

your hand in mine

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your hand in mine

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Summary

Maybe they understand each other better than they think.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The house is quiet as ever. It's pretty much always that way now, but still.

All that means is when she's lying on her bed and basking in the darkness from her black out curtains, she has a chance to feel like she's sixteen again and the movement in the hallway is the heavy-step from her brother and not the squeak of un-oiled wheels.

She's always loved the dark.

When they were little, they used to hide in the closet and crawl to the back whenever their mother had drank too much or their father was doing shady business, which she obviously didn't understand at the time, neither of them did.

Jason always made it into a game, which is totally fucked, but they'd whisper secrets and tell ghost stories and when the coast was clear they'd come back out. So it confuse the hell out of her when the kids in her class were afraid of the dark. It was her sanctuary.

When the light snaps on she has to close her eyes for a beat so they can adjust to the new light.

Then she hears a soft, "Oh, Cheryl," in this mildly pitiful voice, which frankly, she didn't really think she deserves.

So yeah, the room is a mess, the kind of mess that would give her mother a migraine. There's clothes strewn all over the floor and she threw a pillow at her lamp sometime in the night when she just couldn't fall asleep, and maybe she was lying makeup-less and wearing nothing more than a pair of shorts and a ratty old jersey she stole from Jason when they were like thirteen, but hey, she wasn't expecting company.

"You're going to be late," her nana tells her delicately.

She knows. A quick glance at her phone and she sees it's almost *8:00am* and that means she's definitely going to be late, but why her nana thinks she needs to be coddled, she doesn't know.

It makes her appreciate her mother for just a second, but then she snaps out of it, because she really doesn't want to go *there*.

"I'm installing a lock," she blinks, and only takes her eyes off the ceiling for a second.

She's sitting there in the doorway. Cheryl can't help but notice how tired she looks, and she just knows the old lady remembers everything that's happened too, even when they pretend like they they don't.

It doesn't comfort her, not at all.

So she plasters on a smile, one that's fake and they both know it, but she says she's fine and she is. *She's fine*. She'll figure something out, and her nana leaves her to get ready for school without another word.

Her fingers slide across her phone, slowly scrolling down through names, in her head she repeats the same routine 'no' when she thinks about calling one of them, any of them. But she doesn't really have anyone like that. So she tosses the phone somewhere near her feet.

She cries when the door clicks shut, the quiet kind, just to get it out of her system.

She has to pinch her arm on the inside of her elbow to make herself stop. It leaves this kind of angry red mark, one that stands out against her pale skin, but she'll wear long sleeves today and nobody will notice.

She's a therapist's wet dream.

She's running just under ten minutes late when she pulls into the parking lot. Everyone's mostly inside already, bar the few stragglers. She almost turns around, but the thought of her mother getting *that* call keeps her feet moving.

When she gets to the classroom, there's this itch she needs to scratch, so she pushes on the door a little too hard and when the wood smacks against the wall she's rewarded with a nice heavy thud that gets most of the room's attention.

It's the little things, and knowing people are looking at her, just makes her fucking feel good.

Except there's one guy who's looking the complete opposite way. She doesn't need to see the leather or the neck tattoo to know he's a Serpent, she can tell by his unkempt hair that's probably never seen a goddamn comb.

His legs are in her way and she's not about to climb over them to get to her seat.

Something rises up in Cheryl at that. It bubbles through her chest and she *knows* it's going to turn into a slew of insults condemning him and the group of trailer park trash that's invaded their school and has already cheapened the uniform she's clad in.

It's hard to be proud of a school filled with thugs.

But a book comes flying out of nowhere and claps the boy in the back of the head before she can try and articulate the kind of motivational speech her fellow students were accustomed to. It gets a laugh from her classmates and she wishes she'd thought of it first.

There's a soft chuckle from behind him, and a voice she recognises, "asshole."

She gets an almost dizzying flutter in her stomach when she spots the girl, and well, gorgeous would be apt when describing her, even with that hideous pink dye job.

Cheryl's seen her before a few times, she remembers the hair, and the attitude, and has to bite the inside of her cheek to stop herself looking for more reasons to remember her.

She's friends with Jughead and that says it all.

It's annoying how their eyes kind of lock together and she doesn't know if that look is out of amusement or what, but she doesn't look away, even after the guy with the legs has turned a full 180 and her path is clear.

The girl smiles and it totally catches her off guard. The teacher clears her throat in an obnoxious way and Cheryl snaps out of it pretty quickly after that. She rolls her eyes and all but stomps to her seat.

She feels a pair of eyes on her as she makes it to the back of the classroom and her cheeks feel warm, and it's stupid, but it makes her feel a little stabby.

The rest of the class is boring and predictable. And Cheryl doesn't do anything stupid like acknowledge the gorgeous stranger at all. But Veronica is in her fucking ear and she learns her name. *Toni Topaz*. She wonders if it's short for anything, and she hates that her mind goes there.

