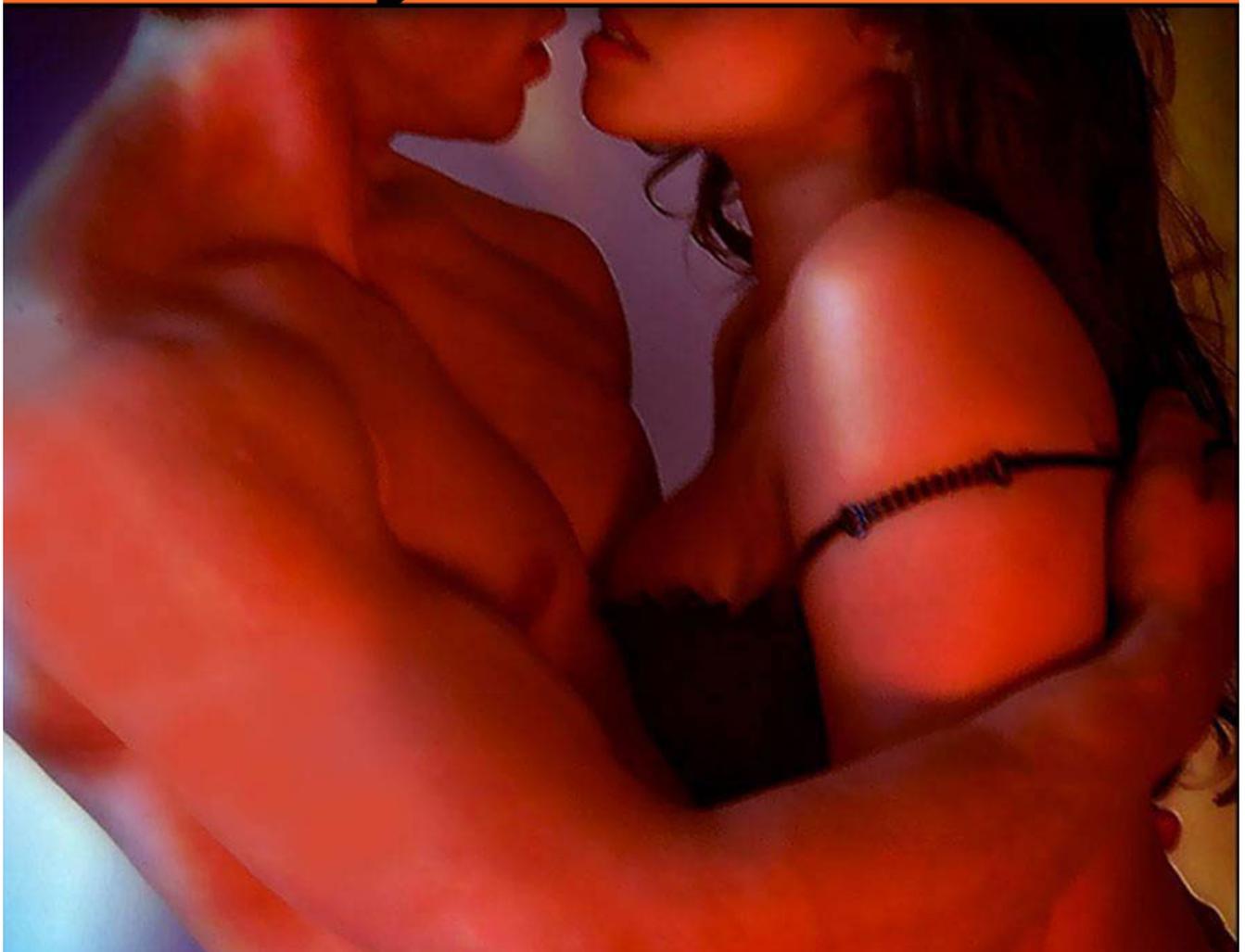




Wicked

Tempt Me Not
Lily Graison



Chapter One

“Please tell me you’re joking.” Holly Baker stood wide-eyed, staring out into the vast wilderness surrounding her. She clutched her cell phone tightly in one hand, listening to her best friend’s voice.

“I wish I was.”

“Roxy, we’ve had this trip planned for a year! How can you just bail on me? Especially now. I’m already here!”

She looked down at the multiple bags by her feet, then closed her eyes and tried to remain calm. Her friend’s last minute business trip two days ago had caused the first seeds of doubt to worm their way in. It threatened to ruin the entire trip but Roxy promised she’d be there. Now, as she stood alone staring at the mountains, her fears were realized.

Turning her head, Holly looked at the resort driver. He stood by the van, a bored expression written across his face. He’d yet to say a word as she shrieked into her cell phone and him ignoring her was almost as bad as Roxy’s news.

She turned her back to him, sighing heavily and lowering her voice. “What am I suppose to do now?” she asked.

“Enjoy your vacation,” Roxy said. “I would be there if I could, you know that.”

“I know.”

“Look, the cabin is paid for. You have two weeks to do nothing but relax, forget about your job, and just chill out. Enjoy yourself.”

“How can I do that alone?” Holly asked. “I’ll have no one to talk to but the damn birds.”

Roxy laughed. “I’m really sorry, hon. You know I’d be there if I could but I can’t pass this case up. It would be career suicide.”

Holly ran a hand through her hair, pushing stray tendrils dangling in her face behind her ear. Roxy’s rich clients always came first. When they needed their lawyer, she ran, no matter what disruption it caused in her life. Today was no different.

Shaking her head, Holly leaned back against the van, and once again looked out over the mountains. “You could have at least stranded me somewhere exotic, with sandy beaches and plenty of eye candy. All I get is trees and bear poop.”

“Having a hoard of hot guys wasn’t on your list of requirements,” Roxy snorted a laugh. “And if I remember correctly, you said, and I quote, ‘Somewhere quiet, with pretty scenery.’”

“Yes well, you didn’t have to take me literally. This is the middle of fucking no where!”

“No. It’s Tennessee. It’s on the map. Look it up.”

Holly rolled her eyes at her friend’s laughter and sighed.

“Look,” Roxy said. “I’ll make it up to you. Your birthday is only four months away. I’ll throw you a party the likes you’ve never seen. I promise.”

“You better.”

“I will,” Roxy laughed. “As soon as you get back from your all expenses paid vacation.”

Holly grinned. “Fine. I’ll be sure to drink all your liquor and call you endlessly when I get bored.”

“You do that.”

Holly disconnected the phone and turned to look at the driver. “I guess I’m staying.”

“Great,” he said, pushing off the van. “I’ll carry your bags inside.”

Holly watched him walk to the cabin, unlock the door, and disappear inside. She stood there, staring out at the surrounding mountains.

Alone for two weeks on the side of a mountain. Could life get any worse?

The driver walked back outside minutes later, smiling as he approached her. “The cabinets are stocked just as requested and everything you need has been provided.”

“Thank you,” she said, reaching into her bag for a tip. He stood patiently and accepted it with a smile.

“Have a lovely vacation, Ms. Baker.”

Holly watched him start the van and pull away, heading back down the mountain. When he was finally out of sight, she turned a full circle, and tried to see the beauty around her without a jaded eye.

Mountains seemed to reach into the clouds, the shadows the sun cast on them made them appear to be colored in shades of pink and purple. Emerald green trees swayed softly in the breeze, the scent of wintergreen and fresh mountain air filled her lungs and replaced the stale, stagnant smells of the city from her body.

The cabin Roxy had rented for them was magnificent. It was small, but still stood two stories tall, and surrounded by nothing but trees.

Holly walked across the pebbled driveway to the front door.

