

UNBROKEN- bonus content – Riley Edwards

## Unbroken

### Deleted Bonus Scene

\*This bonus scene contains spoilers and should only be read AFTER Unbroken part 1.

Riley Edwards

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## Chapter One

Mac

“If Jacob would’ve just minded his own Goddamn business, none of this would be happening,” Jimmy muttered under his breath.

“The fuck you say?” I asked.

Before I knew what I was doing, I was on my feet, fists clenched at my side. This little scrawny motherfucker had no right uttering Jacob’s name. Jacob hated Jimmy. He despised his entire family. That is one of the reasons he took Ava and fled from Texas.

“At least uncuff him before you beat his ass,” Austin suggested, egging me on. I didn’t need any encouragement. This asshole was definitely getting a beat down before I took him to the station.

“Mac, sit down.” Reid stopped my approach. “Jimmy, explain what Jacob has to do with this.” Reid was always the voice of reason. He was the calm, to my short temper.

Reid and Rick were in the middle of some non-verbal conversation, and all I could think about was how I was going to kick the hell out of this son-of-a-bitch. Ava and JJ were in danger because of this dirty piece of shit.

“Nothing. Please just give me my money and let me leave. Everyone’s problems will go away. You’ll never see me again.”

I was fast losing what was left of my patience, and my oath to protect and serve was all but out the window. I was having a hard time remembering I was sworn to uphold the law.

Rick slid his tablet across the table to Reid, he picked it up and quickly swiped the screen.

“Let me see your hands, Jimmy,” Reid instructed.

I didn’t know where Reid was going with this line of interrogation, but years of experience told me not to question Reid.

“Let me have my bag, and I’ll leave. You have no idea what you’re getting yourself involved in. I am begging you, let it be,” Jimmy pleaded.

“Not gonna happen. Why don’t you tell me about the tattoos on your knuckles?” Reid asked.

I looked down at Jimmy’s hands. He was now trying to hide them under the table. And sure enough, he had new ink across his fingers and knuckles.

“Leave it. Give me my bag. If that money is not delivered by tomorrow, no one is safe. Why the fuck do you think I came to your office? It wasn’t to chat, Reid, I just came here to pick up my bag,” Jimmy argued.

“Who is no one? Who won’t be safe?” Reid yelled in Jimmy’s face.

Jimmy remained silent.

“Austin, pull his hands up on the table.” Reid motioned for Austin’s help.

Thank God he didn’t ask me. At this point, I had zero self-control. If I could get close enough, I would strangle the motherfucker.

“Who are you dropping the rake off too?” Reid tried again.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Jimmy said.

“The rake, Jimmy. You know the money you’re transporting. The house’s take on illegal gambling. What’s the going rate these days? Ten, twenty percent? Who the fuck are you delivering the motherfucking rake too?” Reid slammed his hands on the table in front of Jimmy, spittle hitting him in the face.

What an idiot. Maybe I wouldn’t have to kick Jimmy’s ass after all. By the look of it, Reid was already there. One more stupid move on Jimmy’s part and he was a goner.

“Okay, you stupid little shit, let me break this down for you. In the five years since your brother’s murder, I’ve learned a thing or two about the Diamonds. Five years ago, they were low-level nobodies trying to make a name for themselves. Naturally, vice would’ve never made the connection between Jenkins and a bunch of thugs in Texas. I didn’t make the connection either. Since then, they have slithered their way up the food chain. You wear their brand. So that tells me that you run with the very men that called a hit out on your brother. That leads to me having to ask what your role was in his murder? How would a bunch of nobodies in Texas know anything about a San Francisco cop?”

I sucked in a breath, trying my hardest not to destroy the room. If Reid was saying what I thought he was, James Kelley would die tonight.