She's distracted and completely blanks on a question and like, she's usually better than this. She gets thrown by every tap of someone's pen and the messenger that pops her head in the door to pass their teacher a memo. She can usually ignore all that, but not today, apparently.

She also can't ignore the way *Legs* smirks at her when class finishes, because what's up with that?

It's like, really, really cold outside, but they're having practice by the football field anyway, because the janitor got their schedules mixed up and the courts freshly waxed and while she'd love watching the girls slide around, the injuries wouldn't be worth it.

They try to get her to cancel practice, but Cheryl isn't letting them off that easy.

She gets called a masochist for that.

They're all wearing warm-up pants, their skirts over the top, but they're still freezing because she won't let them wear jackets. It's not uniform and she likes the power of telling them no.

She can tell by the look from Josie that maybe it's a little harsh, but oh well.

It's a pretty difficult routine and they're executing it well, bar the rather crude interpretation that Betty is completely botching. It's not really her fault, they've only been running the routine for the last two days, but her steps leading into the cradle is mediocre at best and the rest of the girls are waiting on her to move onto the next part.

The girl is a pretty talented cheerleader, actually, for someone lacking the formal training that she has and they could totally steal the show at the next pep rally if they get this down.

Basically, she knows there's no way Betty wants Cheryl's help, and well, today she doesn't really want to give it but that's never stopped her before.

She's determined, sue her.

So she goes over and stands in front of her, and she gives Betty some credit because she doesn't crack under her gaze and the last run through is actually better than any of the others from the last 45 minutes. But it's still not perfect.

She needs this. She *needs* something to make her feel like she's the one in control here.

"What, Cheryl?" Betty asks. Honestly, there's a tone to her voice that tells Cheryl her dear cousin is having just as bad a day as her. She almost lets it drop, but she's already made the first move now and her itch is back.

So she executes the move Betty's been messing up, and she can tell from her eyes the blonde wants to hit something. It's amusing and just like that, she feels better about herself.

"Your hips shouldn't move that much, don't be sloppy. And your foot, you should..."

"I know the steps, Cheryl." Betty snaps and it's endearing to see Veronica inch closer, ready to jump in between them.

Her back straightens, hands firm on her hips, "do you?"

She can almost hear Betty's teeth grind together to keep herself composed.

There isn't much time left before she's supposed to call practice for the day, so she rolls her eyes and kind of laughs. "Get the move down by tomorrow, or you're the new spotter for lifts."

Betty's face just stays blank, and their eyes stay locked, and she knows she's ruined her cousins plans for the rest of the day, which is enough.

When she turns around she hears one of the girls whisper something and she's pretty sure she was just compared to fucking *Stalin* . It stings, but she'll get over it.

She lets them out five minutes early and packs up the gear herself so she can breathe for a second.

When she's finished and ready to head for her car, she realizes they've had an audience for god knows how long and up on the bleachers Toni, Legs, and another guy whose name she doesn't know are all watching her. She had tunnel vision all practice, apparently.

The boys are sharing a cigarette and she can't roll her eyes hard enough when they wave their stupid fingers at her.

But then Toni's looking her way, and her breath kind of catches when their eyes meet, but she looks away a second later, pushes the gym bags further up her shoulder and tries to pick up her place.

When she gets home there's music playing and it's the kind that only teenagers or strippers use to set the mood. The curtains are drawn shut in the living room and she knows her mother is entertaining.

The thought leaves a foul taste in her mouth.

Her family name once meant something important, and now all it represents is a tragedy that makes strangers look at you on the street, with either judgment or pity. And *god* did she hate pity. She didn't need to see those sad eyes when people remember her brother was gone and her father the same. She was reminded of that every day.

She doesn't want to go inside. There's *nothing* inside for her. But she does, because she gets that same sense of dread every time she steps through the door and she has nowhere else to

go.

Cheryl stops in the doorway and imagines what it would be like to come home to parents that were happy to see her, they'd ask about her day over the diner table, she's complain about homework and it would be nice. Her mother wouldn't walk past her, hand in hand with a perfect stranger and tells her to stay out of the way.

He's paying too much, whoever he is.

The older Blossom looks over her shoulder as they climb the stairs, and gives her a look as if to say 'you did this' and Cheryl backs out. She almost trips over the steps.

She goes straight to her car and doesn't think to look back.

She drives for long enough to run out of gas on the wrong side of town, and isn't that just a fucking kick in the teeth.

A small part of her debates calling home, but it's late and she knows only her nana would pick up and what good would that be? She has nobody else, so she just walks. She's still in her stupid cheerleading uniform and she's completely regretting her earlier decision about jackets because she can't feel her fingers and she can see her breath when she breathes.

She's going to die of hypothermia or at least get sick.

It's a harsh reminder of the lake and she has to pinch her arm again to get that memory out of her head.

