

Chapter 18

The Manipulator

UNKNOWN: You're so pretty when you sleep.

My heart drops when I read the text.

I already knew the fucker was in my house from the rose on my nightstand, but his lack of shame enrages me. I feel the blood rush to my cheeks as fury and embarrassment rise inside of me.

I was knocked out cold last night, and I hate that while I was peacefully sleeping, a man was standing over me, watching and just being an all-around freak of nature. The thought sends cold shivers down my spine.

After Max crashed our dinner, Daya and I felt considerably on edge—the mood soured and rotted. We combated that feeling by bar-hopping. We picked a random drink off the menu for each other, and by the end of the night, we were both pretty toasted.

I tried to avoid thinking about Max the entire night, but his threats plagued me anyway. Lingering at the back of my mind, there to remind me when I had a moment to think.

And it hasn't gotten any better.

I spent this whole day trying to write, but I barely managed over a thousand words. I've long since given up and have retreated to my room to watch mindless TV.

ME: You'll look pretty after I stab you.

I don't even know why I reply to him. I should stop and report this to the police. They'll think I'm antagonizing him.

Jesus, I *am* antagonizing him.

But after Max's threat, I don't need any more reason to make him suspicious by reporting a stalker. And for the ones I already made after Arch's disappearance, I hope those went missing too.

Never thought I'd wish for my only evidence against my shadow to disappear, but the threat of Max oddly frightens me more.

Maybe I'm kidding myself with a false sense of security with the former. He's scared the absolute fuck out of me, but he hasn't seemed inclined to physically hurt me. In fact, he's done the exact opposite, and that knowledge makes me sick.

Max, on the other hand, I know would hurt me.

UNKNOWN: A gun wasn't enough for you? Interesting.

I drop the phone on my bed, and then my head into my hands. But then my head snaps up when I remind myself that the fucker was watching me sleep last night. Which means he got in my house *again*.

All the blood in my cheeks drains like a whirlpool when I realize he could've been in my house before I even went to bed.

That's what he did last time, and I was pretty out of it last night. I know I read Gigi's diary for a little while, but I don't think I retained a single word I read.

My gaze draws to my closet doors, like a magnet on a refrigerator. It's a large closet with two doors that slide apart. My eyes thin, narrowing on the tiny crack between the two.

My body moves on autopilot. I'm scrambling out of my bed and storming to the closet door before I can think it through. I have no idea what I'd do if he's standing there.

Probably shit myself.

I tear the doors open and stop short when I'm met with nothing but way too many clothes that I don't wear.

There's nowhere for him to hide in here. It's not a deep closet and certainly not big enough to hide a six-foot-too-many-inches man. My hands tear through my clothes anyways, searching for him. And even when I'm positive he's not there, I stare harder, swiping my clothes aside with heightening aggression.

Get a fucking grip, Addie. It's like you want him to be there.

I sigh and turn away, the adrenaline rush diminishing. There's nowhere else in this room for him to hide. As immense as the room is, it's an open concept with minimal furniture.

Now, I just feel like an idiot.

I plop on the bed, crisscrossing my legs as I stare at my phone like it's a mousetrap with a big ass block of cheese in it. Gourmet smoked gouda fucking cheese, to be precise.

The phone lights up with an incoming text, the vibrations in the bed traveling straight up my legs.

I snatch it up. I fucking love gouda cheese, goddammit.

UNKNOWN: I'll be seeing you tonight, little mouse.

I snarl.

ME: From *outside* my house, and preferably in a cop's handcuffs.

UNKNOWN: You don't need a cop to get me in handcuffs, baby. I'll let you do anything you want to me.

I'm going to suffer from a heart attack with the severe directions my blood keeps rushing to. My pussy pulses from the illicit thought of him handcuffed to my bed, a smirk on his face, dripping with sin. And those goddamn mismatched eyes looking up at me the way he did when he was fucking me with his gun. Like I'm a little mouse that he wants to devour, stuck in the trap with the gouda cheese puffing up my cheeks.