Her eyes widened when she got her first look inside the cabin. High vaulted ceilings in rich dark wood hung invitingly over the upper loft where

she could see the only bedroom. Furnishings in dark oranges and reds adorned the entire room. Her gaze scanned the living area and she smiled when she saw the ornate fireplace and soft rugs and pillows that were scattered around.

Large picture windows made up most of the outer walls and brought the lush greenery of the outdoors right inside her little paradise. She walked toward the sliding-glass doors that led to a small wooden deck and stepped outside.

A stream ran through the trees and trickled small waterfalls right below the deck. The sound was hypnotizing. She leaned against the railing, staring out across the mountain and spotted a well-beaten path along the pebbled drive.

Walking back inside, she made her way to the front door. There was only one way to find out where that path led and besides, what else did she have to do?

* * * *

“Enjoy your stay.”

Devin gave the driver a nod. He watched him pull away, picked up his bags, and started for the cabin.

The door opened easily and he shrugged at the idea of the cabins not being locked. Walking inside, he couldn't help but smile as he took in his surroundings. It was everything his manager said it was and more.

He noticed the lack of TV upon entering. Even though he came to lay low and work on his music, he wasn't sure how long it would take before he went stir crazy with no outside noise other than that of nature.

Walking into the large kitchen that sat to the left of the front door, Devin made his way to the refrigerator and opened it. His eyes widened when he saw the wine bottles. “Trying to test me, Curt?” He grinned, shutting the door without another look.

He walked to the living room, grabbing his guitar on the way, and sat on the sofa facing the fireplace. He pulled the instrument from its case and his fingers leisurely strummed the strings, the soft tune he'd been working on coming to him easily.

The gentle sounds of the stream outside lulled him into playing the soft melody he'd been toying with for weeks. It was nothing like the other songs he'd written but something about this tune calmed him. Of course it was only a

few riffs. The lyrics eluded him. He wasn't even sure there were any. His fans probably wouldn't go for it anyway. They preferred their music hard and raw. This stuff would make them think he'd lost his touch. Maybe he had.

Sitting back, he laid his guitar aside and stared into the unlit fireplace, leaning his head against the sofa and closing his eyes.

The past year of his life played behind his closed eyelids, each memory bringing another bitter thought to his mind. He was screwed. No doubt about it. His band mates hated him, his reckless behavior doing more harm to them than he'd thought. If the band couldn't get work, they suffered as well. His only hope was Curt, his manager.

Devin knew if Curt couldn't repair the damage he'd single-handedly created, he could kiss his career goodbye. His band mates were already thinking of moving on to other things.

Curt had a lot of ass kissing to do in his absence.

He didn't know how long he sat there contemplating his existence. Opening his eyes, he saw the darkening sky outside the picture windows. The sun rested low over the mountain, the tree limbs swaying softly in the breeze, and the room had chilled in the short amount of time he'd been there.

Standing, he made his way to the fireplace and began building up the wood to start a fire. Although he knew the days were quite comfortable, the nights could get cold. You would think living in New York would have prepared him for the chill but he knew the breeze blowing through the mountains stung to the bone once the sun set.

As the first flames danced to life and the wood began to pop and burn, Devin stood and went to his bags. Grabbing a few things, he made his way down the hall to find the bathroom.

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Holly's body protested when she moved. The hot spring she'd found at the end of the path washed away every doubt she had about spending her vacation alone. Every burden she'd been carrying seemed to melt away the longer she sat there and she wondered if she would ever want to leave. Not having Roxy there sucked, but this was heaven. She opened her eyes, noticing the darkening sky, and watched small woodland creatures scurry along the spring collecting their food.

The entire area looked like something from a dream. The steam from the hot spring hung heavy around the pool. The strong scent of pine perfumed the

air and the breeze that rustled the trees limbs carried with it the scent of mountain laurel.

She raised her arms over her head, stretching out her limbs. "My own little slice of paradise."

Looking around her, she grinned before standing and climbing out of the spring. She quickly grabbed her clothes, draping them over her nude body. Who would have thought, standing naked in the forest would be so liberating? Hooking her shirt under her arms, she laughed and darted up the path to the cabin.

She rushed in the front door, shivering as the cool mountain air stung her wet skin. The room was dark except for the light coming from the burning embers of the fireplace.

She stopped just inside the door, staring at the fire, before looking around. Her brow rose in confusion. "Automatic fireplace?"

She grinned and shrugged her shoulders. "One more reason to love this place."

Walking quickly across the room to the fireplace, she dropped her clothes, sighing as the warmth from the fire engulfed her body.

She closed her eyes, smiling as the heat bathed her skin. She shivered once, opening her eyes before looking behind her. A blanket draped across the back of the sofa caught her eye and she turned, walking toward it. She hadn't taken three steps when she heard a door slam from somewhere inside the cabin.

* * * *

Devin froze when he saw her. He blinked repeatedly, raising a hand to rub at his eyes before looking back across the room. He wasn't seeing things. Someone was in his cabin.

If the look on her face was any indication, she was every bit as surprised to see him as he was at seeing her. A jumble of thoughts rushed through his head but it only took him a second to realize that there was a beautiful brunette standing in front of him wearing nothing but skin.

With a growing smile, he leaned his head to the side. "Well, hello there gorgeous."

Her eyes widened before she took a deep breath and screamed.

Chapter Two

Holly felt dizzy by the time she'd let the last of the air in her lungs out. She stared at the man in the hallway before rushing to the sofa, grabbing the blanket off the back of it, and wrapping it around her body.

She looked around the room frantically, spotting a small glass figurine sitting on the coffee table. She reached for it, lifting it above her head, and turned back to the man.

"Who the hell are you? What do you want?"

The man walked completely into the room and Holly's arm rose higher, her makeshift weapon swaying slightly as her body shook.

"Here on vacation," he answered. "And I hate to burst your bubble sweetheart, but this is my cabin."

"Your cabin?" Holly gasped in surprise. She stared across the room at him before straightening her spine. "You're delusional. This cabin was booked months ago. It's mine. I don't know who you are but you have exactly thirty seconds to get out of here before I embed this glass in your skull."

He laughed. Holly watched him lean one shoulder against the wall, cross his arms over his chest and laugh at her. Her fear turned ugly in that minute. She wasn't nearly as scared as she was pissed off now. Anger she could deal with. "What the hell is so funny?"

It took him a few minutes, but he stopped laughing, much to her surprise. Holly saw him inhale deeply before letting it out in one long breath.

"Look, I know for a fact that I booked this cabin," he said. "And the shuttle dropped me off here a few hours ago. Now how did you get up here?"

"The shuttle," Holly told him with a shaky voice. "I've been here since around noon."

"I see. Well, looks like someone made a mistake somewhere."

Holly snorted back a laugh as she looked at him. "You think?" she said, lowering her arm.

He grinned and pushed himself off the wall. Holly's arm rose automatically, her weapon wielded with confidence. He straightened, holding his hands out in front of him and said, "No need for that, darling. I'm not going to hurt you."

Holly held the blanket around her and watched him walk across the room to the front door. He leaned down, placing the things in his hand in one of the bags sitting there. There were several suitcases and various bags and she

didn't know why she hadn't noticed them when she first walked in.

Glancing around the room, she spotted a guitar sitting on the sofa, before she looked back up at him. "I suppose this is yours," she asked, pointing to the guitar.

"Yes." He took a small step toward her and she stumbled backwards. "Look, why don't you go put some clothes on so you'll be more comfortable? We can try to figure out why we're both here when only one of us should be."

Holly watched him for a few seconds, tossing the object in her hand down on the sofa. She grabbed the blanket with both hands and took a slow step backwards, glancing over at the stairs.

Looking back at the man by the door, she gave a small nod of her head and turned, quickly making her way up the steps.

She rushed to the upper loft with her heart still racing in her chest.

