my bare cock stuffing her full. The image alone is enough, and I cum again instantly.

"Oh my gosh." She blinks in surprise as she looks down at her pussy. "Did you just, you know?"

"That one doesn't count," I grit out, and she grins at me. Squeals of laughter leave her as I roll her onto her back again. "I need to get myself under control first."

"I like having that kind of power."

"You can have all the power," I say and kiss my way up her neck. "As long as I get your love."

"Deal," she agrees, and we make love once more.

Chapter Fifteen



66 don't want to," I huff, pulling the blanket over my head.

Now that I know I'm a full-blown cuddler, I'm not so quick to get out of bed. I'm also not one to sit still, but Julius has a quiet calm that settles the restlessness inside of me. Although people shouldn't be fooled by how peaceful he appears. Julius is quiet and sweet until he's not.

"If you think I'm going to make you, then you've done bumped your head."

I flop the blanket back down, and it takes my hair with it. Julius is standing on the side of the bed, and he leans over to brush it away. The man is so dang attentive. He's staring down at me with a sweet smile, the one that only belongs to me.

"You made me bump it on the headboard," I laugh, and his expression turns serious.

"I did no such thing." Julius's giant hand starts to feel my skull, making me laugh harder.

"It's a joke."

"Oh, you've got jokes?" He yanks the comforter off me. "I'll make you laugh."

He starts to tickle me, and I scream with laughter. "This isn't fair!" I try to wiggle free, but he's three times my size. "You should have to tie one hand behind your back," I manage to get out. "Maybe both."

"I need my hands for this." He stops tickling and starts caressing instead, and I let out a happy moan.

"True," I admit. "Why do you have so many clothes on?" I run my hands under his shirt, needing to feel his skin.

"Had a delivery." I don't get a chance to ask what kind of delivery before he has his mouth between my legs.

After that, the only thing I can do is moan, then I'm screaming Julius's name. He makes me cum with his mouth before he takes his cock out and thrusts it inside me. I'm still reeling from one orgasm when he sends me into another.

"I'll never get enough of you," I vow as he pushes in deep one last time and I feel him cum inside me.

"Good."

We're both panting as he slowly pulls out and then holds my thighs open. His eyes stare between my legs until his cum starts to leak out. That's when he uses his finger to push it back in.

"Julius," I gasp.

His brow furrows. "As hot as it is to watch my cum leak from your pussy, it needs to stay inside."

"Oh my gosh." He really is trying to get me pregnant. I guess it wasn't all dirty talk in the heat of the moment. "You aren't helpful with getting me out of this bed."

"Never will be."

"Well, if I don't get up, my sister will send a search party."

I watch as Julius fixes his clothes, and once he's dressed, I hold out my hand. He pulls me from the bed and then lifts me up for a kiss before I get

ready. I still have to go into the shop. My sister and I have worked so hard on it, and I can't turn my back on that because I went and fell in love.

"Ready?" Julius asks when I exit the bedroom. He hands me a breakfast sandwich. "Here you go."

"Bacon and sausage. You really do love me," I tease, taking a giant bite out of it.

"Keeping my woman fed." He gives my ass a small smack, and I grab the rest of my stuff.

My sister was nice enough to drop off a bag for me, and I didn't even have to ask. She left it on the doorstep.

"What's happening?" I ask when we step out onto the porch and I see a bunch of wood and other items sitting off to the side. This must have been the delivery Julius mentioned. After we get in the truck, he answers me.

"I'm going to build a work area."

"Like a shed?"

"It will be nicer than a standard shed." Julius pulls onto the main road to head toward town. "I'll have it match the main house, but it will be an open floor plan. I'm going to have a small kitchen and a bathroom in it."

"Will it be your man cave?" I half joke. "Not that you need one. You have a whole house."

"We have a whole house." He reaches out and grabs my hand. "You do know you're moving in."

"No one asked me." I shrug, trying to keep a straight face.

"You didn't figure that part out when I said I loved you and told you we're getting married?"

"Don't forget putting all that baby batter inside me." I watch as an adorable pink hits his cheeks.

"It better still be there." He shoots me a pointed look. Now it's my turn to turn pink.

"You want to take a look?" I lift my skirt playfully.

"Liv," he groans in that way that makes me achy.

I decide to be good and smooth it back down so he can focus on the road.

