

You're Mine by Penny Brooks

Chapter 116

Chapter 116

Easton

"Let's hang out, '

Ryan says to me at lunch the next day. Harper is still at home sick. I think she's even worse today. The fever is gone but she's coughing like crazy and can't stop blowing her nose. It was risky, kissing her yesterday. Spending time with her, but damn it, a cold is worth being able to see my girlfriend, even if it's just for a little while. "What are you thinking? '

I ask him. The cafeteria is packed with people since it's raining outside, and the aroma in this place is kind of awful. Smells like a combo of greasy food and smelly feet. Makes me a little queasy. "Let's go grab a pizza when school's over. Maybe go to your house and play some pool. Catch up without the girls always around? '

"Sounds go— '

"What are you whores planning? '

We both glance up to find Blake standing by our table, his expression easy going. As if he hasn't just screwed us over in an endless amount of ways over the last couple of months. Yes, he's one of my oldest friends. No, I still don't trust him. Anyone who willingly spends time with Aisha has to be given serious side eye. But how does that old saying go? Keep your friends close and your enemies closer? Yeah, that's what I'm trying to do. "Nothing, '

Ryan answers too quickly, his expression guilty as hell. "We're gonna go grab some pizza after school, '

I say, leaning back in my chair. As casual as ever. "Want to come with? '

Blake shrugs, ignoring Ryan. "Sure. Sounds good. '

"Probably head to my house after we're done and play some pool. Or just hang out, '

I continue. "All right. '

Blake nods. "Meet you in the parking lot after seventh period? '

"Perfect. '

We slap hands in a complicated ritual we made up when we were fifteen and stupid and then he's out. "What the fuck, Easton? Why did you invite that asshole? '

Ryan asks me, his voice rising. "Because that asshole used to be our friend, '

I remind him. "Yeah and now you think he's a complete dickwad who's planning our demise with Aisha. '

Ryan makes a face. "You don't trust him. '

"Nope, I don't. '

"So why would you invite him to hang out with us? '

"I want to pick his brain. Figure out what his motives are and where his loyalty lies. I don't understand him. '

"Me either. I don't want to understand him. '

Ryan's eyes narrow. "Fuck that guy. '

"Look, I don't disagree. Just...go along with me. Okay? '

After school Blake meets us in the parking lot and we go to a nearby restaurant that has some of the best pizza in town. Once we make our orders, we get our drinks and find a booth to sit in. "I haven't been here in a long time, '

Ryan says once we're settled in. "Me either, '

Blake says. "Wish we could've ordered a pitcher of beer. '

He sneers at his glass full of Pepsi like it's full of poison. "I got beer back at my house, '

I say. "We can have a few. '

"I'm glad you guys invited me, '

Blake says, his expression oddly sincere. "I've missed you both. '

"Really? '

Ryan leans forward, his brows shooting up. "I figured you were too busy with Aisha to miss us much. '

Blake frowns. "Look, I know she was kind of nasty at the lake house— '

"Kind of? '

I interrupt. Blake sighs. "Fine. She was fucking awful. But she's damaged goods, man. And that storm fucked her up but good. Made her think of her brother and when she goes there... '

Blake shakes his head, making a tsking noise. "I don't want to talk about him, '

I say, hating the misery coursing through my blood. Those memories are best left behind me. "And I really don't want to talk about Aisha either. '

"He's the dickhead who brought her up in the first place. '

Blake waves a hand at Ryan. "Only because I'm trying to figure out if you're still a friend to us, or are you planning on digging up information from us and reporting to that snake you're fucking? '

Ryan throws back at him. "Guys. '

I blow out an irritated breath, already regretting my choice to invite Blake. "Shut the fuck up, okay? '

"Hey boys. '

I go completely still when I hear the too familiar female voice. Fucking Aisha. We all lift our heads to watch her, Julia by her side. The smug looks on their faces make me think they already knew we'd be here. "The fuck? Did you follow us? '

Ryan yells. Aisha visibly flinches. "As if I would follow you. Get over yourself. '

My gaze shifts to Blake. "Did you tell her we'd be here? '