“Lock that shit down, Mac. A dead bird cannot sing. And Jimmy, I suggest you start singing. This might be your only shot to save your life. You’ll be lucky if Mac doesn’t kill you himself. If he doesn’t, I’ll put the word out on the street that you gave up Fuentes. That’s who’s runnin’ the Diamonds right now, isn’t it? The dumb little fuck tattooed *‘Thief in law’* across his damn forehead trying to pretend he’s badass. He couldn’t even come up with something original; he had to quote a fucking Russian. Can you believe that lame shit? Stupid ass thinks he’s as badass as Vor.”

“You wouldn’t!” Jimmy yelled and started to thrash around in his seat.

“Why is that, Jimmy?”

“You think you’re so smart. You don’t know shit. You won’t do anything you just threatened me with because if you do, Ava and JJ will die. They’re collateral. The Diamonds know everything about them. Fucking Jacob started all of this! I had one delivery to make to Redding, thought it would be nice to stop off and see my brother. Nosy prick searches my car and finds three keys of coke hidden in the trunk.”

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My hands flew to my head, and I yanked on my hair... motherfucker... three keys!

“Holy fucking shit. Three kilos.” I blurted out. “A week before Jacob was killed an anonymous tip was called in about some cocaine that was found in an alley. Jacob was the first on the scene which was odd because we were off duty. He said he heard the call and was close by; there were three kilos.”

“Three keys of my coke. You don’t steal three keys of coke without being put in the ground. I told him not to do it. That I would not die because he was a goodie two-shoes sellout pig. I told him! He knew I would tell my crew who stole the drugs. Jacob just laughed. He was a cocky prick and thought that stupid badge would protect him. All it did was get him dead.”

Jimmy sold his own flesh and blood out.

I couldn’t stop the memories from rushing back.

It was Jacob’s birthday. He was so excited to get home. He knew Ava had something big planned. She was never any good at keeping secrets and had been inadvertently dropping hints for days. All he had talked about was that Ava must be pregnant, and he wasn’t supposed to know. He knew his wife would be upset if she had known she ruined the surprise. Jacob being the man he was remained silent, he would’ve never spoiled her fun. I had never seen a man love a woman so much.

In my mind, the only man that would ever come close to loving her as much as Jacob did was Reid. I had watched Reid over the last four years slowly making his move. I would’ve put a stop to it, if I thought for one second he wouldn’t love her the way she deserved. Her and JJ both. I wasn’t lying to Reid when I told him Jacob would be happy it was him. Jacob respected Reid, both as a man and as an investigator.

After Jacob’s murder, it was Reid that helped me get through the pain of losing my best friend. Unfortunately, he understood all too well.

Rick slammed his laptop shut pulling me from my thoughts.

“You need to hear this, boss. Dustin unwrapped all the money bundles. There were trackers in two of them. No doubt it’s already been tracked. Jimmy’s crew knows what a fuck up he is. There is no way they wouldn’t’ve been trackin’ that shit on an hourly basis. I would expect more company soon,” he explained.

“Fuck. Just give me the money back.” Jimmy now sounded like the whiny little bitch he was.

“Have the trackers been disabled?” Reid asked Austin.

“Hell, no. Everyone knows better than to disable them here.” Austin answered.

This could get ugly faster than we were ready for. “Hey, dip shit, do something right for a change. Give Austin the address in Redding where the money is supposed to be delivered.” I tried to get Jimmy to talk.

“Go fuck yourself, pig. Remember when Ava and Jacob Junior die, just like Jacob did, their blood is on your hands.” Jimmy sat staring at the wall.

Jimmy was going to die, and soon.

“Have Dustin drive the trackers up to Redding. Tell him to leave them anywhere that is abandoned. Reformat the security footage drive, smash it, then take the shredded paper bin out back and burn it along with the drive. Lots of lighter fluid.” Reid instructed Austin and turned to me. “You do what you need to do. I’m taking Ava and JJ out of here. Roni will be leaving for the day. Austin and Rick are at your disposal. The trash dump is vacant and ready for use. It’s yours if you want it. We all have your back, brother. You know I would love nothing more than to help you, but Ava and JJ are my priority.”