Grabbing one of her suitcases, Holly tossed it up on the bed and unzipped it frantically, grabbing the first thing she saw. Glancing over the rail to the lower section, she looked for her intruder.

He walked across the room to the sofa. He wore nothing but a pair of well-worn black jeans. Hard, defined muscles gleamed in the filtered light from the fire. Moisture still glistened on his skin from an apparent shower and made the plain black tattoo circling his bicep shine. His hair was jet black, cropped close to his head, but a few small curls on top were tousled in a very haphazard way.

She had to admit he was quite pretty to look at. She hadn't seen anyone that healthy looking in quite a while. He was all bronze skin and rippled in the most delicious places.

Shaking her thoughts away, she moved to the farthest wall and quickly slipped her clothes on.

Devin grinned when he saw her step back from the railing. The sight of her when he walked into the living room was one he'd never be able to rid himself of. Naked as the day she was born. Of course, no one looked like that when born. Lord help the human race if they did. His cock twitched just thinking about all that delicious flesh glistening in the low light from the fireplace. She looked like a vision straight from his wettest dreams. Beautiful right down to her rosy tipped breasts.

He sucked in a breath, willing the image away. It was obvious someone had made a serious mistake. Overbooking the cabin was going to cost someone dearly and he hoped it wouldn't be him. Of course, things didn't have to be so dire. There was a beautiful girl upstairs and one shouldn't look a gift-horse in the mouth. Maybe this was his reward for being a good boy as of late?

Nah.

He chuckled to himself and picked his guitar up, placing it back in the case before walking to the door. He bent down, picking up the small blue bag he knew held his cell phone. He had brought it, just in case. One never knew what could happen and as long as it was off, it wouldn't become a bother.

Finding his phone, he hit the "on" button and waited as it charged up. Surely the resort manager could figure out why there was a woman in the cabin he had rented.

"So, you're still here, I see."

Devin turned at her voice and was struck speechless by the sight of her. Seeing her naked was one thing, but now, when he could actually look at her without his body responding was something entirely different.

The light from the fireplace cast shadows across her face and made her hair shine in the dim light. The pale yellow top she wore fell off one shoulder. Tight jeans hugged her thighs and hung low on her hips. A small glimpse of her stomach could be seen and the exposed skin looked like it had been dusted with gold. She was barefoot and the most innocent thing he'd seen in ages. Fresh and full of golden light. So much different from the girls he was used to.

She looked like an angel descending from heaven. When she stopped at the bottom of the stairs, he took a deep breath before shaking his head and turning from her. "Hadn't planned on going anywhere, princess."

She let out a small chuckle before crossing her arms over her chest and leaned against the railing of the stairs. "Well, you're not staying here."

Devin grinned at her, frowning a second later when he didn't get a signal on his phone. Opening the door to the cabin, he stepped outside. The display showed zero bars. "Stupid useless thing."

He walked back into the room, cursing under his breath, and threw his phone back into the bag before slamming the door. He looked up at her, watching her eyebrows rise in amusement. "What?"

"Do you normally talk to yourself or is this psychotic behavior something new? Since you're still here, this is need to know information. I have to be able to tell the police how crazy you were when they find your cold lifeless body on the side of the mountain."

Devin couldn't help but laugh at seeing the wide smile on her face. "Actually, I was trying to call you a cab, but I guess now you'll have to walk."

"Me! I'm not leaving. You are!"

"Oh, now there's where you're wrong, precious. This is my cabin and I'm not leaving."

"No, this is my cabin and stop with the stupid pet names," she spat out. "My name is Holly."

"Fine, Holly," Devin said, drawing her name out intentionally. "I can't get a

signal on the phone and I sure as hell am not walking back down the mountain.”

“Fine,” she said. “Wait right here.”

She darted up the stairs, returning moments later with a cell phone in her hand. She locked eyes with him after punching in a few numbers. The smile on her face was smug. Devin couldn't help but grin when he heard the tell-tell signal of a dying battery.

Her smile disappeared and she looked at the phone before grunting in frustrating and darted back up the stairs. He stood by the door, listening to her talk to herself before she yelled, “Fuck!”

“Anytime, darling,” he yelled up to her. “Just get your cute ass back down here and I'll get straight to work on that.”

She appeared at the top of the stairs and glared at him. “Are you always so crude?”

“I don't think I'm crude.”

“Of course you don't,” she said, descending the stairs for a second time. “I can't find the damn phone charger.”

Devin laughed. More so when her face turned bright red as she stomped to the sofa and flopped down, burying her hands in her hair and saying, “This is not happening.”

Crossing the room, Devin stopped at the end of the sofa and waited until she looked up at him. “Normally I wouldn't give a rat's ass whether you froze to death on the side of the mountain but, since you gave me such a lovely show upon entering, I'm sure we can come to...some sort of arrangement.” A cozy fire, two adults stranded alone. What more could a man ask for? He leaned his head to the side and gave her a good long look from head to toe.

Her eyes widened to cartoon proportions and her mouth flew open. He smiled down at her, his tongue darting out to moisten his lips, and he bit it to keep from voicing his thoughts.

She sprang from the couch, her mouth snapping shut as she closed the distance between them. “Listen here buster,” she said, poking her index finger into his chest as she stood toe to toe with him. “There will be no...arrangements of any kind! This is my cabin. It's stocked with my favorite foods and the only one leaving is you! Now, if you walk fast, you can make it back to the resort by sun up.”

Devin grinned. He couldn't help it. Her face was bright red, her chest heaving with every harsh breath she took and he wasn't sure why, but seeing her get so worked up over the whole thing amused him. Just seeing that much fury contained in such a small package was the most thrilling thing he had been witness to in over two years, pathetic as it was.

He chuckled and reached into his pocket, pulling out his smokes and plucking one from the pack. "You know damn good and well I'm not going to do that. The resort is ten miles from here and I'm not about to walk that far for anyone."

"Well, I saw a nice little cave on the way up. It didn't look too far away. You can sleep with the animals for all I care and don't even think about lighting that thing up in here."

Devin stilled his hand in mid-motion, his thumb ready to fire the flint and light the cigarette dangling from his lip. He sighed as his amusement started to wane. She was becoming bitchier by the minute and no matter how much fun it would be to see her get riled up even more, he wasn't sure he was ready for what she may do if he pushed her too far. He really didn't want to walk to that resort. Not that he would, he grinned.

Pulling the unlit cigarette from his mouth, he placed it behind his ear, and grinned, crossing his arms over his chest. "Fine. So, what do we do now?"

"Um, you can leave so I can go to sleep?" Holly grinned.

"Not hardly," Devin snorted. "You leave."

"Not gonna happen!"

Devin stared at her, watching her jut her chin up defiantly. He grinned. Taking a step back away from her he turned, sitting down on the sofa. He made a huge production of fluffing the pillows stacked up at the end and lying down, closing his eyes after giving her a wink.

Holly gaped at him. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

"I'm being a gentleman and letting you have the bed, but if you keep up all that bitching, I may just change my mind."

Holly stood there, completely speechless as she stared down at him. She didn't know what to do or say. This total stranger had just lounged out across her sofa and made himself at home. Her anger boiled hot. "Look, buddy."

"Devin."

Holly watched him smile with his eyes closed. He started humming and completely ignored her. "Fine...Devin," drawing his name out the way he'd done hers. "You are not staying here. I was here first. The way I see it, the cabin is mine."

Holly watched him, her gaze sweeping over his form and she gritted her teeth. He was ignoring her. He continued to hum, getting louder by the second.

The fact he was ignoring her wasn't as annoying as the song he was torturing her with. How many times had she heard it? Every radio station in the country played it every half hour and Roxy sang it daily, saying the words of the song were almost orgasmic.