She's debating calling the police station and asking for a ride when she hears an old car approaching and now she's trying to get her phone out a little faster, because this is *not* how Cheryl Blossom will die.

"Hey, Red." the guy shouts, and she can't make him out until he gets a little closer, but *fucking hell* .

Legs.

She keeps walking, counting every good deed she's ever done and hopefully it's enough to counteract ever minor infraction, or ethically ambiguous decision. Karma can't be *this* cruel.

The guy continues to tail her, driving alongside with this annoying smirk like he'll never get bored and when she looks over her shoulder she knows he's staring at her ass. And it would be a confidence boost if the circumstances weren't so shady.

"Do you not have anything better to do?" she scoffs and wraps her arms a little tighter around herself.

Her feet hurt and she just wants to go home.

The Serpent actually laughs, and just taps his fingers on the outside of the door, his leather covered arm stuck out the window. "Get in the car, before you get yourself kidnapped for

ransom.”

She whips her head around, and looks at him incredulously, “isn’t that what a kidnapper would say?”

He just smiles and shrugs, “wouldn’t know.”

She can’t believe she’s actually considering it, but the wind hits her in a way that almost knocks her off her feet. She feels a growl in the back of her throat when she stops, the car does the same a second later and she’s yanking the door open.

He presses a button and the windows shut by themselves and she can’t believe anything in this piece of crap is automated, but she keeps that thought to herself, because she’s finally getting warm.

“Why do you always look so angry?” he asks, and she’s confused because that isn’t the questions she’d ask if she picked up a stranger on the wrong side of town.

So she answers, because anything is better than answering *that*, “I don’t.”

He goes to say something else but she’s shivering and leaning into the door, and she can feel her throat getting all tight. She will not cry.

“I could’ve left you out there,” he tells her, and she’s wondering why he’s saying that, but when she looks over he’s using his knee to steer the car so he can take off his jacket.

She’d reach over the grab the wheel herself, but it’s late, the road’s empty and she’s really tired.

“Don’t tell anyone,” he says, before throwing the jacket over her and she’s about to throw it back and shout something about how she doesn’t need his help, but she doesn’t. The jackets warmer than it looks and it smells nicer than she pictured. Legs turns the music up, so he wouldn’t hear her anyway. It’s not like she’s grateful.

She doesn’t put it on, she just lets it sit there. It’s Cheryl’s way of protesting.

She almost gets whiplash when the car stops. She gets the breath knocked out of her and she throws the driver the kind of look that would normally leave them unsettled but he only laughs.

“We’re here, Princess.”

Honestly, she doesn’t know what would be worse, getting dropped off by a Serpent that certainly shouldn’t know her address, or *this* .

It’s not a glamorous place, she’s heard of the bar, and by the rumors she never expected it to be exactly pleasant. There’s bikes everywhere and she can spot enough healthcode violations that she could get this place shut down in a heartbeat, but probably get the inspector killed just as quickly, so she bites her tongue.

“Why the hell did you bring me here?” Her *bite* doesn’t have nearly as much venom as usual.

He just shrugs, like actually shrugs, as if this was a good idea. She would laugh, if her life wasn’t flashing before her eyes.

“I didn’t know where else to take you,” he grunts, and they both see an older guy stick his head out the door and give Legs a look that makes them both uncomfortable. She wonders what kinds of things he’s done in his life and if they were nearly as terrible as her father’s wicked deeds.

“Who...”

“Nobody,” he silences her, grabbing his jacket and kicking open his door. She feels the cold immediately and she’s also a little insulted. Well there goes his chivalry.

“I can’t stay in here,” Cheryl snaps, but he seems completely unphased.

He just shrugs and slips into his jacket, “then come inside.”

“Not a chance,”

“Then figure out another option, I don’t care,”

And just like that he leaves her behind, or tries to, because there’s like a group of men standing by their motorcycles and they’re all looking at her. Cheryl knows her odds and begrudgingly gets out of the car. She keeps a good five steps behind, though, she doesn’t want him to get the wrong idea.

They get over the threshold and surprisingly nobody really looks at her, there’s a few curious eyes but they look away pretty quickly. Really, she expected more of a fuss. She kind of sticks out like a sore thumb.

“You’re late!” the guy from before calls to Legs and he grins when he walks over.

“Had to save a damsel,” and one of the guys sat at the bar laughs, but the look Cheryl shoots to her classmate gets an even bigger one.

The guy orders and Legs gives a winning smile and she’s surprised, she didn’t really picture this, what she did picture was the back rooms. She pictures the place Jason died, scared and

alone, but Legs is looking at her so she digs her nails into her palm, just hard enough to pull her back to reality.

“You good?” he asks, like he’s actually concerned.

“Well it’s significantly warmer in here, and smells better than your car, so...”

There’s a laugh. And she heard it once today already. *Toni*. She’s appeared behind the bar with a dish rag over her shoulder.