Blake shakes his head. "No way. Uh uh. I wouldn't do that. '

I stare at him, not saying a word. Ryan goes quiet too. 'You have room for two more? '

Julia asks flirtatiously. "No, '

I say, not even looking at her. The girls stand at the head of our table for a few more seconds before they both flounce away, visibly pissed. I don't give a shit. "You told her, '

I say to Blake once the girls are out of earshot. "Swear to God I didn't say a word to her. I don't know how she knew we were here. '

Blake's eyes are wide, his tone insistent. "I mean it when I say I miss you guys. I wouldn't want her to here to fuck up our bro afternoon. '

"Uh huh. '

Ryan shakes his head, nudging me in the ribs. "I told you this wasn't a good idea. '

Blake rears back as if Ryan's words shocked him. Fucking Ryan, opening his big mouth. "What exactly are you doing? '

Blake asks me, his gaze narrowed. "Testing me? Seeing if you can trust me? Fuck this. I don't need friends like you two. '

"We don't need a friend like you either. Get the fuck out of here, '

I snarl. Blake jumps to his feet and grabs his drink. "Fuck off. The both of you. '

We watch him go to Aisha and Julia's table, where he's happily welcomed. Of course. "He's up to no good, '

Ryan mutters as he watches them. "Yeah, he is, '

I say as I watch them too. He most definitely is. But what exactly is he up to?

Chapter 117

Chapter 117

Harper

Panic is the first thing I feel the moment my alarm goes off, waking me for school. My brain is buzzing with all the things I need to do as the semester wraps up. I'm about to start finals and I'm so behind on studying. I've been spending all my time with Easton when I should have my face planted in a book. God, I'm so worried about those tests. If I don't ace them, my parents will kill me, and colleges won't be impressed. My parents don't have the funds to pay for school for both my brother and me, so we have to rely on scholarships. Scholarships that require a certain grade point average. An average that is easier to maintain when you're not spending twenty—four—seven with your sexy boyfriend. At least there hasn't been any drama for the last month. We had an easy, fun-filled Thanksgiving break that didn't involve any spray painting or nasty posts from WHGOSSIP. Things have actually been—dare I say—quiet. So, I don't know why, while I lay in bed, my stomach is churning. Why I feel this knot in my chest. Why my blanket feels far too warm. I kick it off and the cool air in my bedroom hits my skin, making me realize how badly I'm sweating. There's a pool under my back. More on my neck. The room is spinning and my mouth is watering. Oh no. I fly out of bed and run across the hall to the bathroom. Fortunately, I get up before Ryan, so I don't have to bust in while

he's in the shower. I rush over to the toilet and everything in my stomach comes up. It hurts—the pain in my chest, the ache in the pit of my gut, the burning in my throat as I retch. And then I hear, "Got too fucked up with Easton last night? "

My brother is standing in the doorway, laughing at me. "Screw you, "

I say, flushing the toilet and going over to the sink to brush my teeth. I swear I closed the bathroom door, but maybe I d forgotten. Regardless, he's an asshole. "Dude, you've heard me puke my brains out plenty of mornings after I've gotten fucked up with your boyfriend. "

"I didn't get fucked up. "

I didn't. Really. Two beers and a hit of his joint, I can't call that fucked up. But, man, it messed with my stomach, which is funny because I didn't feel all that buzzed when I went to bed last night. I drop some toothpaste on my toothbrush and scrub my teeth, getting the awful taste out of my mouth. Once I spit, I look at Ryan and say, "Close the door, I need to shower. "

"Lightweight, "

he jokes. I give him the finger, but it's too late, he's already gone, and I quickly strip and get under the warm water, trying to relax. But even the heat can't take away this feeling inside me. This heaviness in my chest. The uneasiness in my stomach. I finish washing my hair and body and I get dressed, twisting my hair into a bun, not bothering with makeup. Ryan drives us to school and as I'm walking through the main entrance, Sadie's the first person I see. I loop my arm around hers, resting my face on her shoulder. "Ugh. "

"Babe, what's wrong? "

"No. "

I pause. "I mean, I got sick this morning, but I don't think I'm sick, sick. I'm just stressed AF. "

She pulls me into an empty nook by her locker, giving us privacy from the other students in the hallway. "Talk to me, what's going on? "

"It's stress. It's eating at my stomach. "

She nods sympathetically. "Been there, I know exactly how it feels. Maybe if you talk about it and let it out, you'll feel better. "

"It's my grades, Sadie. If I don't ace these finals, I'm not going to get a scholarship, and then what? No college for me? Or student loans and a mountain of debt for the rest of my life? And where am I going

to go? Where is Easton going? What will that mean for us if we go to different colleges?