Fuck.

My hands shake as I try to force the thought from my head. But it's taken hold and I can't get it out.

I straighten my legs, squeezing my thighs together. But it doesn't ease the steady throb between my clenched thighs, nor the wetness pooling between them.

My heart races as another ping vibrates my phone.

I don't want to look, but I have no fucking self-control.

UNKNOWN: Are you playing with yourself, little mouse? Touching your sweet little pussy to the thought of me handcuffed to your bed?

ME: You're disgusting.

But that's exactly what I've begun to do. As soon as I read the words, it was like he possessed my body to do exactly what he was asking. My hand snaked down into my panties, my finger gently swiping at my engorged clit. Even as I wrote back my scathing reply.

I'm wearing nothing but a long t-shirt and comfortable underwear.

I feel bare and exposed beneath the thin cotton. When my legs begin to fall apart, I rip my hand out like I touched a burning stove, hissing at my own stupidity.

UNKNOWN: And you're a liar.

ME: Fuck. Off.

UNKNOWN: Next time you tell me to fuck off, your clit is going between my teeth.

My bottom lip goes between mine. I suck my lip in sharply, shocked by his nerve. By the pure *audacity* this man possesses. Yet just as turned on.

I squeeze my hand around the phone, hating myself more and more as this conversation progresses.

My fingers twitch with the need to tell him to fuck off again. The asshole probably doesn't even know how oppositional I am.

Tell me not to do something, and I'll only want to do it more.

And with a threat like that, I'm so fucking tempted. I feel my heart tumble in my chest again, beating against my rib cage as my thumb travels over the letters.

I stare at the two words on my screen, my thumb hovering over the Send button. My shadow has proven to follow through with his threats.

So why do I want to do it so badly? I mean, who instigates their fucking stalker? And to put his mouth on their pussy, no less.

I throw my phone as soon as my thumb skates across the button. The message swoops away, and I know I just did something idiotic.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

My head is in my hands again, my fingers clenching my hair tightly until I feel the strands pulling taut, tiny stabs of pain following suit.

Ping.

The racing muscle inside my ribcage bursts free and climbs up my throat.

I can't look. Abruptly, I stand, restless energy coating my nerves until I'm nearly convulsing. I need to... do something. Distract myself.

Snatching my phone, I hurry down the hall, down the creaky wooden stairs, and into my kitchen.

It's dark in here. Eerie. But my stubbornness prevents me from turning any lights on.

Ping.

Shakily, I pour two fingers of my grandfather's whiskey into a glass. And then I hold up the decanter, noting how little is left.

Asshole.

I shoot the alcohol down in one swallow. The taste is smoky, with a hint of citrus. It burns on the way down, turning the insides of my body into an inferno.

As if I wasn't already burning up.

After I pour myself another two fingers and swallow that down, I work up the courage to look at my phone.

UNKNOWN: Oh, little mouse.

UNKNOWN: I can't wait to eat you. There will be nothing left of you once I'm done.

Goddammit.

Shivers wrack through my body, and I drop the phone. It clatters loudly against the island, disturbing the stilted air.

"God? Why do you fucking hate me?" I ask aloud, my voice ringing out into empty air.

Of course, she doesn't answer me. She never does. I'm not even talking to God. I'm talking to myself and the ghosts inside this house.

Not even they will answer me.

Fuck it. I'm going to bed.

I storm up the stairs, turn off the T.V., and slip back into my bed, connecting my phone to the charger, and then toss the blanket over my head.

Under here, the monsters can't get me. I'm safe. Untouchable.

I ignore the throbbing between my legs and close my eyes, willing myself to sleep.

And despite the sporadic thoughts floating around in my head, I manage to drift off into a restless sleep. I toss and turn, the blanket keeping my body too warm, but my subconscious won't allow the blanket to go past my eyes.