She won’t admit it aloud, but the pink looks better in this light.

Toni does this thing where she leans against the bar in front of her and she’s still wearing a white tank top with a black bra. And she’s like, annoyingly pretty and she’s pretty sure Toni knows it.

“Come here often?” Toni smiles, and the look makes Cheryl clench her teeth, her eyes flashing.

If she’s not mistaken, Toni looks her up and down, but she really *can’t* allow herself to think about that.

“Aren’t you supposed to be working, or something?” She sighs and looks incredibly disinterested, but the Serpent girl still looks amused as hell and she feels like she’s under a fucking microscope right now. She should’ve just kept walking.

So she crosses her legs and turns a little in her chair. She can see Toni and Legs grinning at each other as he pour someone a drink and honestly, she doesn’t hate it.

“Do you want anything, a drink?” Toni asks, and she kind of does, but she shakes her head.

Cheryl’s attention has been stolen by two extremely drunk guys playing darts at the back of the room when a glass is pushed towards her.

Toni just shrugs a shoulder and taps the glass, “Cherry cola,” and then she walks away. Cheryl forgets all about the dart game.

She’s in *so* much trouble.

The place starts to die around 3.00am and she has no idea when or how she's supposed to leave. Sweet Pea keeps topping up her drink, and yeah, *that's* his name. She learnt it somewhere around the half hour mark when some girls were flirting to get a free drink.

They have school in the morning and she's starting to get tired. It's going to be hell covering the bags under her eyes.

She has a lot of questions, but she keeps them all in her head, because she doesn't actually know these people. They're not friends.

"You wanna get out of here?"

Cheryl's entire body hums at the words and she has to lean forwards a little so she can't feel Toni's breath on her shoulder. She should say no, but Sweet Pea looks busy and he's not her chauffeur.

"Sure,"

She thinks it surprises Toni, because the girl laughs softly and bites her lip.

Cheryl slides off her seat and folds her arms and tries not to think about her mouth.

She hears Sweet Pea yell a quick goodbye, and she almost returns it, but she rolls her eyes instead. It makes him laugh. She really doesn't understand these people.

When she gets outside she realizes why Toni was laughing. She's standing by her motorcycle and holding out a helmet like she actually expects her to climb on board. And *hell* no.

"I'll go slow," Toni says gently, but the smirk ruins the kind tone.

She's not that fragile and the fact Toni thinks she is, just makes her concerns disappear. So she walks up and snatches the helmet. "If this ruins my hair..."

"I doubt it,"

And Cheryl would be flattered if she wasn't in a pretty compromising position, halfway through straddling a motorcycle, behind a girl she doesn't even know. She doesn't know what to do with her hands and she feels her ears burn when Toni looks over her shoulder and tells her to hold on tight.

The leather feels good under her fingers when she grips onto the jacket and gets a kick of adrenaline when they start moving.

She's sat with her hips right up against Toni's ass, and she can feel the hum of the bike underneath her when it hits her.

This feels *good*.

She feels good.

Cheryl wonders how long the lecture would be if her mother ever saw this. That makes her smile.

It's a terrible idea, but she drops her head to Toni's back, her cheek pressing against the leather, and she feels the girl relax into her. She realizes, it's probably not just her that's freaking out here.

She doesn't know at what point it was decided they'd drive the long way back to town, but she doesn't oppose the idea. It's nice, seeing everything so quiet.

Cheryl watches the lines on the road until her eyes get tired and she closes them, just for a second.

It's more than a second, and they're pretty close to her place when she feels a pinch on her finger.

"Gonna tell me where you live, or am I supposed to guess?" she hears Toni's speaking over the bike and she doesn't feel like shouting back so she just points her finger at the next junction and they carry on like that until they're parked just out of sight from the Thistlehouse windows.

They don't say anything. The engines off and they've been sat there long enough for Cheryl to get a light set of shivers. She's still freezing, especially now there's some space between them.

Toni gets off first, it's kind of awkward and she has to lift her leg a certain way so she can do it without kicking Cheryl. It makes her laugh and Toni's eyes kind of snap towards her. The blush on Toni's cheeks shuts her up.

They know she's avoiding something inside, but Toni's polite enough not to bring it up.

Cheryl's staring at nothing in particular when Toni leans to tap her foot against hers. It's a small gesture and it makes her blurt out a question she's been dying to ask all night, "where's your tattoo?"

It's definitely not what the Serpent was expecting, she can tell from the way her eyes narrow and the twitch at the corner of her lips, "which one?"

And *fuck* .

"All of them..."

Toni studies her for a moment after she says it, and then gives the sexiest grin Cheryl's ever seen in her life, "i'm not telling."

She definitely shouldn't be looking at her lips, but she can't help herself.

Dangerous territory, but she doesn't hesitate, "Show me."