'You're right, that's a lot. '

She puts her hands on my shoulders. "But you get the best grades and you're going to kill your finals. If you need to take a few Easton—free days, then do it. Bust out some heavy studying and then"—she smiles hard—"make up for lost time. '

But every minute apart seems like an eternity, especially when, come summer, we'll probably be heading to different states. Ones that will be far from each other. "Has Easton talked to you about his college plans? '

I shake my head. "I haven't asked. I don't even want to bring it up because I don't want to face the reality. We'll probably be plane rides away from one another and then what? I can't afford a plane ticket, never mind buying one once a month. '

"But he can afford it. '

"Sadie ... '

"I know, not the point, '

she says. "But you can't stress about this now. Graduation is months away and so much can happen between then and now- '

"Like me falling even deeper in love with him. '

She pulls me against her, hugging me. "Oh, babe. It'll work out ... I promise. '

"And if it doesn't? '

She's silent for a few seconds, and then, "That's not an option. I don't even want you thinking that way. You and Easton are perfect for each other. '

"Harper? '

Easton says. His voice startles me, and I release Sadie, finding him standing only a few inches away, concern etched across his face. "Hi, '

I whisper to him. He glances at Sadie, and then back at me. "What's wrong? '

He holds out his hand, waiting for me to grab it, and when I don't, he reaches for my waist and pulls me against him. "What happened? Did someone say something to you? Is there more spray paint— '

"No. '

I wrap my arms around his neck. "I was just having a shitty morning, but I'm fine now. '

As he stares at me, I can tell he's trying to get inside my head. I break our eye contact to quickly look at Sadie and mouth, "Thank you, love you. '

She smiles and nods and leaves me alone with Easton. "I don't like seeing you upset. '

"I'm not, '

I assure him. "I mean, I was, more like overwhelmed with school stuff, but Sadie talked me off the ledge. '

"Why didn't you come to me? '

His expression doesn't change, but I see the hurt in his eyes. "Sadie was by the entrance when I came into school. That's the only reason I vented to her first. '

I bury my fingers in his hair, pulling him closer. "I tell you everything, you know that. '

The sound of the bell goes off and I add, "If we're late, it's detention. '

Words we live by now since he no longer has the hook up—something I'm extremely grateful for. "I'll see you next period, '

I tell him, giving him a quick kiss. "Harper— '

"I promise I'm okay, don't worry. '

I chew my lip, knowing it drives him mad. "And you're mine after school. I have a little plan for us. '

"What? '

"What's not the question, Easton ... it's where."

Chapter 118

Chapter 118

Easton

When Harper and I parted at the start of first period, where was the last thing she said to me. Now that we're at her house, sitting on the couch in her living room, she just finished spilling where she had in mind. And I'm a little surprised. 'That's your fantasy? '

I ask, nodding toward the Christmas tree. "To fuck under there? '

The location is weird as hell, but that doesn't stop my dick from getting hard. It's been throbbing to be inside her since the moment we walked into her house. There's something about going all day at school without being able to touch her the way I want to, that always works me up. She bites her nail as she says, "Do you think I'm crazy? '

"Crazy, no. We all have fantasies, Harper. Shit, I have plenty of my own. '

"I've been nervous to tell you, but since my mom put the tree up a few days ago, it's all I've been thinking about. '

"Tell me why. '

She shrugs. "I ... know it's strange. But, since I was a kid, there's always been something about that tree. Maybe it's the scent of the fir needles or the twinkling lights, maybe it's the soft, fuzzy skirt around the bottom—I don't know, I just want it to happen. '