When he just lay there, she shook her head and grunted in frustration, turning and making her way to the stairs. She stopped the second he started singing.

She listened to the words, the tone of his voice as he sang, and her heart rate increased with every verse. Turning her head, she looked over her shoulder to where he laid. She studied his face, recognition slowly clearing her foggy brain. Her eyes widened a second later.

It can't be.

His hair was short. That wasn't right. His hair should be long, falling over his shoulders. It was in the last picture she saw of him. She glanced at his arm. The tattoo was the same. The hair color, his name, the trademark black jeans, but...

He opened his eyes and flashed her a devilish smirk. Now that was definitely familiar. Was it really him?

When he winked at her, she gasped. "Holy shit," she whispered. "You're Devin Shaw!"

Devin sat up slowly, grinning. He lifted one brow and gave her a nod of his head. "Bout damn time you recognized me. Now pipe down, I need my beauty rest."

Chapter Three

Holly stood rooted to the floor until her mouth had gone completely dry from hanging open. Her heart raced in her chest and she blinked a few times before closing her mouth.

She stared down at who she now knew was the very famous, although troubled musician, Devin Shaw, front man for the band, Wicked, the hottest thing to hit the music scene in years.

Her hands started sweating instantly. Devin Shaw. She was in the same room as Devin Shaw. Roxy would shit bricks when she found out!

He'd lain back down after giving her one last grin and she stared at his silent form wondering what to do. All that pretty flesh was laid out right before her eyes and she had to shake her head to remain focused on the problem at hand and not him.

But, how many nights had Roxy drooled over every member of that band, Luke especially, going into detail of what she'd like to do to them given the chance?

And here she was, her hungry gaze devouring Devin Shaw in the flesh.

She bit her cheek to keep from smiling and turned, making her way quickly to the upper loft.

She searched her bags again for the phone charger. How could she forget to pack it? Sitting on the bed after the third rummage through her things, she sighed.

Now what?

What Devin Shaw was doing here was a better question. Weren't rock stars supposed to be living life in the fast lane? Yet, here he was, sleeping on her rented sofa in the mountains of Tennessee.

What did she do now?

Roxy would know what to do. Of course, knowing her friend, she would tell her to take advantage of the situation and ride Devin like the stallion he was, but that was something Holly couldn't do. She'd never been the go-get 'em kind of girl. Besides, just because he was a rock star didn't mean he was fuckable.

Her inner eye recalled all that sinful flesh laid out on the sofa and she grinned. Okay, so maybe he was fuckable. That didn't mean she would throw herself at him like some love-crazed groupie.

The thoughts of actually sharing the cabin with him lasted about as long as it took for her mind to register how bad an idea that was. The last she'd read, he had been in rehab for substance abuse, and what that substance was, had never been revealed.

He was ill tempered, arrested after he attacked someone at one of his concerts, and every detail of his life splattered on every magazine cover and trash paper imaginable.

Then again, how many times had Roxy gone on and on about how the press lied to sell magazines? She was probably right too. Every time that band appeared in a magazine, Roxy snatched it up and devoured every word written about them, proving her point.

She sighed, lifted her hand, and pushed her hair back away from her face. What was she going to do? She couldn't possibly share the cabin with him. The idea was insane. Devin Shaw? How would she ever survive two weeks with him underfoot? Maybe he isn't staying that long. She frowned and lay down across the bed.

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Devin let out a long breath and turned his head to look up at the bedroom loft. Dim light shown on the walls but he couldn't sense any movement. The cabin was quiet; the only sounds were that of the fire popping and the wind outside whistling through the trees.

Holly had looked completely shocked when she finally realized who he was. He'd be lying if he said he wasn't a little disappointed it had taken her so long to figure it out. He was used to screaming girls recognizing him from four blocks away. She was a first.

He didn't know what to do. His cell phone didn't work and hers was useless as well. He was here for the next month. There was no way he could spend that much time with her and still expect to get anything done. He was here to write and get his shit together.

Having her underfoot would be a distraction. He'd yet to meet a woman he didn't eventually sink his cock into. Women threw themselves at him daily and he was happy to oblige. Of course, bedding Holly was in no way a burden. The girl was a looker. A little plain compared to the girls he'd been with but that didn't make her less attractive. She looked sweet and innocent, like a grade-school teacher with curves and tits that would stop traffic. The vision of her sweating and screaming his name put a smile on his face. Seeing her by the

fire, naked and beautiful, was proof enough. He'd fuck her silly given the chance.

He sat up and stared into the fire. If you can't get rid of them, fuck 'em. It had worked for years. Why not now? Besides, how long had it been now? Too damn long.

Chapter Four

Holly stretched out her limbs and opened her eyes. She was still lying across the bed in her clothes. She turned her head to the window, looking out across the mountain. She could hear the birds singing their praises to the early morning light. The fluttering of life outside brought a smile to her face.

The sun was cresting the mountain and showering its rays across the valley below. It was too beautiful for words. Turning and grabbing the edge of the blankets, she pulled them up and under her chin, and stared out into a new day. She lay there, watching nature stir to life for long minutes.

This is what she had wanted when she left the city. Peace and quiet.

“What the fucking hell!”

Holly jumped at the sound of Devin’s voice before rolling her eyes. “So much for peace and quiet.”

She listened to a montage of colorful words before she sighed and sat up. Throwing the blankets back, she crawled from the bed and walked to the railing, looking down.

Devin was in the kitchen opening every cabinet door, looking inside, before cursing and slamming it shut. He still wore nothing but jeans, his chest and feet bare. His hair was disheveled, sticking up in various places on the top of his head. The morning sun coming through the kitchen windows illuminated him, casting a small halo around his form. If possible, he was more gorgeous in natural light. She rolled her eyes at the thought. Don’t even go there, Holly. He’s not staying.

She watched him for a few minutes before she cleared her throat. “Do you mind? Some of us enjoy peaceful mornings, not the obscene ramblings of the clinically insane.”

He turned his head, looking up at her before he smiled. “Well, good morning, princess. Sleep well?”

“Knowing there is an insane man sleeping under my roof? Oh sure. Best night of my life.”

“That’s what most women say,” Devin grinned, before turning back to the cabinets.

Holly stared at him for long minutes, chewing on her bottom lip to keep from smiling. He could be such an ass. A cute ass, but still an ass.

Rolling her eyes she stepped back from the rail. Walking over to her

luggage she almost growled in frustration at the smile still trying to form. "He's not cute," she mumbled under her breath. "He's smug and arrogant and, and... his hair looks stupid all curly and wild like that. There." She nodded her head to prove her point.

Clothes in hand, she grabbed her toiletries before making her way down the stairs. She kept her focus on the hallway but she could see Devin out of the corner of her eye.

He was watching her.

She walked around the sofa, making her way to the hall. A small glimpse into the kitchen revealed Devin leaning against the cabinet, arms crossed over his chest. He was still watching her! What is his defect?

Entering the bathroom, Holly locked the door behind her. She laid her things down on the sink and sighed heavily, looking around the room.

She'd only had a brief glance at it the night before and the fluorescent lights did nothing for the beauty she saw now. Much like the cabin, it was a work of art.

Bright morning sun filtered through the tinted glass that made up the ceiling. The shower was the most impressive thing she'd seen in years. There wasn't a shower door, only a wide opening. The entire back wall was smooth rock. The large showerhead jutted out from between the rocks making it almost invisible.

She crossed the room, finding the control knobs on the wall, and turned it on.

"Wow." The rocks glistened as the water ran over them; the sound it made reminding her of a trickling stream.

She undressed while waiting for the temperature to adjust before stepping inside under the spray. Her smile was huge by the time the water hit her skin. She washed quickly, not taking the time to enjoy the shower like she should have, and was finished in record time.