"So a man cave?" I ask again. "Not sure I love that you have a place to hide from me."

"It's not a man cave, and I'd never hide from you." Julius parks in front of our store and turns to me. "It's for us. You bought that dresser and small table to redo when we went thrifting. I thought it would be best if I made you a studio. Then you don't always have to go into the shop," he says. "I googled about lighting. I guess people use different ones for when they record themselves. I thought we could make an area for that too."

"Julius." I unclick my seatbelt and crawl into his lap. This is becoming a habit. "You're so good to me."

"I want you to feel like it's home."

"You're my home." I press my mouth to his.

"I don't want you giving up on your art, that's all."

"I won't." I press another hard kiss on my man before I get out. He walks me to the door and says hello to Lane before he leaves for work.

"I don't think I've ever seen you smile so big." My sister gives me a hug. "You're glowing."

"You think I'm pregnant!" That's all I can interpret from what she just said.

"It wasn't what I was thinking when I said that, but I suppose you could be." Lane laughs.

I've told her some of what went down, but I kept out the extra-dirty stuff. Although that didn't stop Lane from blushing more than Julius.

"How was your walk home with Sawyer the other night?"

"I have work to do." Lane spins around to head to the back. "I've got to get my audition piece done."

"Hey!" I call after her. "Fine, I'll let it go for now." She's lucky I have work I need to catch up on today too. Lane held the place down for a few days, but she struggles with technology.

I click on an email addressed to me asking about one of my pieces I posted. This day keeps getting better and better. I clean up our inbox and organize a few things before I make a TikTok to post. Thankfully, the day passes quickly, and I even sell the piece I received an email about. It's local, so I'm going to drop it off real quick.

I let my sister know before I double-check the address because it's one that's not familiar to me. I get in the truck and plug it into my phone before I head in that direction. It's right outside of town.

When I pull down the drive, I see an old farmhouse that doesn't look occupied. There are a couple of windows missing, the stairs up the porch are busted, and the place could use a power wash and fresh paint.

I pause, about to drive off, when I see Troy step out from inside. I put my truck into park and hop out. "Did you buy this place?"

Maybe he's planning on fixing it up. I still owe Troy an ass-chewing, but I need to keep in mind he's related to my Julius and will soon be my inlaw.

"No, I didn't buy this dump." He talks some shit for someone who still lives at home with his mom. Troy jumps off the porch to avoid the broken stairs, and as he moves closer, I see he's pissed off. It makes me wonder why he didn't say it was him in the email.

"If you wanted to talk about your lies, you could have said that. You didn't have to trick me into meeting you." I glance around. We're surrounded by trees but not far from the road. "This is creepy. You could have come to my store if you wanted to talk in private. I won't tell everyone that you're a giant liar face."

I could have called him a giant lying fuckface, but I'm keeping it sweet. I might have to share holidays with him.

"It's you that's going to want the privacy." Troy smirks, holding up his phone. He swipes, letting me see picture after picture of me. There are a couple from my makeout session with Julius in the truck. One from the night at Dixon's when I went home with him and the other from this morning outside my store. There are more of me half-dressed sitting on Julius's porch having coffee with him.

"Why are you showing me these?" It's super creepy, which matches the vibe of this place.

"Oh, there is more."

He hits play on a video, and again I'm on the porch, but this time I'm in Julius's lap, and the only thing I have on is one of his shirts. You can see his hands moving between us before he picks me up and carries me inside. You get to see a lot of leg, but the shirt covers my ass.

"Okay, so you're a creepy stalker?"

"I'm not the stalker! Julius is. He's a fucking psycho that watches you all the time. He doesn't belong here. Julius thinks he is so damn perfect." Troy flails his arms around as he rants. I think he might be talking about himself.

As long as Julius is only stalking me, which I'm sure he is, I'm okay with it. Honestly, I'd be disappointed if he didn't stalk me.

"What are we doing here, Troy?" I really want to get to the point.

"He gets everything, but not this time." He points his phone at me. "You'll break up with Julius, or I'll post this. Everyone online will know what an easy whore you are."

I stare at him. "You got something else on that phone?" I ask. I'll need way more than that because I have no shame in anything I've done.

"What do you mean?" He jerks the phone back, holding it to his chest.