She stops chewing her nail, moving on to her lip, gnawing on that bottom one like it's gum. "And I want it to happen now. Her neediness, the way she's demanding my cock, makes me smile. The truth is, I don't give a fuck if it happens under the tree or in the bathroom under the stairs, like the first time we kissed, or in the janitor's closet at school. I just want to touch her, I want to taste her. I want to come

inside her. I stand from the couch and kneel on the floor in front of her, holding her face with both my hands. "Kiss me. '

Her lips immediately fall against mine, her mouth parting, allowing my tongue in. I don't know how a kiss can turn me on this badly, but something about the way Harper moves her lips causes an urge to take over my body. All I can think about is her pussy. I reach underneath her shirt, fisting her tit through her bra, grazing my thumb back and forth across her nipple. Her breathing increases, each exhale ending in a soft, sweet moan. There's nothing better than the way her body responds to me. It doesn't matter how I'm touching her, she finds pleasure in all of it. But I need more. I lift her off the couch and carry her over to the fuzzy skirt that frames the tree, lying her down on top of it. "Here? '

She nods. "Yes. '

My hand rests against her stomach, lowering until I reach her pussy. "And here. '

She smiles. "Fuck, yes. '

In one quick movement, I have her pants unbuttoned, her zipper down, and her pants pulled off. I don't want to waste a goddamn second. From the moment I saw her this morning, hugging Sadie, clearly upset, all I thought about was making her feel better. My mouth can certainly do that. I get on my stomach, positioning myself between her bent knees, and I shift her panties aside, my tongue licking her clit. "Easton... '

she moans, tugging at my hair, bringing me even closer. What that earns her is a finger, slipped into her wetness. I bury it inside her until I reach my knuckle, that's where I turn my wrist, pulling out, and diving back in. "Oh God, yes, '

she hisses. She tastes so good, her wetness coating me, her tightness sucking me in. I can't wait to dip my cock into her, to feel her pulsing around me, to hear her screaming my name over and over. But I'm going to make sure that happens from my tongue first. I'm going to make sure she comes so hard, she

doesn't even remember what upset her earlier. My hand speeds up, so does my mouth, focusing on the top of her clit, licking it horizontally. My finger tilts forward, finding that place, deep inside, that I know she loves. "Ahhh! '

I add a second finger, her moans turning even louder, and that makes me lick her harder, it makes me finger—fuck her faster. Her thighs fall against my face, and I push them apart as her back arches off the floor, her fingers twist my hair like she's trying to rip it out. Goddamn it, she's so fucking hot. Especially when she comes, like she's about to right now. I can feel the build happening inside her body as she starts to grind her clit against my mouth. Her sounds are filling my ears, her wetness thickening the more I lick, her pussy clenching against my finger. She's seconds away. She just needs that push. And I'm going to give it to her. I suck her clit into my mouth, flicking just the edge with the tip of my tongue, and that's when I hear, "Easton, I'm going to— '

"What the fuck! '

Harper's mother gasps. My tongue goes still. My body goes rigid. My dick goes limp. I don't glance up—I don't dare—but from what I just heard, her mom can't be more than a few feet away. Harper and I react at the same time. She shouts, "Mom, '

and grabs for her jeans. I push myself to my feet, turning my face so her mom doesn't see me wipe her daughter's wetness off my lips. When I finally face both women, I say, "Il, ah— '

"Easton, I think you should leave, '

her mom says, cutting me off. "I... '

I don't know what the fuck to say to that. Harper is trying to wiggle into her jeans, I know she's about to get the wrath of her mother any second. I don't want to leave her, but the

way her mom is looking at me, tells me I have seconds to find the door before she kills me. "I'll call you, '

I tell her. "You will most certainly not, '

her mother says. "Because Harper's phone is going to be taken away ... for the rest of her life. '

"Mom— '

"Are you really going to Mom me? '

her mother snaps. "Because you think you have a right to talk back to me when I just walked into my house and saw you on the floor with your brother's best friend, under our family's Christmas tree, no less, with his face between .. '