Sometime in the middle of the night, I feel rough flesh skate across my arms. My subconscious slowly starts to drift away from my dreams, but it feels like I'm weighed under a heavy fog.

Something rough glides around one wrist, jolting me further into consciousness. When I feel the rough texture tighten around my other wrist, I finally start to slip back into reality. My surroundings rush in, and even in my half-asleep state, I know something is wrong.

My face feels tight, and my body is exposed.

I feel the blanket drift past my breasts, down my stomach, and past my hips. When the cool air settles, tightening my nipples into sharp buds, I jerk

awake.

My eyes open wide, and my breath lodges in my throat when I see a dark figure settled between my legs. Immediately, I panic. My heart races and my adrenaline surges.

I go to scream, but something constricts my mouth. My eyes round when I realize my mouth is taped shut.

Several realizations hit all at once. My arms are above me, tied to the headboard with thick ropes. I tug against the binds, desperately trying to slide my wrists out of the loops to no avail.

I struggle hard, but my body can only move so much. Thick thighs trap me into a firm hold as my stalker props himself above me, his face concealed by the shadows.

I continue to fight against the rope but only succeed in rubbing my skin raw.

“What did I tell you, little mouse?” he asks, his deep voice barely above a whisper. I don’t even spare him a glance, my panicked gaze glued to the ropes that are rendering me completely fucking helpless.

Fuck what he told me.

“Let me go!” I shout beneath the tape, but the words are muffled and indistinguishable.

He plants his hands on my hips and roughly pins me to the bed. Electric shocks travel from his skin to mine, the feeling making me tremble beneath his calloused hands.

Panic sends my mind into a complete tailspin. I no longer think rationally. My body goes into survival mode, and I fight against his hold with all the strength I can muster.

But it’s useless. He’s too big. Too heavy. Too fucking imposing.

I scream with frustration, attempting to buck him off. He laughs at my attempt, the rich sound of his amusement sending ice down my spine.

I still, huffing and puffing against the tape. My hair is in disarray, with several tendrils scattered across my face and constricting my view of him.

Not that I particularly want to see his face anyways. It’s a goddamn weapon.

Gently, he brushes the tendrils out of my face, tenderness in his touch.

“Fascinating that you have yet to learn, I always follow through with my threats,” he whispers.

“Fuck. Off!” I shout, enunciating my words as clearly as possible beneath the tape. They’re muffled, but he heard what I said loud and clear anyway.

He grabs my face in his hand roughly and brings his face down into mine. Minty breath and a hint of smoke washes over me.

“Keep pissing me off, Adeline. I do enjoy hurting you. It’s music to my ears when I hear you cry.”

I struggle against him, muffled curse words spilling from my taped mouth.

Another chuckle reaches my ears.

“You’ve been a very bad girl, little mouse,” he drawls, his deep tenor vibrating through his throat. “And I do enjoy showing you what happens to bad girls.”

Sweat pricks at my hairline and trails down my back. I’m still panicking—absolutely shaking with fear.

But I have no idea how the hell I’m going to get away from him. Tears prick at my eyes when I realize that I can’t.

His words from before filter through the panic. *You can’t escape me.*

His calloused fingers lift up my t-shirt, exposing my black lace panties and flat stomach. I can’t see them, but I feel his eyes devouring me. He continues to lift the shirt until my breasts are bared to him.

I hear a sharp intake of breath, revealing his desire. My nipples are tightened into hard peaks. But the asshole is cracked if he thinks it’s because of *him*.

“You are absolutely exquisite,” he breathes, his hands trailing across my stomach reverently. Over the fading marks, he forced on me four nights ago.

“Fuck. Off,” I growl again.

“Don’t mind if I do,” he tells me, his voice shadowed with desire and anticipation.

My eyes round when his fingers skim beneath the waistband of my underwear, teasing my sensitive skin and warning me of his intentions. I suppress the shiver, determined to maintain my dignity, even as he pulls them down to my knees in one move.