"It's only that—" I stop speaking when I hear a vehicle speeding down the driveway, flinging gravel in its wake. I turn to see Julius's truck heading right toward us. "Oh shit." All the blood drains from Troy's face.

"You motherfucker." Julius's voice booms so loudly a flock of birds takes off from the nearby trees.

Troy goes to run, but I stick my foot out, tripping him. He doesn't get a chance to try and get up before Julius plucks him from the ground and cold-cocks him right back down. Troy drops his phone in the process, and I grab it.

"How did you know I was here? Is he trying to blackmail you too?" I ask as Julius once again picks Troy off the ground. Before he hits him again, he stops to answer my question.

"I tracked you, and I know this is Troy's hangout spot." He shakes Troy like he's nothing more than a ragdoll. See, my Julius is nice and sweet until he's not.

"Told you," Troy mutters. "Stalker."

"You stalked me?" I ask Julius, and he nods. "That's so sweet." I could melt right on the spot.

"He's trying to blackmail you?" Julius looks at the phone in my hand.

"He took pictures of us together."

I turn the screen around to show him, and rage takes over. He slams his fist into Troy's face and then leaves him in a heap on the ground. Julius is about to go for him again, but I lay my hand on his shoulder.

"He's not worth it, and we can't cuddle if you're in the slammer."

"I can make him disappear. No one will know."

"I'm sorry," Troy chokes out, but I don't think he's sorry at all.

"Hush," I hiss down at him. "He's stupid, and hopefully this will teach him a lesson." I tug on Julius's shirt so he comes closer to me and I've got all his attention. "You're supposed to kiss me when we first see each other. That's a rule."

"I was kind of busy." He gives me a lopsided smile, which I lean up to kiss.

"Troy." I sigh when I see he's still lying on the ground. "This is your chance to run, dummy."

"Shit." He scurries to his feet before taking off toward the tree line.

"He tried to blackmail you with those?" Julius nods toward the phone I'm still holding. I know he wants to chase Troy, but I'm holding on to him as tightly as I can.

"Yeah, he said he was going to post them online and call me a whore if I didn't break up with you." I laugh, but Julius doesn't join me.

"I'll kill him."

"Forget him." I climb up Julius' body, and his hands go to my ass to keep me in place. "He's a dumbass because I'd post these myself. I don't mind letting the whole town know you're mine. It would be better if he posted it. Then I can pretend to be all shy and embarrassed when really I'm eating it up. It would be very demure and very mindful of me."

Julius throws back his head and laughs. The sound is sexy as hell. "I love you so damn much, Liv." All the anger leaves his face, a warm smile appearing.

"I love you too, my giant stalker."

"Only for you."

As it should be.



Epilogue

Nine months later...

ook what a good job you did." I press my chest against her back and whisper in her ear, "Look how pretty you made that."

"Julius," Liv whines as I thrust deeper.

We're in the new studio I built, and she's leaning forward to brace herself on the changing table she decorated. Pregnancy has made her beyond horny, so she's taken to wearing little sundresses around the house with nothing on underneath them. It's easier for me to get to her whenever she needs me.

"Have I told you how much I love fucking you while you're pregnant?" My hand goes to her belly before I slip it between her legs. "You get so wet, it's running down your thighs."

Her breath catches in her throat, and I feel her right at the edge. I take my hand back because I don't want her to go off too soon.

"Don't stop."

"I'm right here." I tease her clit again and then slow down.

"Julius—" She's getting frustrated, but I've found that if I work her up to a really big orgasm, she doesn't feel as achy afterwards.

"You're such a good girl," I tell her, and I feel her clench around me. "You've worked so hard growing our baby and making everything so special." Her sweet honey drips down my cock, and I'm soaked with it. "I'm so proud of you."

"Oh god, why do I love when you talk like that?" She's panting now, and I'm increasing the pressure on her clit.

"Because you love being a good girl for me, don't you?"

"Yes." She pushes her ass back, taking me deeper. My thick cock surges forward, filling her until there's no more room.

"You're my sweet, perfect girl, and everything you touch is so pretty."

"I-I'm gonna—"

Her cry of pleasure echoes in the room, and her legs give out. She knows I've got her, and as she goes limp, I'm there to hold her up. While pleasure takes hold, I rub her pussy gently. Then I cum inside her, triggering another orgasm. It's like her body wants her to love me cumming in her, so she goes off every time I do it.