They're staring at each other when Toni whispers, "I really can't," and Cheryl doesn't even have time to process how hot that is, because the other girl takes a step forward and tugs the helmet right from her head.

She suddenly really fucking warm and doesn't have time to think about how messy her hair might be as she climbs off the bike. Her legs feel a little weak but she finds her step and backs up a little.

"See you at school, Cheryl." Toni says, and thank god, she doesn't wait for a reply because she's hardly functioning at this point.

She's decided, she *really* likes pink.

In the morning Cheryl sees her car in the drive, as if it never left, she doesn't know how the hell it got there, but she knows who's responsible and it helps her forget where she is for a moment.

Chapter End Notes

This is going to be something of a slowburn so I guess buckle up. In the meantime, enjoy! Feedback is loved.

Chapter 2

She knows why she's flustered when she wakes up in a sweat, because she dreams of pink and she can't think of a good enough reason why she shouldn't get off, so she does. It's been like, months since she's slept with anyone, and it was mediocre at best. So yeah, she presses her fingers between her legs and it's not a surprise that she's fucking *wet*. It's totally Toni's fault, so that's who she pictures, and it turns out to be a really frustratingly good orgasm.

It's still early, even after she's showered and dressed, she barely slept and it didn't feel right to just lie there, so she goes downstairs. It's safe in the mornings, her mother is still sleeping off an indefinite hangover and she gets free reign of the house. It feels cold, empty, like they're just filling space. It wasn't home.

She bakes, because she can't actually verbally thank the Serpents for picking her up. She doesn't want to give them the wrong idea. A small batch of cookies, however could fix her problem and honestly, it's a good distraction from *dangerous* thoughts.

They're cherry flavored.

She's also wearing a dress that is kind of cutting off the circulation to her chest, but it's pretty and when she does this little turn in front of her full-length mirror, she gets to admire her own figure and she knows it's probably, *definitely*, against school regulation.

She looks hot and expensive, which is exactly what she's going for.

She has to walk tall.

"I have plans, after school," she tells her nana, kissing her cheek goodbye. It's not really a lie, because she doesn't intend on coming back right away, she doesn't want to be around for another run-in with another one of her mother's clients, but wouldn't exactly call it *plans* either, "don't wait up."

She ignores the concerned expression etched on her nana's face and Cheryl wonders if the older woman can see past all the makeup and catch how utterly exhausted she is, so it's probably better to keep everyone at an arm's distance today just in case they have x-ray vision too. Blossoms don't have *flaws*.

The car is actually in perfect shape, there's not even a scratch, but the first thing she notices is the messy little 'IOU' stuck on the wheel. The tanks full and there's a receipt attached to the note as well as an 'SP' and a number scribbled onto the bottom. She wants to hate how bold he is, but she can't, because there's a lipstick kiss on the back and *he* didn't put that there.

She sticks the note deep inside her bag.

It's busy when she pulls into the parking lot, it's peak time for arrivals, but she notices everything, and gets a bite of disappointment at the lack of motorcycles, half-restored trucks, or leather, and that means there's no Serpents. At least not the ones she's looking for. It's not

like she expected them to wait for her, but they're usually hanging around and intimidating delicate students before school starts.

It's strange, but for a motorcycle gang, they're actually relatively punctual. She expected every one of them to flunk out in their first semesters, but here they are.

She goes against all of her instincts and approaches Jughead and Betty, because the cookies are going cold and they're the only people that might know where Toni and Sweet Pea actually are. Cheryl hails them down and while the couple slow, she can see that Betty has no time for her. She makes a mental note to single her out in practice more often, because she kind of likes seeing her all bitchy.

It's also amusing. Her cousin tugs on her boyfriend's hand a little and he doesn't hesitate to follow along, "We have to get to homeroom, Cheryl."

Honestly, they make her a little jealous. She pushes *that* thought to one side and rolls her eyes, because she wasn't talking to Betty anyway, "Where's your cronies, Hobo?"

That makes Jughead stall, but he shrugs and tells her, "probably ditching."

She wonders what kind of trouble they're getting into and it's a hard reminder that she had no place getting excited over one pretty girl anyway, she's *loveless*. Cheryl's heard it all before, and she hates that her mind tells her *mother knows best*.

"Of course," she snaps, and she doubts that anyone would think this is personal. Cheryl practically hosted the anti-welcoming party for the Serpents, and on their first day, she made damn sure each one of them knew the standards Riverdale High strive for. It didn't make her any friends, she didn't want any.

Jughead looks a little confused, they haven't spoken in a while. Actually, she can't remember the last time their talks didn't end in fiery insults or threats. He seems bored when he asks her, "don't you have anything better to do than chase this up?"

And no, not really. This was the only thing on her agenda this morning.

He eyes the box she's holding firmly against her hip. It makes her a little skittish, because she's embarrassed she went to all the effort. Cheryl doesn't let the conversation go any further, she's spent too much time thinking about people that really don't matter, so she turns to walk in a different direction.