My fight renews, kicking at him harshly and landing a good kick in his chest. He powers through the kick, pushing back into it and sending painful shockwaves up my leg.

It stuns me long enough for him to slip my underwear the rest of the way down my legs. Instead of discarding my underwear, he bundles them in a ball and slides them in his pocket.

Oh... that's *gross!*

I growl, deep in my chest and desperately kick at him again. I use both legs, putting every bit of force behind them. He snatches both of my feet before they can connect with his face.

Dammit.

I squirm, upending the upper half of my body as I struggle.

Quickly, he works his hands around both ankles while avoiding a foot to the face. And then he forces my legs apart, pinning my knees to the bed as he bares my pussy.

What felt like forever only took fifteen seconds.

I force myself to still, my chest heaving wildly. If I continue to buck, I'll only be putting my pussy right in his stupid face. And the asshole would just *love* that.

Rage unlike anything I've ever felt floods me, replacing the fear and helplessness. I scream beneath the tape, raging and cursing him as his eyes eat up the expanse of my center.

The moonlight doesn't provide enough light for him to see much, but it doesn't matter to him. He's seen it before.

He inhales deeply. "Fuck, you smell just like I remember. So fucking sweet."

He leans down and places a gentle kiss on my pelvic bone. I arch my back, pushing my body deeper into the mattress and away from his kiss. I'm panting harshly through my nose, imitating a pissed-off bull.

Self-hatred wars against the hatred for him. I did this to myself. I know I did. I instigated him—pushed against him when he warned me what would happen.

It didn't matter. I was too fucking stupid and hard-headed. Too high off whatever sick thrill I can't seem to get enough of.

He grips my hips and roughly yanks me down, tightening the bonds on my wrists and giving him full access to my pussy.

Another soft kiss, an inch above my clit. I can't stop the whimper that releases from my mouth, sticking against the tape, just as my lips are.

But the tape doesn't mask the sound like it's masking my words. I feel him pause, and then he smiles against my skin.

I shudder beneath his touch, his hot breath fanning across my most sensitive area. My knees jerk inward, another useless attempt to close my legs.

And then I feel them. A stubborn tear slips free as his teeth scrape against my mound. I scream and thrash against the feeling, dislodging his teeth from my skin only for my body to jerk right back into his mouth.

I gasp, feeling far more than just teeth this time. His tongue slides against my clit, a feral groan releasing from his throat as he tastes me. Uncontrollably, my eyes roll and my head kicks back as the most delicious feeling envelopes me.

But I refuse to let that cloud my judgment. Riding alongside pleasure is disgust.

Disgust at myself—my body—for feeling anything else. And disgust that he is taking something that I didn't willingly give.

"*Fuck,*" he growls against me, the vibrations forcing me to suck in a deep breath. The sound of his deep tenor sends a burst of butterflies into my stomach.

"You're so fucking creamy," he rasps. I squeeze my eyes shut, hating how I feel my pussy throb from his words and the attention he's giving me. More so, I hate that he's right. I can smell my own arousal, feel the juices sliding down my asscheeks.

I shake.

I shake because I don't know what else to fucking do right now.

Now more than ever, I hate *myself*, and the reaction my body has to adrenaline and terror.

He licks the entirety of my slit, his tongue moving leisurely all the way up to the bundle of nerves before he sucks my clit between his teeth and clamps down.

Just like he said he would.

I scream with both fright and bliss. His bite is hard enough to send a wave of pain scattering across my clit, but not hard enough to truly hurt me.

He pulls his head away slowly, my clit dragging between his teeth until it slips free, a burning sensation radiating from the bud.

I try to wriggle away, but all it does is cause him to slide his hands behind my knees and forcefully push them back to my ears.

I squeeze my eyes shut again, another traitorous tear slipping free as I thrash against my bonds, desperate to slip free. In this position, I'm far more exposed and vulnerable to him.