Her hand goes to her forehead. "I can't even say it, I'm so disgusted. '

What the hell? Why did she call me her brother's best friend? I'm Harper's boyfriend. I look at Harper, waiting for her eyes to find mine. But they don't, they stay glued on her mother. I just want to grab her by the hand and walk her out of here and take her to my place. "Easton, '

her mother says, forcing my attention to her. "It's time to get moving. '

"Bye, Harper ... '

I keep my eyes on her as I walk toward the door. With my hand on the knob, I add, "I'll see you at school tomorrow. '

The second the door closes behind me, I place my ear against, listening "Sit down, '

her mother shouts. "You have some serious explaining to do. '

Fuck. Me.

Chapter 119

Chapter 119

Harper

"Mom— '

"No. '

She puts her hand in the air. "I need a second. '

She's not supposed to be home. No one is. Ryan is at Sadie's and my parents are always at work at this hour. Mom never gets home at this time, so I don't know what she's doing here. But that's not the point anymore. The point is, she saw us under the tree with Easton's face between my legs. And I'm mortified. I seriously want to die. "Explain yourself, Harper. What would make you think it's appropriate to bring a boy into our home and have him do—that—under the family Christmas tree? Or THAT in general. '

Her hand goes to her forehead, like she has a migraine. "Are you having sex? Are we about to have that kind of talk? '

She swallows, her knuckles turning white. "I didn't know you were even getting close to, to, to what I just witnessed. You've said nothing to us about dating or boys or—sex. '

This conversation would be easier if I could ease into it. Bring up the idea of a boyfriend, mention that we're getting closer, and then revisit it after several months. Guess that opportunity is long gone. "Mom, Easton and I are together. As in, we're dating. As in, we're a serious couple. '

"Why am I just finding out about this? '

I don't know what to say. I didn't even think to mention him to my parents. Maybe it's because, for the longest time, my brother wanted to murder Easton. And then we went from hiding to being totally open and somehow the concept of sharing the news just got lost. Plus, it was nice, not having to explain myself when Easton was around all the time. They just assumed he was here for Ryan. Not me. "I... don't know, '

I tell her. "Harper, I let you go to Easton's lake house for the weekend, I had you stay there an extra night because of the storm. And that whole time, I had no idea you two were—are—intimate. '

Her eyes widen. "How could you do that to me? How could you be so dishonest with me? '

"It wasn't intentional. I didn't do it to upset you. '

'You've always been the most honest, loyal, forthcoming girl—it's your brother who keeps everything locked up like a vault. And now I have to find out like this? Does Ryan know you're dating his best friend or is that another fire I have to prepare myself for? '

I swallow. "He knows. '

"Of course. I'm the last to find out, makes perfect sense. '

"I- "

"Disappointed doesn't even begin to cover it, Harper. I've always trusted you to make mature decisions, I've given you the freedom to do so, and this is how you treat that freedom? With this much disrespect? "

"Mom... "

I reach for her hand, knowing I have to make this better. "What happened today was wrong, I shouldn't have done that. You definitely shouldn't have walked in on it, but you need to know I'm being careful.

Easton and I—we're both being careful. I've waited a long time to do this, I wanted to make sure it was with the right person. "

I nod. "And it is. "

I take a breath, fibbing just a little when I add, "He's been so incredible to me—from day one. "

"Wait ... are you telling me .. "

She pauses, her chest heaving as she takes a massive breath. "You're on birth control? "

"Don't you remember when I went to the doctor last year because my cramps were so bad, and she put me on the pill to help make them better? You came to the appointment with me, Mom. "

"Jesus. "

She grabs her chest, pushing against it. "I didn't even think about it because in the same appointment, you told the doctor you weren't sexually active. "

"And I wasn't—then. "

She continues to stare at me, my stomach in knots. "But now you're using birth control, so you won't get pregnant. "

Disappointment is dripping from her voice. It's killing me. "Mom, I'm a senior in high school, I'm almost eighteen— "

"And I'm still your mother, something you're obviously forgetting. "

She shakes her head. "I knew this was coming one day, I'm not naive. But to find out like this? "