Dressing in jeans and a simple blue shirt, she towel dried her hair. The desire to dry and fluff her hair, slather on make-up, and dash her body with perfume caused her to roll her eyes.

She sighed while looking at her reflection. If Devin weren't here, she'd walk out there as is without another thought. Why, just because she knew a famous rock star was in the other room, did she feel the need to be someone she wasn't?

You're not interested, so why bother?

The argument sounded good in her head but her hand stilled on the bathroom doorknob. What if he found her unattractive? There wasn't anything glamorous about her. She was plain, nothing special about her at all.

Maybe a little make-up wouldn't hurt.

Growling in frustration she shook her head. No. She wouldn't dress up for him. She would be herself. If he didn't like her, then so be it. But what did it matter anyway? She wasn't interested. Nope, not interested at all.

She stepped out of the bathroom and her stomach growled a second later when the scent of bacon and eggs reached her. She smiled and straightened her spine, fluffed her slightly damp hair, and made her way down the hall.

Devin was sitting at the kitchen bar reading a magazine when she walked into the living room and she put her things down on the coffee table. He glanced at her briefly, his gaze roaming over her body from head to toe, before returning to his food.

"Smells good," she said, crossing the room and entering the kitchen.

"That it does," he said, never lifting his gaze from the magazine he was reading. "Tastes even better."

Holly flashed him a smile and looked at the kitchen cabinets. The smile vanished when she realized there was only one plate. His.

Her lips tightened into a thin line and the look she shot him should have killed him right where he sat. He never moved. Never even acknowledged her as she stood there staring at him. Her blood boiled hot.

She gritted her teeth, stomped to the cabinets, and started opening them.

Finding the assorted boxes of cold cereals, she pulled one from the cabinet and slammed it down on the countertop before searching for a bowl.

She fixed her cold breakfast, a flurry of comments running through her mind like a tape recorder in fast-forward. If she hadn't thought him irritating before, this certainly qualified him for jerk-off of the year.

Sitting down at the bar, she made a huge production of chewing the hard, crunchy bits of cereal as she stared at him. He never looked up, just continued to eat in silence.

Why would he do that? What reason did he have to only fix one plate of food?

Because he's an asshole?

She nodded her head and glanced at his plate before shoving her mouth full, chewing with her mouth open to exaggerate the noise. The sight of his bacon and eggs made her own meal even less appealing.

How dare he? I would have made enough for both of us. Well, if I could cook, that is.

It was all Devin could do to eat as Holly stared at him. He knew he had pissed her off and truthfully, that had been his intention, but now, hearing each crunch of her cold breakfast, made him regret his actions.

He hadn't done it for spite. It was just harmless fun. She just looked so

damned cute when she got all red faced and mad. Not that she wasn't cute when she wasn't mad.

He'd nearly choked on his toast when she rounded the corner. Simple jeans and a t-shirt and she looked mouth watering delicious. Hair still wet, the first thing that popped into his head was the image of her naked. He'd seen that but not with a generous lathering of bubbles caressing her flesh. He'd been half tempted to pick the lock on the bathroom just to get a peek.

He took another bite of his food, swallowing it with great effort. His plan had failed. She hadn't taken the bait. As sick as it was, he enjoyed their sarcastic banter, and thought this was a sure fire way to get her riled up but instead, she hadn't said a word.

Who knew the look on her face would make him feel like shit?

Keeping his eyes on his magazine, he had to force himself not to look up when the incessant crunching from Holly finally stopped. He did glance at her when she stood. He watched her walk to the sink, rinse her bowl, and turn to look at him.

He couldn't help the smile that automatically rose. Her face was almost red and her lips were pressed into a thin line. He couldn't stop himself.

"Problem, sweetheart?"

Her eyes narrowed and she spun on her heel, making her way to the stairs. He took a deep breath when she was out of sight. "Fucking brilliant plan, you ass."

Devin stood and walked around the bar, dumping his plate of food, before rinsing it in the sink. He stared out the window, looking at nothing in particular and thought of what to do.

They still hadn't spoke of their situation and he knew now wasn't the time. She'd probably kill him with the first uttered word.

Turning and walking to the couch, he picked up his guitar and tried to forget about the brunette upstairs.

* * * *

Holly finally took the time to unpack her suitcases while she contemplated her situation. She had fallen asleep with every intention of coming to a suitable arrangement for their predicament but waking to Devin's rude outburst first thing in the morning had completely sidetracked her. Now as she stood in the middle of her room, the only thing she wanted was him gone.

She was furious over his childish behavior. Why did he do that? Was he

born an asshole or was it something he needed to practice on a daily basis?

The entire morning played again in her mind's eye in slow motion. It only took her a second to come to a decision. His ass was so gone. Rock star or not, Devin Shaw would pay for treating her like that.

Walking to the railing, she looked down, her mouth open to speak. The air left her lungs when she saw him on the couch. He was picking out notes on his guitar and she finally heard it. Her inner turmoil had completely closed off the outside world.

She recognized the song he was playing. It was one of the few she didn't mind hearing. It was soft, hauntingly beautiful, and even though Roxy played it countless times, she had to admit, if only to herself, that she liked it.

She liked the sound of his voice when he sang it better.

The smile that crossed her face surprised her. She had to admit the thoughts of him really being here were just incredible. She knew Roxy would freak out when she learned she had met, and slept under the same roof, as Devin Shaw.

Seeing him glance up at her, she watched the same irritating smirk he had thrown her too many times to count cross his face before she rolled her eyes and stepped back from the rail. She sighed deeply, shaking her head, and trying to clear her thoughts.

Glancing out the window she wondered what to do. Without her phone charger, her cell phone was useless. His apparently wasn't working either. That only left two options. Walk the ten miles to the resort or tough it out for the next two weeks.

She frowned. How in the world would she be able to put up with him for that long? He was smug, irritating, rude, arrogant, cocky...

And completely mouth-watering.

She growled in frustration. If she had to spend the next two weeks with him, she'd have to learn to play by his rules. If he wanted to be an ass, then fine. She could too.

A smile bloomed across her face at the thought flitting through her head. If Devin wanted to play games, then so be it. It was highly apparent from the magazine articles she'd seen he would sleep with anything that moved and he'd come on to her how many times already?

Grinning, she walked to the dresser and grabbed her bathing suit, throwing it on the bed. When she started to close the drawer, the suit Roxy had bought her last year for their trip to Cancun caught her eye. It barely even qualified for a bathing suit. More like three scraps of material strung together and held by string. The only reason she'd brought it was for maximum sun exposure.

She chewed her lip, looking over her shoulder, and wondered if she had the guts to put it on and let him see.

He needed to pay for that stunt at breakfast and he made it no secret he'd screw her silly given the chance. He was a guy, after all. Most would fuck anything that moved and according to the trash papers, Devin did.

What was the harm in tempting him a little? It would certainly serve him right.

Grinning, she grabbed the tiny scraps of red cloth from the drawer and clutched them in her hand. Devin Shaw would pay...she'd make sure of that.

* * * *

Devin wrote down the next string of notes and tossed his pen down, staring at what he'd written. He played it again, satisfied with the way it sounded.

He looked at the page again, shaking his head in disgust before laying his guitar down. Half an hour and he'd written a whole two lines. Every time he got a good rhythm going, thoughts of Holly would sidetrack him and he forgot everything he'd just played.

This is exactly why Curt wanted him alone. Any distraction, especially a woman, and his time would be wasted. Curt may be an ass at times, but he knew what he was talking about.

Thoughts of Holly still rattled through his head. He didn't know what to do about their current situation. She hadn't mentioned it this morning but he assumed his little stunt at breakfast might have been why. She'd barely spoken three words to him.