She dumps the cookies in the trash at her first opportunity and that's the end of that.

The dress feels like overkill now, but she can't go home and change, so she just makes it work. It's not like she's never shown up to class overdressed. It makes her feel a little better when she catches the guy next to her staring, even so, it feels a little dirty, so she rolls her eyes and he looks away quickly. She just adjusts the top of her dress and watches the clock for the rest of the class.

She still finds herself looking around throughout the day, because maybe they'll show up. Cheryl doesn't know why she's so attached to the idea, and frankly, she's desperate to forget about those leather jackets.

In her last class, she slips her phone into her lap and sends a text to Reggie and asks *Party Friday?*

The answer comes a moment later when her phone buzzes against her thigh and she feels her heart jump a little when Josie turns around in her chair and whispers, "get ready at mine?"

They both share a smirk and when class is dismissed, they pair off together and discuss in specific detail what they'll wear and who else is invited. *Toni who?*

She can't go home, she gets a text from her mother that reads, *make yourself busy, Cheryl.*

It doesn't take much to convince her, so she drives around for a little while, as planned. There's a new movie screening at the theatre, so she goes alone. The ticket guy knows her by name and he lets her in without paying. She'd be embarrassed about the improper casualness, but she's been an avid member since she and Jason were kids.

They were eight when they saw their first movie on the big screen. Two days after their birthday, they spent all their collective gift money to buy a ticket for every screening. It felt wild as children and they spend the whole day there, switching seats to find *theirs*. It became part of their weekly schedule and even as they got older, they kept the silly little tradition.

After Jason died, the owners reserved the seats indefinitely for her. It's not like she goes back every day, but this was their thing, so she drops by and cries into her popcorn.

The whole group of trailer park ruffians are back at school the next morning. They're in their spot and she does her best to avoid looking, but she's not giving away *her* spot just to make a point. She keeps her eyes on the floor, but they snap up when she hears Legs yell, "drop something?"

She spots the massive black bruise around Fangs eye first, and then the red cracked knuckles that Legs is trying to hide. They were in a fight, gang related probably. Toni seems completely unharmed but who knows what's under that leather.

Their devotion to the Serpents is admirable, their loyalty unwavering. She respects that, but it's dangerous and they're the wrong kind of people to get wrapped up in, despite the wicked urge. It's a different world and she doesn't belong with these people. She has her *own* people.

So when Sweet Pea nods at her and brushes his fingertips together doing the universal sign for money, she rolls her eyes and keeps walking. She'll pay him back on her own terms and all of this will be finished.

Cheryl makes it off the parking lot, but then someone tugs her to one side and for a split second she thinks it's Sweet Pea trying to get his cash and she's got some special words for an impatient debt collector. But it's Toni and she slips her hand down her arm so they're loosely holding hands, the contact sends a jolt down Cheryl's spine. Something simmers in the pit of her stomach, because they look so fucking good together. She whips her head around to make sure nobody is looking when she slaps the hand away. She's getting *too* close.

"Get your hands *off* my body," the word *Sapphic* is floating around her head but she doesn't say it out loud because that in itself is pretty gay and she just *can't*.

Toni pulls back, hands disappearing into her jacket. Cheryl regrets everything the moment contact is lost, especially when Toni furrows her brows and then leans in close to whisper, "hey, you okay?" and *no*, she's fucking not. She's an idiot and she's not falling for this trap. She can't trust anyone not to break her heart, again.

It's feels like a splash of white hot anger, and she's not even sure why, but she snaps, "I would be, if you left me alone."

Toni just tilts her head, like she understands, but how can she? And Cheryl doesn't get it when she smiles in a way that completely unsettles her, "okay, well how about you call me when you're ready to talk."

She spins on her heels and walks away and Cheryl watches her ass until she's turns a corner. She's stumped, because she doesn't have Toni's number, *not* that she wants it.

The party is in full swing when she arrives. It started around 8.00pm and it's pushing on 10.00pm when she and Josie actually walk through the door, and she really wonders where in the hell Reggie's parents are, and why they let this be a regular thing. They must really not care or there wouldn't be people filtered throughout their house and backyard, making a total mess.

There's a bunch of cheerleaders mingling, some guys from the football team and then a bunch of other guests she doesn't really care about. When she looks out back she sees Archie and Veronica in the pool, and Jughead is sitting with just one foot in the water talking to Betty. She wonders what kind of miracle it took to get him here.

Then she spots the Pussycats and Josie must too, because her friend squeezes her arm and she disappears from her side. She's alone and she's reminded how this preppy group of teenagers are supposed to be *her* people, and yet she felt more at home at the Whyte Wym. *Maybe she could be good at darts.*

She almost turns around and leaves, it's not like anyone's noticed her yet anyway, but at some point they would and she needs this. It's the kind of party that could change everything.