Her face drops, her stare now on the floor. “I think I need another minute. ’

She gets up from the couch, pacing the living room. Every time she looks up at the tree, she turns, and heads in the opposite direction. When she finally stops in front of me, she holds out her hand. “Give me your phone. ’

“Mom— ’

“Your phone. Now. ’

“Because I’m having sex? ’

She threatened to take it when Easton was here, but I didn’t think she was serious. I thought I could make this better if I explained everything. And now ... it’s worse? ‘This is my house, my floor that I found you on”— she grabs the phone from my hand—“and your father and I pay for this phone line. Until you buy your own phone and pay for service, then I’ll take it away whenever I damn well please. ’

She points to the stairs. “I want you to go to your room right now and I want you to think about respect and what that exactly means and the lack of respect that you showed this family today. ’

She shoves the phone into her back pocket. “I also want you to think about how wrong you were by not telling me about you and Easton—how allowing that boy upstairs, allowing you to stay at his lake house is an entirely different situation now that I know he’s sleeping with my daughter. ’

Her hand is back on her chest, holding it like her heart is about to fall out. My arms wrap around my stomach. “I’m sorry. ’

“I don’t want to hear it. ’

She points to the stairs. “Go. ’

I feel the tears start to pool the minute I stand and hurry for the stairs, rushing up the long flight and running into my room, shutting the door behind me. No phone. No trust—it’s gone as far as my mom is concerned and the minute she tells Dad, it’ll be gone with him, too. I feel sick. I look at my bed and almost throw myself on it, burying my face under a pillow to scream, when the sight of my laptop catches my attention. I sit at my desk and click the screen alive, pulling up my email and typing a message to Easton. Me: I’m so sorry Mom barked at you, ugh, she’s so pissed. She took my phone, and this is the only way I can communicate. FML. I can’t believe she came home. I mean, talk about bad timing, right? I get up to go to bed when a message almost immediately comes into my inbox. Easton: Are you okay? Me: Yes. No. I don’t know. She’s really mad, I know she’s going to tell my dad. Maybe I should have told them about you ... I stare at my inbox, waiting for him to respond. Several minutes pass and there’s still

nothing from him. I go to my bed, looking back at the screen every few seconds to see if a message comes in. But nothing. Not even after the most awkward family dinner ever. Not even when I climb into bed to go to sleep. Not even when I wake up the next morning for school after the most restless night ever. Is Easton ... mad? But what did I do wrong?

Chapter 120

Chapter 120

Easton

I'm not surprised to find Harper at my locker when I get to school the next morning. I expected her to be standing there, looking pouty, just like she is, especially after not emailing her back last night. Truth is, I was fucking pissed. And I still am. "I'm not in the mood, '

I tell her. I twist the padlock to enter the combination and pull the door to my locker open once it's unlocked. "But why? What happened? What did I do? I can't handle my parents being angry at me and you, too, Easton— '

"That's the whole thing, Harper. I can't fucking figure out why you wouldn't tell your parents about us. Am I this disgusting little secret to you? '

She backs up, like I just spit in her face, "What? Is that really what you think? '

"Now I do. '

I grab two books, toss them into my backpack, and slam the locker shut. "I had you over to my house for dinner, you sat with my parents, and it was clear to them—to everyone—that you're my girlfriend. Yet, I'm this big fucking secret to your family. How do you think that makes me feel? '

"I... '

Her eyes are filling with tears. "I didn't even think of it that way. '

"Because you didn't think and that's a fucking problem. '

"__ '

"Do you know how much I've changed for you? I've settled down, I've committed, I've basically ruined a friendship with Blake all because of you. And what are you doing for me? Lying to your family about us being together? '

She shakes her head, the first drip falling from her eyes. "No. It's not like that. You know it's not like that. '

"I do? Tell me. '

"I love you, Easton. '

I sigh. It kills me that she's crying. That her parents are upset with her, that I'm upset with her, that she's feeling raw as hell. But, damn it, she's wrong, and I don't know how to make it any clearer to her. "What now? '