But just as it always does, the thrill of danger sends an uncomfortable feeling straight to my core.

He has my body curled so far inward, my ass is no longer on the bed. As if I wasn't already ashamed enough, I feel my arousal sliding down my stomach.

He growls, noting the desire flooding from my entrance. I can feel his body tightening with need, power rippling through his body.

He doesn't waste any more time bringing his mouth back to my pussy and sucking my clit back into his mouth.

I jerk, the pleasure renewed as he tugs and sucks at the bud. He doesn't lick me again, refusing to use his tongue against me—only his teeth.

Every time I move, he clamps harder. So I force myself to stiffen, but the pressure doesn't lessen. If anything, it only heightens until sharp pain is sluicing from my clit.

I squeal from the sting, screaming muffled curses at him through the tape. And just when it becomes too much, he lets go. I pant through the relief and the lingering pain, my clit throbbing and sore.

But he doesn't allow me to suffer for long. His middle finger slides inside of me, curling to hit that sweet spot. My hips buck against his hand, a different type of pleasure swelling inside of me.

A bliss that stings and burns but yet, feels fucking incredible.

"Did that hurt?" he asks softly, tilting his head as he watches his finger slide in and out of me, juices collecting in the palm of his hand.

Now that one of my legs is free, I'm tempted to drive my foot into his face. But the reminder of that bite keeps my leg still.

So I just fume silently, glaring holes into him. The anger feels like it's burning me from the inside out.

He hums, disappointed by my silence. Leaning down, he captures the abused nub between his teeth, sucking in but keeping his bite minimal. Combined with his finger curling up to hit that spot, I can no longer breathe.

Gently, he scrapes his teeth over the sensitive flesh. Over and over until it drives me mad with both the need for more and the need to kill him. Maybe I can cut his hands off like he did Arch. Knock his teeth out so he can't turn my body against me anymore.

"Remember this, little mouse," he murmurs in between nips. "Remember that your disobedience brings you pain." Another sharp nip. My hips jerk away, but the action is futile. "I know you remember how good it felt when my gun was fucking your pussy. Imagine my tongue inside of you—my cock. The pleasure you'd feel would be blinding."

His finger curls and proves his words true, sending that blinding pleasure racing throughout my body.

I feel the break. The moment when my body decides it needs what he's giving me more than the need for him to stop.

I fight against the dark part of me that wants to beg for more. A dark part that has found a voice and is trying to break free. Take over and give in to this man so we both can find relief. I thrash against it, entering a silent battlefield and trying to choke the life out of it so it never comes to light.

But then he withdraws his finger to the very tip, swiping his finger along my entrance, and when he sinks back inside me, he adds two more fingers. My eyes roll as he stretches me, caressing that sweet spot over and over while his teeth bite into my clit anew.

The dark side of me wins while I watch helplessly as my body renews its struggle. But this time, I'm shamefully grinding myself against him. He's not giving me what my body has begun to crave—to *need*—in order to assuage the pleasure building deep in my belly.

He continues to scour my clit with his teeth. Nipping and biting, but refusing to give me his tongue.

Frustration mounts until I'm brimming with it. I'm so, so *angry*, but now it's because he's denying me pleasure.

"Asshole!" I screech against the tape. The answering smile against my pussy is evident that he heard me.

Giving into the anger, I kick my leg out with unrestrained force. He dodges the kick by a mere inch.

A feral growl tears from his chest, and he pushes my knee back down with bruising force. The sound wasn't of desire like before—but anger.

Even if I were forced in front of a priest tomorrow, no fear of God would convince me to confess how fucking sexy that growl was. Or how hard my pussy pulsed in response.

I'll *never* confess that—not even to myself.

He tightens his grip to a punishing hold. Tomorrow, I'll have handprints on the underside of my thighs. They'll go nicely with the hickeys smattering my body.

"What did you learn, little mouse?" he taunts, blowing hot breath directly onto my clit.

I growl, another frustrated tear leaking down my temple and into my hairline.