I gave Reid a chin lift in acknowledgment.

“One last thing, Jimmy. Who else did you piss off? Vandalizing Ava’s house seems like someone just wanted you to know you’re being watched. If the Diamonds were here already and they thought you had double-crossed them, you’d be dead.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Jimmy answered.

“Piece of shit!” Reid spat out and slammed the door behind him.

That about summed Jimmy up, a piece of shit.

“You two ready to roll?” I asked Rick and Austin.

“Yep.” They answered in unison.

“You won’t do anything. You’re a fucking pig. Hurry up and take me to the station so I can be processed. You and I both know I’ll be out in a few hours, and when I do, Fuentes will be my first call. He’ll slit your throat, and after that, he’ll find Ava and JJ. Think about that copper. Or you can give me my bag, and I’ll be on my way.” Jimmy mustered up all the false bravado he had. He knew Fuentes wasn’t going to bail him out of this. He was bluffing. He wanted the money so he could run.

Jimmy had no idea that the words he just spoke were exactly what I needed to absolve myself from any guilt I might’ve felt after I killed him. I would’ve been willing to live with the guilt, but now, I’ll go to about my life with a clean conscious. This was no longer about avenging my best friend’s murder; this was about necessity. I needed to keep Jacob’s family safe. Ava and JJ would not be harmed.

“You’re right Jimmy. Let’s move this along. The faster you’re processed, the sooner I can stop breathing the same air as you.” I bluffed. This fucker wasn’t going anywhere near the station.

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“Where the fuck are we?” Jimmy thrashed around in the backseat.

No one bothered to answer him. We pulled to a stop in front of the run-down shack that Reid liked to call a cabin and parked.

“Seriously, Mac. What the fuck? Just take me to the station. I won’t call Fuentes. You’ll never see me again.” Jimmy jerked in his cuffs in the backseat.

The reality of the situation was sinking in. Good. I hoped the little shit was pissing in his pants. A loud cracking sound had me turning around in my seat.

“Motherfucker wouldn’t sit still,” Rick said as he sat back in his seat, rubbing his elbow.

Jimmy’s nose had blood pouring out of it, dripping off his chin and landing on his lap.

“You broke my Goddamn nose,” Jimmy yelled.

Rick just shrugged his shoulders and chuckled. “Stupid fuck, be happy that’s all I broke. I’m leaving the fun stuff for Mac,” Rick taunted.

Rick opened his door and yanked Jimmy across the backseat and out of the car. Not caring that Jimmy fell to the ground and was struggling to get to his feet. We were in the middle of the Tennessee Valley outside of the Golden Gate National Recreation Center. The bastard had nowhere to go he could fight to stand all he wanted. Hell, he could get to his feet and scream for all I cared. There was no one to hear his pleas.

Reid purchased this particular piece of property because it had one valuable feature. A fallout shelter. There were very few bomb shelters in the San Francisco area. With two major fault lines running through San Francisco, earthquakes made it impossible to have basements and underground shelters. However, this piece of property was fitted with the shelter back in the 50’s. Surprisingly, it had survived many major earthquakes.

Austin grabbed one of Jimmy’s arms and pulled him up to his feet. His face now covered in blood and dirt.

“You don’t have to do this. Keep the bag. I swear to God you’ll never hear from me again,” Jimmy begged.

“Changed your tune already? I thought you were at least man enough not to start begging for your lousy life until the gun came out. Pussy,” Austin spit out in disgust.

“Where is all your big talk now, fuck face? Take it like a man, and shut your mouth,” Rick added.

I did not take pleasure in Jimmy’s fear like I thought I would. The gravity of what I was about to do weighed heavily on my mind. Taking another man’s life was not without consequence. I had to take a moment and think about the ramifications of my actions.