I ask her. "Your mother catches me eating your pussy and now I'm supposed to just go over to your house, like nothing happened? Like every time she looks at me, she's not visualizing me on the floor, feasting on her daughter? '

"Oh God ... I don't know, '

she says in almost a whisper. "They're not talking to me, so I don't know what's going to happen. '

'You need to make this right. '

"I will. '

She reaches for me. "I promise. '

I say nothing as she grips my waist, trying to pull me closer to her. "Please love me right now. I had the worst night, I'm falling apart from all this fighting. Everyone is mad at me, and my heart can't take it. '

"Because you fucked up. '

She wipes her eyes. "I know, Easton, and I'm going to fix it. They know now—about us, that we're having sex, that I'm on birth control so I won't get pregnant, there are no secrets anymore. '

"And your mother wants me to fucking die, and your dad probably wants to slit my throat. Thank God he didn't catch us. '

She winces at the description, and then shrugs. "Maybe? '

She puts up her hand the second I start to respond and says, "But they would anyway, think about it. I'm their little girl, every dad wants to kill the man their seventeen—year—old daughter is sleeping with. '

She has a point. That doesn't make me any happier. "I'm still pissed. '

"I know. '

When she tries to pull me closer and I don't budge, she wraps her arms around my back, burying her face against my chest. "All thought about last night was why you weren't messaging me back. It broke me, Easton. '

I can feel her tears soak through my shirt. "I needed you. I was hurting so badly. '

Fuck me. I hold the back of her head, my fingers lost in her wet hair. "I didn't want to abandon you, but fuck, Harper, that shit is wrong, and you know it. You ——hurt me. '

"I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry. '

We stand there in silence, hugging each other, the anger just starting to simmer out of me. I don't know how she's going to make this better. I also don't know how I'm going to face her parents again, which

causes a real problem because of my friendship with Ryan. I can only imagine the next time I'm around them, I'm going to feel like the biggest piece of shit. I don't want that. I've respected their daughter. I didn't push her to fuck me. I made sure she was on the pill before I stopped using a condom. I've honored her—in ways I've never honored other women in the past. The drama, lately, never fucking ends. I kiss the top of her head, holding her tighter, when the bell rings. "We have to get to class, '

I tell her. "You're going to have to let go. '

She squeezes for a second longer, and then looks up at me. "Favor? '

"What? '

"Can I borrow your phone? '

I chuckle. "Why? '

"Seriously? '

She snorts. "I haven't seen my phone in over twelve hours and my entire life is on it. I just need to log into some of the apps and see if there are messages waiting for me. '

I reach into my pocket and hand her mine. "We're not done talking about this. '

"I know. '

She leans up on her tiptoes and kisses me on the lips. "I'll see you after class. '

She then hurries down the hall. Since I'm headed in the opposite direction, I watch her ass for a few seconds longer, the way that perfect—shaped heart moves as she walks, and then I turn toward my class. "Lovers spat? '

I hear. Of course Blake's here. Of. Fucking. Course. "Stop with the jealous remarks, Blake. They make you sound pathetic. '

I don't even bother to turn toward him, he doesn't deserve my eye contact. "At least I would know how to keep her happy. '

All he saw was Harper's tears and my anger. And he assumed. Well, he assumed fucking wrong. Now, I turn, my teeth grinding together when I say, "Why don't you mind your own fucking business and stop chiming in when you don't know what the fuck you're talking about. '

He smiles, like the motherfucker is getting a blowjob. "Because I do know what the fuck I'm talking about. '

When will this dude ever stop? "Yeah? Then you'd know this one wasn't on me. Now go hump the urinal, that's about the only hole in this school that will put out for you. '

I walk into my class and take a seat next to Ryan. I can feel his eyes on me, and it takes everything I have to look at him. "Listen— '

He puts his hand up. "I heard—my parents yelled all night about it. I don't want to talk about it, Easton, my fucking ears are still bleeding. '

I glance straight ahead, my fingers winding together, my patience so thin, I want to flip this desk over and throw it toward the front of the class. But there's something I need to know. Something that will make this situation even worse. "We good? '

I ask him. He takes a few seconds to respond, and then he finally nods. At least one thing is going right today.