He still didn't know why he felt the need to irritate her. Maybe because he was used to fucking girls blind and leaving them right where they lay? The last woman he actually talked to was his ex and she turned out to be just another groupie trying to find a free ride. Holly was far from groupie material.

Movement out of the corner of his eye caught his attention and he looked to the stairs.

His mouth watered an instant later.

Holly was at the top of the stairs in nothing more than tiny scraps of red material. The bathing suit she wore had to be the most sinful thing he'd seen in years.

He loved it.

Two small triangles placed over her breast were just big enough to cover

her nipples, which were pebbled to perfection and clearly seen through the thin material. Round, firm, golden breast met his gaze; he licked his lips involuntarily as she took the first step down.

Her stomach was taut; a slim waist gave way to full hips and tantalizing thighs. He wanted nothing more in that moment than to have them wrapped around his head while she rode his face.

She reached the bottom of the stairs, never once turning her head to look at him, and he nearly moaned out loud when she passed the sofa and he saw her backside. The g-string bottom made her ass look delectable. The sun had definitely kissed this goddess in places he wanted to explore himself. Her wiggling little ass begged him to touch it...and he would before the week was out.

She was out the front door before his brain could process the fact she was leaving.

He blinked, turning his head to stare back at the unlit fireplace and a slow smile curved his lips. His cock twitched and he looked down, an obvious erection straining against the material was almost uncomfortable now that he noticed it.

He grinned and stood, his new song forgotten as he walked around the couch. How could he work when tempted like that?

Someone wanted to play and he liked the sound of this game.

* * * *

Holly sank into the pool, letting out the breath she'd been holding. She practically ran all the way to the hot spring, hoping to burn away her embarrassment.

It took every bit of courage she had to parade around in front of Devin like that, but she'd seen him out of the corner of her eye. The man was all but drooling. She grinned at the thought. Innocent little Holly Baker had caused a man to gawk at her like she was a sex goddess. And not just any man. Devin Shaw...a rock star.

She sighed as the warmth from the hot spring and the noonday sun relaxed her muscles. She straightened her legs, reclining back into the molded rock she rested on.

The morning had been less than pleasurable but now she felt vindicated. Sure it was just a little flaunt down the stairs in a barely there bikini but the look on his face was revenge enough.

She still wasn't sure what to do about him. Could she spend the next two weeks under the same roof with him and not go completely insane? Less than twenty-four hours and he had already brought on thoughts of violence.

They needed to find a solution to their problem, but seeing how he hadn't mentioned it, she figured he was as determined to stay as she was.

A loud crack of popping branches startled her. She looked toward the path, holding back a smile when she saw Devin standing by the side of the spring.

Just as suspected. She knew he would follow her.

He grinned at her before starting to remove his boots. She didn't know how long he had been standing there but from the smile on his face, it was longer than she would have liked. "What do you want?"

"Just a little peace and quiet," Devin smiled, reaching for the bottom of his shirt.

Holly watched the thin material of his shirt uncover hard, toned muscles, inch by inch, and she swallowed heavily when she realized she was staring.

The smirk was back on his face and she mentally shook herself to regain focus. "I'm using the pool at the moment." She winced as her words came out in a breathy whisper and the smile on Devin's face only increased.

"Don't mind sharing," Devin said, tossing his shirt aside.

"Well, I do. I came out here to get away from you."

"Oh, I'm crushed," Devin laughed. "You can always just leave."

She watched him reach for the buttons of his jeans. "I don't think so and you better have a bathing suit on under those."

"And if I don't?"

He smirked at her and she knew in that moment he was wearing nothing but skin under those jeans.

The game had just taken a major turn. She upped the stakes by parading around practically naked. And what did you really expect? Did you honestly think he'd just smile and let you walk away? Of course he wouldn't.

He locked eyes with her and Holly met his gaze. Her earlier bravado diminished with every passing second but she was determined to play the game anyway he wanted to.

He popped the first button open on the button-fly jeans and Holly swallowed loudly. With each popped button more skin was exposed. If possible, the smile on his face only brightened.

A thin patch of fine hair that ran from just under his navel and disappeared into the confines of his jeans came into her line of sight. Holly's pulse quickened and she had to force herself to not look away.

He was definitely not wearing anything under the jeans. Slim hips gave way to long, toned thighs, and she almost screamed when he pushed the pants

down to his knees.

Lord help her, the man was beautiful!

His cock was impressive. She could tell he wasn't completely hard but even in this semi-hard state, it made things low in her belly clench. She swallowed the sudden lump in her throat, her gaze sweeping up his torso and landing on his face.

The look he gave her caused her stomach to clench again. She licked her lips, inhaling deeply, and tried to look disinterested.

He kicked his jeans away, gave her his trademark smirk, and climbed into the pool.

A small chuckle from him was all it took for her face to burn hot. She felt heat run down her neck, her throat tightened, and her heart raced in her chest.

Holly knew she had to move. She'd make a fool of herself if she didn't. She turned her head, looking at the surrounding mountains and could feel Devin's eyes on her.

Her flesh burned because of it.

Taking a deep breath, she stood and turned to look at him.

The smug look on his face made her instantly regret it. She rolled her eyes before taking the few steps to the edge of the pool and climbed out.

"Don't leave on my account."

"Drop dead," Holly mumbled as she grabbed her towel and wrapped it around her. Devin's laughter had her biting her tongue as she slipped her feet back into her sandals.

"I have to admit, sweetheart, that little scrap of material gave me the best hard on in years," he told her as he leaned his head to the side while he stared at her. "Although you without it... Are you going to give me another show like you did last night?"

Holly rolled her eyes before she turned around to look at him. She grinned before securing the towel at her waist. "Well, I'm glad you like it," she said with a wide smile. "I guess I can just live out the rest of my life knowing that bad boy Devin Shaw found me attractive. How fortunate I feel to have met your approval."

Devin continued to smile and the fact that he didn't say anything caused Holly's temper to flair. Why couldn't he be back at the cabin, panting like the dog he is, and wishing for something he couldn't have? Because that's not how Devin works. He takes what he wants and at the moment, judging from the leer and the forming erection, he wants you.

She almost growled in frustration, grabbed her things, and turned, stomping off into the forest.

A low chuckle was the only response Devin could come up with. As he sat

there in the stillness of the forest, the appeal of the hot spring wasn't as attractive now that the fiery brunette wasn't anywhere in sight.

Standing, Devin climbed from the pool, slipped his jeans back on and grabbed his boots and shirt, running up the trail after her.

* * * *

The evening light was fading and Holly stared at the fireplace wondering if she should light it or just wait for Devin. He'd been gone for hours now and she half-expected him to follow her back to the cabin as soon as she left the spring.

She tried to convince herself that his little stunt of stripping down to nothing had upset her but to be honest, her pulse quickened every time she thought about it. She could still see the hardened muscles that defined his body in her inner eye and the thoughts of it caused a slow ache to form in the pit of her stomach.

It had been months since she had had any physical contact with the opposite sex and even though she knew nothing would ever happen between the two of them, her mouth practically watered at the thought.

"Come on, Holly, you're being stupid," she said out loud. "He's a famous musician who probably has a girlfriend, not to mention more girls than he knows what to do with draping themselves all over him. Why would he be remotely interested in someone like you?"

She sighed heavily and glanced at her watch. Her brow furrowed as she realized exactly how long Devin had been gone.

The last of the sun had disappeared behind the mountains and for the first time since arriving at the cabin, she was truly alone.

She panicked.

Walking to the front door, Holly opened it and stepped out into the darkness. She let her eyes adjust, looking back toward the path that led to the hot spring.