There's a table of drinks and a keg in the middle of the floor, but she makes her way over to the kitchen, stepping over a shirtless boy that's already KO'd on the floor. She finds where all the good drinks are and gets to work on finding a glass. She didn't bring anything because she's not going home to steal from her mother tonight, she's done an excellent job of avoiding her and it's a routine she'd like to keep repeating.

A guy stumbles in and she thinks his name is Josh, he's grabbing more cups and she thinks she's slapped him once, he smiles and looks her up and down before offering to get her something.

"You're not my type," she says, with a smile that makes his face drop and he leaves.

She makes herself a whiskey because she has taste and there's a bottle in the cupboard. She knows it's probably hidden up there for a reason, which makes her want it more. She throws in a couple chunks of ice and heads out into the party.

The music's loud and overrated. She tries talking to a few of the guests, but the conversation is dry and she has to refill her drink just to survive it.

She's on drink #3 when Reggie saddles up beside her, he's holding a beer and it's definitely not his first because he's swaying a little, she wonders if she is too. He greets her with a smirk and totally checks out her chest, but it doesn't make her all warm like she expected, he leans in to say, "glad you could make it."

Cheryl can practically taste the Coors Light on his breath, but she's trying this new thing where she fits in, so she hides her repulsion, "how glad?" she asks, with a hint of a smile. She tilts her head and bats her eyelashes for added effect.

He just smirks and hooks his arm around her. She feels a hand on her lower back and she doesn't hate the feeling of it, but she doesn't love it either. It's not what she wants, that's for damn sure.

She takes a bigger mouthful of her drink, because it seems like she's the only one not having fun and does her best to engage small talk. It gets easier when a few other people join them. She lets Reggie fill up her drink again and when he comes back, the hand on her back slips a little lower and she's starting to feel the warmth from the alcohol so she allows it.

There's a game of beer pong to one side of the room, Archie is dominating and Josie's watching with the rest of the gang. Reggie drags her over and she knows this isn't really her scene and so does everyone else. It feels like she's trying too hard.

Somehow, she gets roped into playing a round. She doesn't know how much she drinks but she feels sick when it's over. It's a new sensation, because people are actually laughing with her. Cheryl wipes her mouth and cringes because that's not attractive. They try and get her to play again and she really can't, so she's so fucking relieved for the rescue when Kevin volunteers.

They stay and watch and at some point, she feels Reggie looking at her lips. She could say no. He's not a total jerk, she's said no before and he's backed off. She could push his hand away, but she doesn't. She finishes her drink and drops her glass onto the table, then drags Reggie away.

Cheryl can hear his chuckle and she really hates that she compares it. She's still got Toni on her mind and she *needs* to just be done with that. *Now*.

He presses her back against the door and she knows her skin is flushed. The kiss is messy and if she wasn't drunk and desperate she'd rate it below average. She can actually taste second hand beer now and it's kind of gross. She hopes her lipstick doesn't smudge, but it doesn't stop her, because if she stops then she'll have a chance to think this through logically and back out.

She kisses him fast, and hard, and Reggie makes this grunt when she pulls him closer.

She wonders how Toni tastes.

Cheryl lets it move at his pace, closing her eyes tightly when he dips to her neck, he sucks on a spot and nips the skin with his teeth, then repeats, over and over. It feels good, but it feels so much better when she pictures *her*.

It's the same dream she's had the past two nights. Vivid and totally euphoric. She can see her smiling up from between her legs, kissing the inside of her thighs, and...

"Stop," she breathes. Her throat is all dry, so he doesn't hear her, but she slaps his arm a few times to get his attention. It gives her the chance to push him back. She's gentle, because really, he's drunk enough that he'll probably fall on his ass.

Reggie just stands there, like he's not sure what to do.

Her eyes burn.

They stay like that for a beat, while they catch their breaths. But then he clears his throat and his hands land on his hips. Reggie bows his head when he says, "you're not feeling it," he tells her, it's not even a question. And he just shrugs, "it's fine, I didn't really wanna do this either."

She's surprised and kind of insulted, but she nods. And he just takes another step back so he can lean against the sink. It's a way of saying she can leave, so she does.

She's sitting on the front steps of the house when Legs pulls up. She kept his number, even after ditching the cookies and sent him an address, signing it '— Red' so he wasn't going into this totally blind. He agrees with pretty much zero encouragement. She really wants to know *why*.

Cheryl looks terrible, there's no denying it. Her feet hurt and the dress she picked is just all around uncomfortable now, so she has the heels dangling from her finger tips and she's considering just leaving them behind. She has tears streaming down her cheeks and she doesn't really know why she's crying, but her wet mascara is still marking her face when he walks up the steps. Legs gives her this look that makes her question why she did anything tonight, and then he just takes off his jacket and she doesn't fight him when it's thrown over her shoulders. It's warm and smells of vanilla.