"Are you going to tell me to fuck off again?" he asks, darting out his tongue for a sharp lick. It's there and gone before I can get any satisfaction from it.

I shout at him some more until he finally reaches up and rips the tape from my mouth. I curse against the flaring pain in my face, and then keep cursing now that he can finally fucking hear me.

"You fucking psycho motherf—" my tangent is cut short due to another painful bite to my clit.

"Try again. Are you going to tell me to fuck off again?"

I heave, trying to calm myself down but failing.

I don't even know how to begin to name the emotions swelling inside of me. I could explode from the force of them converging all in my chest.

"Probably," I grind out through gritted teeth. He chuckles, a musical sound so dark, it must come straight from an Edgar Allan Poe flick.

He nips at me again, but this one lighter and more playful.

"Do you understand what's going to happen from now on when you do?"

I clamp my mouth shut, refusing to answer such a stupid fucking question. I understand perfectly what's going to happen. It's just a matter of *listening*.

In response to my nonverbal answer, he withdraws his fingers, leaving me bereft. But before I can complain, he licks me again, this time slower and more languid. He flattens his tongue and licks me from the bottom up, going particularly slow over my pulsating clit.

My eyes close against the sensation, a breath whooshing from my throat. There's no stopping the shivers that encase my spine. No stopping the bliss radiating from where his tongue laps up my cunt.

I arch my back, growling from how easily my body turns to jello beneath his unfairly skilled tongue.

But just as I start to grind against his mouth, shamefully and unabashedly, he stops.

"Do you. Understand?" he asks again, his tone lilted with superiority.

A frustrated sob works its way up my throat, but I swallow it back down. It takes several swallows before I feel confident to speak levelly, though the words taste like battery acid on my tongue.

"Loud and fucking clear, kitty cat."

A dark chuckle skitters across my core, and I'm ashamed of how my body responds. My ass curves towards his mouth without permission, seeking what it needs.

His tongue dives into my pussy, licking inside of me with ravenous strokes.

A cry leaves my lips, breathless and embarrassingly loud.

The pressure builds as he finally does what I've been silently begging for. His tongue swirls up to my clit with the perfect amount of pressure, paying special attention to the abused bud before dipping lower again and spearing the muscle inside of my pussy.

Cries of pleasure echo throughout the room, and now I regret the tape ever leaving my mouth. Because I don't want him to hear what he's doing to me, but I can't seem to contain myself either.

I just lose myself. To him and the thrashing of his tongue on my clit. It's impossible to resist as the coil deep in my stomach curls painfully tight.

I can't stop him from sucking my clit into his mouth any more than I can control the orgasm from reaching its peak.

I suck in a sharp breath, a strangled cry escaping as my body falls over the edge. He plunges two fingers inside me just as I do, and the bliss is catastrophic. I no longer care to hold back the sharp screams, nor do I stop my thighs from clamping his head firmly between them.

Drown in my fucking pussy. Die there for all I care.

Euphoria consumes me, wrapping me so tightly in its clutches, all five of my senses are lost to it.

This isn't a climb to heaven. It's a fall from grace.

I'll never recover—not when my soul has been ripped from my body and dragged down to hell. I fell so deeply that I've found myself in the devil's lair, being feasted on from the dark god himself.

Moans wrack from my throat, and I feel his answering groan. His hands clutch at my thighs, prying them apart just enough to continue to lap at my throbbing cunt, riding out the orgasm for longer than my body can handle.

He rips his mouth away and crawls up my body while continuing to fuck me with his fingers. I'm still delirious, my mouth still parted as I continue to moan. So, when he pinches my cheeks, holding my mouth open, I hardly care. His fingers feel too good.

His mouth skates over my lips once before I watch a trail of saliva drip from his mouth into mine.

"Swallow your juices," he rasps.

And I do. My throat works as the unique taste blooms across my tongue. He growls deep in his chest before he crushes his lips to mine.