"Devin?" The only thing to greet her was the sounds of small animals that scurried along the shrubs. No sign of Devin anywhere.

Walking to the path that led to the spring, she stopped. She peered into the darkness of the forest. The cool mountain air caused her flesh to cover in chill bumps. "If this is your idea of a joke, I'm not amused," she yelled.

She listened for any sound, when none came, she turned and walked back to the cabin.

As she made her way back inside, the stillness of the room engulfed her. Her confusion to his whereabouts gave way to fear. Where was he? Why wasn't he back yet?

Chapter Five

Devin opened his eyes, blinking into the blackness of the forest. His head was throbbing and the smell of dirt surrounded him. Hearing a sound off to his right, he turned his head to the noise and smiled as he recognized Holly's voice.

She was calling for him.

Sitting up, his head began to swim. His vision blurred, the entire right side of his head throbbing with every beat of his pulse. He raised his hand to where the pain seemed to be concentrated.

Wet, sticky blood coated his fingers and he growled in frustration as he slowly remembered falling. "Stupid fucking animals," he mumbled, remembering the brown furry creature that had darted out into the path. He had screamed like a girl and he hoped Holly hadn't heard him. Seeing how it was dark, he assumed she hadn't.

Scratching the side of his neck, Devin slowly picked himself up off the ground and tried to steady himself. The shooting pain that radiated from his ankle brought him to his knees.

"Fuck," he hissed as he tried to look at his ankle. It was so dark he could barely see his hand in front of his face. Taking a deep breath he let it out slowly and closed his eyes as the pain from his injuries left him suddenly dizzy.

He tried to focus his eyes on anything but the longer he tried, the more his vision blurred. He wondered if something bigger than a squirrel would eat him if he lay there all night, and mumbled Holly's name before he blacked out.

* * * *

Devin was dreaming. Warmth engulfed him and soft hands roamed his body. The scent of jasmine surrounded him and he smiled, his aching muscles relaxing with every second that passed.

Soft music played somewhere in the distance and an angel hovered above

him. He heard his name, whispered on a breath, and the fluttering of butterfly wings skated across his cheek.

“Devin, can you hear me? Come on, wake up.”

He blinked. His eyes felt like they had steel weights on them and he tried with every bit of energy he had to open them.

A slight move of his legs caused pain to radiate through his body and he opened his eyes a second later. A pained groan crawled up his throat and he turned his head, looking to the right.

Holly was there, concern etched across her face.

“Devin?”

Focusing his eyes on her face, he smiled. It was an angel. “Hey.”

“Hey. Are you okay?”

“Define okay?”

She smiled. “You have a nasty cut on your head. It looks pretty bad. I don’t think it needs stitches though.”

“Hmm...,” Devin mumbled as his eyes closed again. “What happened?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “It got dark, and when you never came back from the pool, I got worried. I called your name and when you didn’t answer, I went looking for you. I found you on the path, face down in the dirt.”

Devin sighed lightly as the details came back to him. No way was he going to tell her a damn squirrel was the cause of this. “How’d I get back here?”

Holly snorted a laugh. “I dragged you back.”

“Dragged me?” Devin said with widened eyes. “Literally?”

“Yes,” she grinned. “And it wasn’t easy. It took me twenty minutes to get your ass back up here.”

He stared at her, watching her rewet a towel in the bowl of water sitting on the coffee table before turning back to him. When she locked eyes with him, her cheeks reddened.

“Thank you,” he said.

She blushed brighter. “You’re welcome,” she said. “Are you hurt anywhere else?”

Devin looked down over his body and remembered his foot. “Twisted my ankle.”

“Which one?” Holly asked, looking toward his bare feet.

“Right.”

Holly scooted to the foot of the couch and lifted the bottom of his pants leg. “It’s a little blue. Are you sure it’s not broke?”

“No,” Devin told her as he scratched the side of his neck. “Hurts bad enough though.”

Holly looked up at him briefly before reaching out for his ankle. The

slightest touch and he was yelling.

“Sorry.”

“Just leave it be,” Devin spat out between clenched teeth. “Fucking thing hurts enough without you poking at it.”

“Um, do you need anything?” she asked him quietly.

“A sponge bath would be great,” Devin smirked as he scratched his arm. “I feel like I rolled in hay.”

“Your neck is pretty red,” Holly told him. “But the sponge bath? Not happening.”

Devin grinned before his eyes once again became heavy.

“You look like shit,” Holly said. “I’ll let you get some sleep.”

Devin opened his eyes and grabbed her arm. “No. Stay with me.”

Holly offered him a tiny smile and nodded her head, settling herself back on the floor in front of the sofa. She watched his eyes close again, and looked at the cut on his head.

It didn’t look nearly as bad now as when she first found him. It had stopped bleeding and there was nothing but an angry red mark marring his skin.

Finding him in the woods had scared the shit out of her. Face down in the dirt, wearing nothing but his jeans.

Every horrible thought she could imagine flew through her mind, each one worse than the first, and she was running to him with her heart in her throat.

She’d called his name and tried rousing him to no avail before grabbing his arms and pulling him back to the cabin.

It didn’t take him long to come to once settling him on the sofa and she felt the tension coiled in her neck release an instant later.

She sat with him for half an hour, studying his face before finally standing and clearing away the water and towels she’d used to see to his cuts.

He appeared to be sleeping, with no signs of apparent pain, and she switched the lights off. When the room was dark and nothing but the flickering light from the fire illuminated the room, she settled into the chair opposite the sofa.

Long minutes were spent memorizing every nuance of his face. The curve of his shoulders, the small dips and valleys on his abdomen and Holly felt herself blush before raking her gaze back to his face.

Her pulse quickened when she saw Devin looking at her.

“Like what you see?”

She looked away, embarrassed, and he laughed.

“What are you doing here?” he asked.

“You asked me to stay,” she said. “Change your mind already?”

“No,” Devin grinned. “I mean, what are you doing here. Alone on the side of a mountain.”

“Oh,” Holly laughed. “My friend, Roxy, planned a vacation for us and this was it. She’s a lawyer and got tied into a case at the last minute. She couldn’t make it.”

“So, you came anyway?”

“Not exactly. She was supposed to meet me here. She was in Chicago on business and was going to leave from there and come here. She called me when the shuttle dropped me off saying she couldn’t make it.”

“How long are you here?”

“Two weeks,” Holly said.

He nodded his head, moving his foot and grimacing before settling back down.

“What about you?”

“Forced isolation,” Devin grinned.

“Forced?”

“Yeah, my manager sprang me from rehab with the condition I had to hole up here for a month with no outside distractions.” He grinned, looking up at her with half lidded eyes. “He’d have a heart attack if he knew you were here.”

“Good thing he doesn’t then,” Holly laughed.

“He’d have me thrown back in there for sure.”

An onslaught of questions rattled through Holly’s mind and she bit her tongue to keep them from spilling out. His life was none of her business. She had no right to ask but it didn’t stop her from wanting to know every sordid detail.

“Alcohol.”

“What?” Holly asked.

Devin grinned. “I can almost see the questions floating over your head.”

“Sorry,” she said. “There’s just so much written about you in the papers its hard to know what’s truth and what’s just lies.”

“Lies,” Devin said. “Most of it, anyway. My problems with alcohol were mostly true, though.”

“And the band,” she asked, quietly.

“Some of that was based on truth. Luke and Mick were ready to head off on their own if I didn’t straighten my shit up and Christian...well, Christian just does what the other two say to do so...”

He yawned, his eyes fluttering. “Why don’t you get some sleep,” Holly said. “You’ll be good as new in the morning.”

He grunted something unintelligible and Holly watched him for a few more minutes before standing and making her way to the stairs.