Before I killed James Kelly, I had to be morally straight, clear in mind and heart. Would I be willing to go to jail for the rest of my life if I got caught? To keep JJ and Ava safe, abso-fucking-lutely. Could I live with myself knowing I killed my best friend’s brother? Again, the answer came fast, yes I could.

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“Let’s go, Jimmy.” I grabbed his other arm and started walking him towards the house.

Austin let go of the arm he was holding. “You want company down there?” he asked.

“I got it from here. You and Rick have helped enough. Probable deniability and all that,” I answered.

“You know that doesn’t mean shit to us right?” Rick said and pulled a 9mm with a silencer attached out of the waistband of his jeans. “It’s clean, and there’s already hollow-points in the magazine. We wouldn’t want a ricochet down there.” He winked handing me the gun.

I handed him my service weapon and replaced it in my holster with the new gun Rick gave me. “Appreciate it. But, this is on me, something I need to do alone,” I answered.

Jimmy remained silent as I drug him through the interior of the house and down the stairs into the underground room. For that I was grateful. I was tired of hearing him run his mouth.

The room was almost empty, a toolbox, and a chair was the only furniture in the space. There was also industrial eye hooks screwed into the concrete walls. If someone were to happen upon the room, they wouldn’t be any the wiser that this was Reid’s personal torture chamber.

“Mac, seriously! Please. You don’t have to do this. I won’t tell anyone. I’m sorry. No one will hurt Ava.” Jimmy’s tears rolled down his face mixing with the dirt and blood.

I didn’t bother attaching his cuffs to the eye bolts, nor did I secure him to the chair. This was not about tormenting him. There was no information to be gained. This was simply his execution. I would allow him the dignity of standing like a man.

I pulled the gun from my holster and pressed the muzzle to his head.

*I’m sorry brother, but I have to do this. I have to protect Ava and Jacob Junior. There is no other way. I know you would not want revenge for your death, you were the understanding and forgiving one. But, I need this Jacob. Please forgive me. JJ and Ava miss you so much. Hell, I miss you. I promised you I would always protect your family. This is me keeping my promise.*

I flinched when the warm sticky blood hit me in the face and quickly pulled up the hem of my shirt to wipe off the blood and tissue that was now dripping down my chin. The metallic copper smell instantly overpowered the musk of the concrete shelter causing me to gag. I didn’t bother to spare Jimmy a second glance as I turned to leave. My job was done.

James Kelley was dead.

I took no glory in delivering the punishment he deserved, but I did feel infinitely lighter now that the threat of him was eliminated. Ava and JJ would be safe now, and Reid could finally claim the family he had always wanted.

## Chapter Two

Mac

Rick and Austin met me at the top of the steps, both men stood off to the side with identical stances; hands on their hips and somber looks across their faces. I didn't want to stop and have a postmortem of the last ten minutes, I just wanted the fuck outta this house. With my head down I tried to rush past them.

"Take your clothes off." Rick stopped me.

Without bothering to look up I quickly rid myself of my blood splattered clothing and dropped them on the plastic tarp that one of them had the foresight to put down.

"Go and shower. There are clothes on the counter," Austin told me.

Wordlessly I walked naked down the short hall to the bathroom. My bare feet sticking to the plastic as I walked. I could hear the tarp being rolled up and Rick and Austin talking to each other. Their words didn't register as I adjusted the water temperature before I stepped in. My mind was still on the dead man downstairs.

I looked around the shower and noted there was a single bar of Irish Spring soap and an industrial bottle of bleach. I quickly lathered up with the soap and tried my hardest to ignore the bleach.

I was a cop, sworn to uphold the law.

Yet, here *I* was the fucking criminal, in the shower at a crime scene. My crime scene, washing away evidence. Jesus.

Clenching my teeth, I struggled to hold in the scream that was trying to force its way out. James Fucking Kelley brought shit to Ava's door and forced me to end his life, but that was not what had me wanting to scream out in frustration. Once again, I had pissed Ava off, and she pushed me away. I knew what she was doing even if she didn't.