I let him. Later, I'll ask myself why. But with his fingers still drawing out pleasure, despite my orgasm having faded and the fog clouding my judgement—I fucking let him.

Not only that, but I kiss back.

His tongue dives into my mouth, swirling with my own. Fire and electricity spark from our connected lips, and it feels like planets colliding. Like the energy is astronomical, and with every brush and every lick, a new star is being born.

Time ceases to exist as he kisses me until my lips are bruised, and I'm sure I'll come out of this with a permanent stutter in my breathing. At one point, he withdrew his fingers and cupped my face with his hands almost sweetly. A stark contrast to... well, *him* and the way he devours me.

He yanks himself away when our bodies begin to grind ruthlessly and moans slip free, and I'm glad for it. The second he retreats, it's like time and clarity come rushing back in, hitting me over the head like someone just clocked me with a bat.

I don't open my eyes, I just suck in deeply, breathless from that kiss. His body slips out from between my thighs, and I immediately snap my knees inward and drop my feet, hiding myself from his ravenous eyes.

Being consumed by him feels like drowning in water with a live wire in it. Electric currents ravish your body until you're overcome with it. No oxygen. No thought. No control.

And when it's over, he yanks you out of the water. The electricity still dancing across your skin, currents sparking between your bodies, but you can see and think clearly again.

All you can feel is like you've been ripped to shreds. Like your body chemistry has been completely rearranged, and you've come out of that water an entirely different person.

I *hate* him for it.

I hate him more than I've ever hated anyone. The bliss fades, and the familiar feeling of fury and hatred reawaken.

He doesn't speak, but I feel the power bubbling beneath his skin.

I can feel the desire. The thirst. The absolute ravenous beast threatening to tear from his skin.

If it does, I can no longer trust myself to stop him from consuming me from the inside out. And the realization makes me want to cry.

I let it fucking happen again. With the gun, and now this, *why* do I keep letting this happen?

He's forcing himself on me, we both know that. But in the end, he had me wanting it just as much as he did. He had me nearly begging for it. Whether it was his gun fucking me or his tongue, my legs fell open by the time it was over.

Not to mention we just made out like two horny teenagers about to lose their virginity.

I don't know what the fuck to do with that information. Or how the hell to even process it.

A moment of silence passes, the air disturbed only by our heavy breathing.

I'm not strong enough to open my eyes and face what happened. I'm scared of what I'll do—what I'll say.

For the first time, the asshole in the sky finally listens to my pleas and compels this man to reach over, untie the ropes and walk the fuck away.

I force my eyes open and watch him go, swallowing the venom that threatens to spew from my mouth. If I let it loose, I know it'll just result in him carrying out another threat.

He pauses at the door, turning his head just enough for the moonlight to reveal his sharp jawline, the wetness coating his skin, and a hint of a scar.

He doesn't speak, but he does bite his bottom lip hard, trapping whatever meaningless words on his tongue. Right along with the taste of my pussy.

Finally, he turns, the door gently clicking shut behind him. For the second time, I'm left alone. Decimated and in ruins. And again, I let the tears fall freely while I work to pick up the pieces.

June 19th, 1945

John is drunk again. I told him that I needed space, and of course I sneaked off to see Ronaldo.

I know, I know.

My husband is hurt and angry, and to escape his harsh, but validated words, I ran off to cheat.

God, I'm terrible. I truly am.

But I don't know how to stop. And lately, I haven't been feeling the safest. John is drinking more, and though he hasn't hurt me yet, I fear he might.

He seems to grow angrier as the days pass.

He comes home from work and yells at Sera for the simplest things. He's even made her cry a few times.

I've tried to explain to her that we're going through a rough patch. She's fifteen now and old enough to understand that marriages aren't all sunshine and rainbows.

She begged me to work it out with him. But I'm not entirely sure I want to anymore. Even if it's for Sera's sake.

And I know that makes me incredibly selfish.