"Not yet," she protests when I pull out of her.

"You've been on your feet all day, and you know how that wears you out."

When I take a seat on the couch, I have her straddle my lap. Then I hold the base of my cock so she can slide down on it again.

"Better?" I ask her, and she nods at me sleepily.

"Better." She rests her head on my shoulder and kisses my neck. About two seconds later, she's asleep, and I smile down at her.

I scratch her back the way she likes it, and then I massage her lower back. I stay hard the whole time because her cunt is magical, and when my dick is inside her, it refuses to go down.

It's a little while later when she wakes up from her nap, and she moans before clenching around me.

"You need me again?" I ask, and she nods at me sleepily. "Do you want to be my good girl this time too?" She nods again, her eyelids heavy. "I think that's a good idea."

I brush her hair away from her face and then kiss her forehead.

"I love how you're taking care of yourself by sleeping when you need it." She rocks her hips a little, and then I do the rest for her. Slowly and gently, I move her up and down. "And you're eating all the things the baby wants, being such a good mommy already."

The front of her sundress has come down, and her tits spill out. Leaning forward, I latch on to a nipple and flick my tongue back and forth over the tight peak.

"Julius," she gasps and then moans.

The sounds of her wet pussy on my dick are filthy. "You've done so much today, you deserve this." She whimpers when I grind against her clit. "You deserve to be soft and protected. I'm here, I've got you."

She cums around me while I finish inside her, and then I whisper words of love. I kiss her lips, her cheeks, her eyelashes, anything I can. Each touch is a reminder that she's here and she's mine.

"Let's go inside the house so I can make you and the baby a snack," I tell her, and when she looks up at me, she's so fucking cute.

THE END!



Small Town Girl

BY ALEXA RILEY

Lux is ready to leave Pink Springs and spread her wings, but when she winds up in the big city squeezed into a bunny costume, things are definitely not going to plan. One little hop into the arms of a stranger changes everything, and suddenly this small-town girl is feeling right at home.

Bastian's path to success doesn't include a detour, especially one that falls into his lap. What's he to do when a cute little bunny makes a home in his heart? Simple: love her forever.

Warning: Welcome to Book 1 in the Pink Springs Series! It's just as adorable as it sounds.



Chapter 1

LUX

I glance at the clock again knowing I'm out of time. I should have accounted for this, but I'm always late. It's a terrible habit, but I could have worse ones. It doesn't matter how hard I try, time always gets away from me and then it's a mad dash. It's really going to bite me in the butt today if my brother makes it back home before I'm long gone.

I tape up another box quickly then carry it outside and put it in the back of my little blue Beetle. I got it for my eighteenth birthday, but my brothers never would have given me this car if they knew what I was up to. If it was up to them I'd stay right here forever and become a spinster. I do a kickass cross stitch, but that's not all I want from life.

My phone starts buzzing like crazy in my pocket, and when I pull it out I drop it on the concrete driveway. I let out a sigh of relief when I see the screen is fine. That is until I see why my phone is going off in the first place.

There are twenty texts one after another saying CODE RED! I'VE BEEN MADE! Of course she was made! I never should have believed Juno could keep tabs on my brother. He's the town sheriff and she's running around with pink hair this week. She's unmissable.

I hear him before I see him as his SUV comes down the long gravel driveway. I run back into the house and grab a few more boxes and try to get them into the car before he gets here. Without realizing it, I misjudge the last step and hit the ground. Both boxes go flying. One bursts open, and clothes go tumbling out. Of course it's the box with my underwear.

Cooper parks his car, making sure it blocks me in. I fold my arms over my chest, ready for a throw-down as he gets out of the SUV. He tosses his sunglasses back in before slamming the door.

"You know that's the town's property. You should take better care of it," I say and then smirk at him.

This town would let him set his sheriff's vehicle on fire in the middle of a parade and no one would care. They'd probably cheer him on and declare that day a holiday. As always when I'm pushing back against him, he ignores me.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" He walks around my vehicle in full cop mode. He looks through all of the windows and my trunk. My brother can be intimidating to most since he's well over six foot tall and built like one of those football players they're always yelling at on TV.