She had been punishing me for the last five years. Each year it got more and more noticeable. Things were getting ready to come to a head. If for no other reason, I was happy this was happening now that Reid had decided to man up and claim her. Ava was going to need him during the fallout. She blamed me for not protecting Jacob. Oh no, she never actually voiced that, those words never came out of her mouth, but her attitude screamed it.

I had broad shoulders, and I could take the blame and punishment if it meant Ava had peace of mind. If she needed someone to hate, to make her sleep at night, I would take that too. Truth be told, I blamed myself as well. If I just been with him that day, maybe I could've saved him. Instead, I was home in bed, with some faceless woman who's name I couldn't even remember.

My thought's drifted back to James Kelley. He was not the first man that I had killed and being a San Francisco cop, I doubt he would be my last. But he was the first man I had

murdered. And I was feeling it, deep in my gut. Instead of the guilt or remorse, I thought I should've felt, I was relieved and indifferent. What kind of man did that make me?

Fuck!

A few deep breaths later my stomach settled, and I rinsed the suds off. I needed to get the hell out of this house and fast. Turning the water as hot as I could manage I picked up the bottle of bleach and went about cleaning down the shower stall, letting the bleach splash my legs and feet before it swirled down the drain. Once the entire bottle was empty, I stood and let the hot water pound on my back. Slowly I felt the tension in my shoulders loosen. James Kelley had to die, there was no other way. Ava and JJ would never be safe as long as he was breathing.

*I did the right thing. The only thing I could do.*

By the time I made my way outside only a small pile of ash was left of the tarp and my clothes. Austin was stomping out the last of the embers while Rick raked the ashes into the dirt. I didn't even want to think about how many times they had done this before.

“You ready?” I asked.

“Yep, cleanup is on its way,” Austin answered.

Rick tossed the rake into the trunk and slammed it closed. A sound that reminded me of the finality of the situation.

I waited until we were back on the 101 almost to the Golden Gate bridge before I powered back on my phone. My nerves were shot, and adrenaline still pumped through my body. I needed another shower and a release. And there was only one person who could give me what I needed. My hands shook as I typed out a text.

Mac: I need you. Are you home?

I tapped the back of my phone impatiently waiting for the reply. Seconds later my phone beeped.

LB: Now? Yes, I am home. But I had things to do this afternoon. I just saw you this morning.

I tried my hardest to tamp down my annoyance. We had been doing this song and dance for the better part of six months. I was getting increasingly annoyed every time she tried to pull away from me. It was almost time for us to have a little chat about where our relationship was going. I wasn't going to be her dirty little secret for much longer. Either she got on board, or I was gonna have to cut her loose.

Mac: Yes, now. I will be there in 30. And, you better be there when I get there, or you'll find yourself over my knee. And it won't be the fun kind, sweet girl.

## Chapter Three

Mac

It ended up taking closer to forty-five minutes before I got to her house. I had to stop at Reid's office to get my car, and traffic was a nightmare this time of the day. She lived in a little guest bungalow in the Outer Sunset district. That meant I had to take the bypass through the park or go out of my way twenty blocks or more. I ground my teeth as I took the bypass. I was not in the mood for San Francisco drivers, I had to get to where I was going. The tension was quickly bubbling to the surface I needed her, now.

By the time, I made it to the door I was vibrating with need, and want. She wasted no time answering and allowing me to enter. She was fully nude, wearing only a beautiful choker. It was dainty and delicate just like her. A small token of my ownership. One that instantly calmed my nerves.

I reached out and traced the gold links that circled her throat. God, she was stunning. I brushed her shiny golden blonde hair over her shoulder. As much as I loved her beautiful waves I wanted an unobstructed view of her perfect tits. Skin pebbled when I traced a line from her collar bone down to her areola. Her head fell forward and her nipple hardened under my touch. Perfect.