She looked back down at him, smiling. That was probably the first conversation they'd had that didn't involve yelling or sexual advances.

Her smile grew, her gaze sweeping his form before she sighed. He really was pretty to look at and now she knew that underneath that rude exterior was a man she would love to know more about.

* * * *

"Fuck!"

Holly opened her eyes and sighed as the previous morning played over for her. Loud, obscene words filled the cabin as Devin ranted, about what, she had no clue.

Crawling from the bed, she walked to the stairs and looked down. "Have you ever tried not acting like an insane person in the mornings?"

"Fuck off!"

Her eyes widened as she gaped at him. "Excuse me?"

"I said: Fuck. Off." Devin yelled up to her.

Her blood boiled hot. "You are the biggest asshole I have ever met!" Holly started down the stairs, never taking her eyes off of him. He turned his head to her and the look he shot her caused her to pause.

The previous night played in slow motion in her mind's eye and her last thought before going to bed was erased instantly. The sweet guy she'd talked to last night was gone. The asshole was back.

She snarled her lip at him, rolling her eyes and continued down the stairs. He was leaning on the side of the sofa, she noticed, and when she reached the bottom of the steps, she stopped, crossing her arms over her chest. "Where are you going?"

"To take a piss. Not that it's any concern of yours," he spat.

Holly watched him, noticing the grimace on his face when he tried to take a step. His right leg gave out and she held back a smile as he cursed and hit his knees. "You know, all you have to do is ask me nicely and I would help."

Devin looked over at her and growled in response. "I don't need your help."

"Oh, is that so?" Holly asked. "Well, by all means, go about your business." She walked past him on her way to the kitchen and could hear him mumble under his breath. She hid her smile as his cursing got louder before she heard him whisper her name.

Turning to face him she couldn't help but smile. He was now on his hands and knees and his face was completely red. "Did you need something, Devin?"

She watched him for long moments, his face turning bright red before he said, "Can you help me up?"

"What was that?" Holly asked, putting a hand to her ear as she smiled. "I didn't quite hear you."

He swore under his breath, turning his head to look at her. "Can you help me?" he shouted before looking back at the floor. "Irritating little bitch."

Holly's eyes widened as she heard his whispered comment before she grinned. "Now Devin. I know you didn't just call me a bitch, did you? Because that would be one sure way to end up in the floor for the rest of the day."

"Christ woman, can you stop your blathering for one fucking second and help me off the floor before I piss myself!"

With a grin, Holly walked over to him and grabbed his arm. She helped him stand, and walk back around the couch, letting him fall onto it amidst more colorful words.

Heading to the kitchen she searched the cabinets until she found what she was looking for. Walking back to the couch, she grabbed the blanket he had thrown in the floor, threw it on his lap, and held her hand out.

"What?" Devin asked, stretching his arm and taking the jar she held out to him.

"For your little problem," she smiled, glancing at his crotch.

Devin looked down when she did before looking at the jar. "You want me to take a piss in a jar?"

She smiled. "I'm not helping you use the bathroom, if that's what you were thinking."

"It's not like you haven't seen it," he grinned.

"Seeing it is one thing. Standing there while you...well, that's completely different. You go in the jar or your pants. Your choice."

"Suit yourself, princess."

Holly didn't like the look in his eyes and knew her little plan had just taken a major turn. When he snatched the lid from the jar and grabbed the waistband of his jeans, she yelped as he snapped all the buttons on them.

She got a small glimpse of him before she turned around. "Jesus, Devin, I gave you the blanket to cover up with."

He laughed while taking care of his business. "Hard to take aim when I can't see what I'm doing."

Holly bit the side of her cheek and walked to the kitchen. She opened the cabinets and grabbed the first thing she found. She could still hear him laughing and rolled her eyes as she reached into the drawer for a spoon.

"So, you gonna empty this or just make me stare at it all day?"

Holly turned and smiled, walking back to the living room. Holding her

hand out, she took the jar from him and held out the bowl she'd brought him.

"What's this?" Devin asked as he took it from her.

"Breakfast."

He stared down into the bowl. The cold cereal she'd fixed him caused a smile to curve her lips. Colorful floating rings swam in milk and Holly was half tempted to try and fix bacon and eggs for herself.

She saw him raise one brow as he looked back up at her. "Breakfast? What am I? Four?"

"If the shoe fits," she grinned, walking across the room and out the front door.

"Let me guess," Devin said when she walked back inside. "I get to watch you eat bacon and eggs this morning?"

She laughed. "No."

"No?" Devin grinned. "You can't tell me this whole morning hasn't been some twisted little payback on your part."

"I'm not the one who did a nose dive in the forest," Holly smiled, walking to the sink and washing her hands. "You managed that one all by yourself. As for your breakfast? That's all you'll be getting from me. You want something better, fix it yourself."

Devin watched her pull another bowl from the cabinet, reaching for the cold cereals that lined the shelf. He sat quietly and just stared at her before it finally dawned on him why the cabinets were so full of heat and serve foods. He chuckled and said, "You can't cook."

Holly turned her head and returned the smile. "No, I can't."

"Well, this is just beautiful," Devin laughed. "I guess it really did burn your ass watching me eat a nice, warm breakfast while you munched on the best the Captain could offer."

Holly laughed, sitting at the island bar and started in on her own breakfast. She looked over at him and the look on her face was too smug. She wasn't telling him something. When it dawned on him, his eyes widened.

"Did it finally catch up with that pee brain of yours?"

"You cannot possible expect me to eat Ravioli for every fucking meal!"

"Well, I could just let you starve," she grinned. "Not that it would take much."

Devin snorted a laugh. "Don't go throwing stones, darling. That ass of yours is barely even a handful," he lied.

"I've never had any complaints."

"Yeah, and I suppose you've had them just lined up around the block, yeah?"

"No, that's more your style," Holly grinned. "I watch TV. I've seen all those

ho bags that line up just to touch you. Absolutely pathetic.”

Devin chuckled as she rolled her eyes and continued to eat her breakfast. He leaned forward, placing the bowl of cold cereal on the coffee table before reaching up and scratching his stomach. Red blotches covered his skin and the more he scratched it, the more it itched.

“Um, Holly?”

“Yes,” she said, standing and walking to the sink to rinse her bowl.

“Can you come here and take a look at this?”

She turned to look at him and laughed. “To look at your crotch? I don't think so!”

Devin rolled his eyes. “Get your mind out of the gutter. I have a rash.”

“A rash?”

“Yes, a rash,” Devin sighed before reaching up and scratching his neck. “Been itching like crazy all night.”

She crossed the room and looked down at him. “Jeez...what did you do?”

Devin looked at the red splotches covering his stomach. “How the hell should I know?” he said.

“Stop scratching it,” she said as she took a step closer to him.

“I told you I needed a shower,” Devin said, looking down at himself. “It probably wouldn't have been this bad if you would have helped me.”

Holly shook her head. “Well, getting you to the bathroom isn't a problem, Devin, but you can barely stand on your own. There is no way in hell I'm going to help you shower.”

He turned his head to her and grinned. “You might like it.”

“I doubt that.”

He laughed when she averted her eyes. She was lying. “So, what do you think it is?”

“What? I look like a doctor to you?” Holly asked. “Could be anything.”

Devin sighed before leaning his head back on the sofa and closing his eyes. “Why does my life suck so bad?”

“Because you're an asshole and have no manners?”

Devin opened one eye, turning his head to look at her. “You're not nearly as cute as you think you are.”

“I don't think I'm cute at all,” Holly grinned. “Just honest.”

Devin watched her walk to the stairs before he sighed again. The way things were going, he'd be completely nuts before the month was up. First his crazy ex, the court battles, the trouble with the band...now this. What would be next?

End of Excerpt

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