"I put all my drugs in your room." He gives me a hard glare, not thinking I'm funny. Juno would laugh. Cooper is as straight-laced as they come. He was a SEAL before coming back home after we lost Dad. I was sixteen at the time. Instead of having me go stay with my aunt, he moved back into our childhood home and quickly settled into being the sheriff here.

"I'm not playing games with you, Lux."

I roll my eyes at him. "I'm twenty. I can do as I please. Now be a good big brother and help me with the last three boxes I have." I motion toward the front door.

"And where do you think you're taking these boxes?"

"To the city. I got myself a place." I try to say it with confidence.

"The city?" His jaw hardens.

"Yes, I need space." I throw my arms open. "As much as I love Pink Springs, it's time for something else."

"What's wrong with it here?" He actually looks insulted.

"Hey, you did the same thing when you went into the Navy," I point out.

It was hard when he left. I was only about ten at the time. My other brothers took it even harder because they were so close. Luckily the next year Juno moved to town, giving me someone to hang on to. I love my brothers more than anything, but I'm going to miss her the most. She knows I have to do this, even if it's going to be hard being apart.

He stands there for a long second, and the reality of what's happening settles in. At the end of the day he can't truly stop me. He could, however, lay a major guilt trip on me. I know this is what I need because something is calling me, and it has been for a while. I can't fight the pull any longer.

"What's your plan?" he asks, still hedging his emotions.

"I've been saving all my tips from the diner. I've got a nice nest egg until I can find a job." It was easy to save up since my brothers took care of most everything at home. I need to grow up at some point, and I'm sure they want to live their own lives soon enough. Maybe even get married and start families of their own.

"Where are you going to stay? And don't say a hotel."

"Of course not. Juno and I went and looked at places." At the mention of Juno's name, my brother stands up a little taller.

"Is she going with you?" I shake my head no, and his brow furrows. "How is that possible? You two are connected at the hip."

"She loves it here, but she knows I have to do this."

Juno grew up in the city with her parents. They were both high-profile lawyers, and when they were killed in a plane crash, she ended up here with her grandmother.

"So where are you staying then?"

"I rented a room from a girl named Avery." I hold up my hand before he can say anything. "Yes, I did the whole background check. Everything came back clean, but I need a roommate to stay in a safer part of town. I'll never be able to afford it on my own. And maybe we'll hit it off and I'll have a friend there."

"There is no talking you out of this, is there?"

"No, but who knows, I might hate it and be back next month. Either way I have to do this. I've got to get it out of my system. I don't want to stay working at the diner forever."

"What about college?" he tries again, and I scrunch my nose.

"I suck at school and you know it." I graduated from high school and my grades were pretty good, but I hated it. I had to fight hard to keep them up, and I knew college would be way harder. I don't think college is for everyone, and I'm not going to blow thousands of dollars to come to that conclusion.

"I told you that you could work dispatch." He can't help himself.

"No way. I don't want people's lives in my hands or trying to talk them through something scary until police get there. I'd be panicking right along with them."

"I need all the information and I'm coming out there soon." He walks over toward me, wrapping his arm around my shoulder. "I know I'm overbearing, but you're my little sister, and I promised Dad I'd take care of you."

"I know." I fight back the tears, not wanting to cry as he kisses the top of my head. "Luca is going to lose his mind when he gets back home tomorrow." I can feel him shaking his head. "I know, and that's why I'm leaving today."

"Let me help you get the rest of your stuff."

With his help it isn't long until I get everything packed up. He gives me one last long hug and tells me to call him when I get there. As soon as he

takes off for work, Juno is pulling in.

"Are you still going?" She hops down from her Jeep.

"Yep."

A bright smile lights up her face. She's always reminded me of a little pixie. I know she's sad I'm leaving, but she's going to hide it for my sake. "I'm going to miss you at the diner."

"Me too." It isn't that I hate the diner. It was always fun when we had shifts together, but I just need a change. More than anything, I need to be out from under my brothers.

"I'm going to come see you soon," she promises, and then we hug for a long moment and just hold each other tight.

"You better. It's only a couple of hours away." I let her go, and it's harder than I thought it was going to be.

"I sent you an audiobook for the road. It's a good one." She wiggles her eyebrows at me before turning and getting back into her Jeep. I stand there looking up at the only home I've ever known, wondering if I'm making a mistake.

But I suppose there's only one way to find out. For all I know, my forever might be waiting for me.

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