“You are beautiful. Do you hear me, Laura? Absolutely beautiful,” I said.

Laura's head snapped up, and her eyes widened as she searched my face. I was sure she was trying to find an answer for my strange behavior. I rarely saw her twice in one day, and I had never demanded her presence.

She was always watching, always analyzing, she always had her guard up. It was starting to piss me off. I debated whether or not I should talk to her now, or wait until I was in a better state of mind. I wanted her tied in knots just as much as I was. But she never allowed herself to completely let go.

That was part of why we had started this journey. Her need to lose control, and my need to take it. When I saw her in Stripes a local BDSM club, I was both ecstatic to find out she had similar tastes I did, and furious she was there alone. That night I sat at the bar nursing my Jack and Coke, watching her from a distance. She didn't know I was watching, she had no clue I was studying her every move. I waited to approach her until she was fixin' to leave, purse in hand, and headed for the door. The shocked look on her face when she saw me, and the stuttered excuses why she was there was comical.

It took me all of thirty minutes, to lay out the ground rules, and go over limits before I had her bent over the spanking bench. Fast? Maybe. Necessary? Absolutely. If I had allowed her to walk out of Stripes, she would never had summoned up the courage to come back. It was very obvious from my observation that she needed to be there. It was a month of playing in the main public areas of the club before I took her into a private room. Another month after that before I played with her outside of the club. She was new to domination, bondage, toys, and punishment. For the first three months of our D/s contract, I was painstakingly slow in my exertion of control.

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Only giving her more when those beautiful amber eyes of hers lit up in wonderment. This was about the journey after all, and I wanted her to enjoy every second of it.

I'd had my eye on Laura since the day Ava hired her at Del Mar's. There was something mesmerizing about her. It was like, she was funny and outgoing until she remembered she wasn't supposed to be and clammed up.

"Thank you," she whispered. "May I?" She glanced down at my cock, and I knew what she wanted.

"Yes, honey, you may," I answered and prepared myself for what was to come.

Her small hands worked my zipper down and pulled my cock out. Never bothering to remove my pants or even push them down further than my thighs.

With my cock in her hand, she positioned me at her lips, that pretty pink tongue of hers snaking out to lick my engorged head. Closing my eyes, I allowed the sensation to wash over me. When she took me fully into her warm mouth, I sucked in a breath. Heaven.

All too quickly she had me ready to blow my load, I pulled my cock from her mouth, hoisted her up and carried her to the kitchen table.

"Hands above your head." Wordlessly she complied.

I stared down at the beauty laid out before me, she spread her thighs wide giving me the perfect view of shaved pussy. I needed a taste, a single swipe of my tongue over her opening had the sweetness of her exploding in my mouth.

I stood to my full height admiring her puffy pink lips my cock resting at her entrance begging me to slide home.

With a single thrust, I was fully seated inside of her slick cunt. Home. It should've scared the shit outta me that I thought of her as home, but it didn't.

After my wife fucked me every which way but Sunday when she ran off with her yoga instructor. How clichéd was that? I hadn't been in a monogamous relationship since. I hadn't wanted a woman to need me, or more than that I hadn't wanted to need a woman. But, the truth was, I needed Laura. I needed her like the very air I breathed. Over the last six months, I had fallen for this elusive woman.

I gave her a few hard thrusts when I had her panting nearing orgasm, I pulled out letting my cock rest on her clit. She let out a groan of impatience that had me smiling. I loved that my girl loved my cock, she was greedy for it, and she didn't mind me knowing just how much she wanted it.

I belatedly realized I hadn't kissed her yet. I needed to rectify that. I bent over and took her mouth making sure my cock rubbed her sensitive clit in sync every brush of tongue on hers.

She gave as good as she got. Her hands finding purchase in my hair pulling the strands not allowing me to break the kiss. Yeah, my girl liked my mouth too. She liked it when I was kissing

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her, and she loved it, even more, when I was between her legs licking her cunt until she screamed her orgasm.

“I need your cock, baby,” Laura said against my lips.

Normally I would make her wait, draw out the anticipation. But I needed her warmth. It soothed me, made me forget all the fucked-up shit I saw on a daily basis. And right now, I needed to lose myself in her.

“Greedy,” I replied and reached between us, dragging the head of my cock over her clit one last time before I pushed in again.

“Aiden,” she breathed.

Fuck, but I loved when she called me Aiden. No one calls me by my first name, only her. And it sounded fucking sweet coming from her lips.

“Yes, honey?” I teased only giving her the first couple inches of my cock.

“More. Harder. Please.”

I stood back up, put both of her legs over my shoulders, reaching for that perfect angle. The one I knew would have us both seeing stars in mere minutes. Her pussy was tight, sleek like velvet. Dare I say it, it was Goddamn magical the way she could milk my cock faster than any woman. Ever. Hands down, the best pussy I had ever had.

Those eyes I loved so much came to mine, half-mast yellowish amber to my blue. And I snapped. I gave her everything I had, hard, fast, and rough. The way my girl liked it.

I knew she liked it, there was no denying she liked it when I felt the first splash of her come hit just below my bellybutton. Yeah, my girl could squirt. When we had that perfect rhythm, and the head of my cock hit that secret place inside of her, she went wild. And by wild, I mean, full-body participation. Her head shook back and forth, her hips thrust up to meet mine her hands pulled at her cuffs if she was bound. If not she found somewhere to touch, grab and scratch.

Best fuck I ever had.

When the pulsations in her cunt subsided, I let myself go. A few more deep thrusts and I pulled out jerking my cock over her belly. We both watched as my come marked her soft skin, with a few more jerks, I let the last of my orgasm hit her tits before I slowed my strokes and enjoyed the waning sensation.

Best Goddamn pussy ever.

“Aiden.” She smiled and let her head rest back on the hardwood kitchen table.

“Right here, honey.”

I kissed her left ankle trailing a path over the surgical scar and continued to her knee. I knew the other leg had almost an identical scar. Another thing she wouldn't let me in about.

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That would change, and soon.

## Chapter Four

Laura

Mac kissed over my scars making my skin crawl. I hated those scars. I hated that Mac always kissed them so reverently. Those scars reminded me of everything that was stolen from me. I knew he had questions about them. He had asked more than once now what they were from. I would never tell him. I would never tell anyone why I had them. They were disgusting and hideous. The day I got those scars my life had ended. Every dream, every hope, everything.

As a matter a fact, he had been asking all sorts of questions now. I guess I couldn't blame him that is what normal people did after all. Ask questions, get to know the person that they've been fucking for the better part of six months.

I was so stupid. I knew better. I had outstayed this stop, I had to get moving.

And soon.

Not to mention Mac was a cop, a detective no less. He was different from anyone else I had met since I had left New York. Working in restaurants and as a low-level file clerk hadn't ever put me in the path of someone who could very easily wade through my bullshit, or puzzle together my lies.

The truth was, I'd never allowed anyone to get so close. I had never formed a friendship like I had with Ava, or invited a man into my life. Not one single time.

This was the hardest part of being with Mac. When we were in a D/s scene or when we were having sex, it was easy. My mind was occupied, we were like two crazy people that couldn't get enough of each other.

I wasn't thinking about my past or my future. I wasn't trying my hardest to ignore his tender kisses. His soft touches. He deserved better than this. He needed more than I could ever give him. In a different life, he would've been the perfect man for me. I would've allowed myself to get lost in him. *I wanted to get lost in him.*

But I couldn't. It wasn't in my cards. I had been dealt a shitty hand, and now all I could do was try my hardest not to lose what was left of my shitty life. I had to cut him loose and move on. I was a bad bet that was for sure. And Mac was a good man and had already lost once. He didn't deserve what I was going to do to him.

I already had enough money stashed away, and my next stop planned out. I would've already left but the anniversary of Ava's husband's death is in a few weeks. I want to be here for that. Ava has been a good friend to me. She had never pried or asked too many questions. Our friendship was easy and superficial. The only way either of us could handle a friendship. It was perfect.

So, I was waiting for that, then I'd be gone. Just like all the times before, I would sneak away in the middle of the night with a few backpacks of clothes and ditch my fake identity. I'd

buy new credentials when I got where I was going. I had changed my name, so many times in the last few years, I barely remembered my real name..

I sneak away like the fraud I was. A coward. Too afraid to even say goodbye the people I had met. Admittedly, I had never stayed in a place this long, so it never had hurt this bad to leave. All the times before it was more of a relief. I could shed the person I was pretending to be and start over.

Always starting over.

“I’m sorry I was so short in my text message,” Mac said against my skin, “It has been a shitty day. But, I shouldn’t have demanded you be here.”

“It’s okay. I was more surprised is all. Ava and JJ okay?” I asked.

Mac and Ava had been bickering a lot lately. It didn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out it was bothering Mac.

“Yeah. They are fine. Reid is actually with them now.”

Well if it didn’t have to do with Ava, then I wasn’t going to pry. It really wasn’t my business. We shouldn’t be talking at all. He came over, did incredible mind boggling things to my body then left. That was the way this was supposed to go. But more and more he stayed after to chat.

“Come here,” Mac said and pulled me to a sitting position.

Before I knew what he was doing, he wrapped my legs around his waist and carried me to my bedroom. My common sense was screaming at me to make him leave, that this was the last thing on earth I needed to be doing, entertaining the idea of lying in bed curled into Mac. Allowing my mind to wish for things that I could never have.

I was leaving. And not because I wanted too. Because it was necessary for my survival. If I didn’t keep forcing myself to run my past would catch up with me. No matter how many years it had been, it was always just two steps behind me. Teasing me, haunting me, reminding me I would never be free.

“What’s this?” Mac asked when he set me on my bed.

“What?” I returned confused as to what he was referring to.

“This?” Mac held up my grandmother scarlet emerald necklace.

So damn careless. I couldn’t believe I had not put that away after I wore it the other night. That one necklace was all I had of my old life.

My grandparents owned a claim in the Wah Wah Mountains in Utah. When they were prospecting for uranium, back in the late fifties, they found scarlet Emeralds instead. My grandfather had a necklace made for my grandmother as an anniversary gift. Five Scarlet

Emeralds set in platinum. The large links that make up the chain have a patina that only comes after nearly sixty years.

“Oh, nothing. Just an old necklace,” I answered.

“It looks like an antique.”

I should’ve lied and told him it was a junky piece of costume jewelry. No personal information. That is what had kept me alive over the years. But, I couldn’t bring myself to diminish my grandmother’s memory that way. I loved her so much.

“It is. It was my grandmother’s. It was her favorite, my grandfather had it made for her for their first wedding anniversary. It is all I have left of her. My most valued treasure,” I explained.

Mac had no idea the value of the necklace he was holding. Fair market price of scarlet emeralds was about ten thousand a carat. The necklace had five gems, all two carats in size. It was spectacular. If I closed my eyes, I could still picture my grandmother wearing it.

“You should be more careful with it then. Keep it locked up and not just laying on your nightstand.” He gently set it back down.

He must have missed it earlier when he was over. Oh, that’s right we never made it to the bedroom. We rarely did. The moment Mac walked into my house we normally just ripped each other’s clothes off in the living room.

“I took it out, to look at it and forgot to put it away,” I lied.

There was no way I was telling him that I had worn it to the ballet the other night. That was a special secret. Those nights were only for me. I could sneak away and get lost in the beauty of dance. I could sit in the audience and watch the performance. I could forget. But, once the curtain fell, all the pain and memories rushed back.

It was the sweetest torture, remembering my old life.

Before *him*.