"Thanks," she says, still staring at her feet, because she doesn't know what to do now that he's here. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but now she feels like an idiot. He doesn't care, he shouldn't, but she still can't fight the fact that, he *still* came.

The look she gets can only be described as a mix between disdain and pity, she doesn't know which one she'd prefer. A guy from the football team comes stumbling out of the door and it makes her jump, he falls over laughing and she watches the scene until someone comes and drags him back inside.

"I hate these people," he grunts, and when she opens her eyes, he's crouched down beside her and watching the door. These people. Nothsiders. *Her*. Does Toni hate her too?

She ignores the voice in her head, because she's too drunk to get that deep, instead she says, "you're still here."

He looks personally insulted by the statement, and she would be too. “Whatever, can you walk?” he asks and she has to roll her eyes when he adds, “I’m not carrying you.”

He stands by his word, but he offers a hand and she takes it. Cheryl puts her arms in the jacket because she’s freezing and leans into Legs before he can run away. She can blame it all on being drunk later so she tells him, “you smell nicer than you look.”

And Sweet Pea just rolls his eyes. She thinks she’s made a friend.

It takes her a while to realize, but he’s not taking her home, and *god* she's so relieved. They drive to the trailer park and she’s silent the whole ride, she's heard stories before, but she'd never dare step inside before this point.

She’s mostly just glad he doesn’t ask any questions about tonight, she figures he doesn't care, it’s probably the reason why she called him. She uses the time to brush away as much of the tear marks as she can and scratch at the little mark on her neck. He *marked* her.

“Can you like, be fucking quiet?” He asks when they’re getting out of the car, and she’s taken aback. She isn’t even *that* loud.

She rolls her eyes and pulls the jacket around herself tighter, let's the collar touch her face.

He has his hand on her back, it’s higher up than Reggie had it, almost touching her shoulders. It’s gentle and it’s what’s keeping her up straight because she's stumbling. She had to put her heels back on so she's not caked in mud, and they’re digging into the dirt with every step. She bets it's funny to watch but she's too drunk and it's not helping her balance.

Sweet Pea gives her that look again when they get to the door, he’s pulling out a set of keys that has almost a dozen attachments, he tells her, “I mean it, be quiet. If you wake anyone up...” he leaves it there and she bites her tongue.

It’s small, and messy, but it’s homey and there’s pictures up. She doesn’t remember ever having pictures being celebrated so proudly by her parents. Does he *have* parents?

She has so many questions and one of them is answered when this tiny human comes padding out of a room. He’s holding a blanket and is dressed in a onesie with a big Superman logo on his chest. It looks like it's been worn for years and has probably been passed down by an older child, because it's way too big. The kid must be no older than two because he’s *so* small.

Sweet Pea shoots her a ‘look what you did’ glare and she holds her hands up, surrendering because she really did try and be quiet.

“Sweets?” and fuck, the kids got a lisp. He's also a miniature version of Legs, with the hair and everything so it's tripping her out.

Her heart melts a little bit when Sweet Pea kneels and whispers something about tucking him in. The kid tells him about needing a monster 'handled' and she wonders how many times

he's had to do this. Is the kid his? And then she ruins the moment when her hand slips off the wall and she drops one of her shoes. Everyone's a little tired so it startles them and *Sweets* looks at her with a cute glare and just points to a door.

She gets the message and doesn't wait to be told again.

There are clothes on the floor, it's the perfect obstacle course for someone who's definitely drunk. There's a few posters on the wall, graffiti, and there's so many pictures all over the wall. A lot of them are Polaroids of himself with Fangs and Toni, a few others show up from picture to picture, but it's clear they're a bit of a trio. There's some artsy black and white ones too, they're pretty. Cheryl drags her finger along the wall, but doesn't look too hard at all the doodles and photographs, because she can't multi-task right now, and it's hard enough not falling over.

She'll deny it, but she even picks up a few things and tosses them in his wash basket because she's a guest and it's *right there*.

Eventually she stumbles on her own feet, hits her toe on something hard and bites her lip when she lets out a little yelp. She hopes nobody heard.

Even though the room is small, it fits a double bed, she wonders if he has the biggest room or if she just expected less. She figured trailers were supposed to be more dirty and it makes her feel a little terrible for judging them all so wrongly.

The sheets look soft and she's really fucking tired and *tempted*. She doesn't even wait for an invite, she just unzips her dress at the back. It's awkward and she's got to angle her arm in a certain way to push it down her body. It pools at her feet.

"What the hell are you doing?" she hears and what the hell is *he* doing?

Sweet Pea is actually averting his eyes, using one of his hands to block the view and the other is pulling open his dresser. She can see how red he is. She's wearing underwear so she doesn't get what the problem is. He tosses her a pair of sweats and a t-shirt, it hits her in the face but he's not looking so when she almost topples over nobody can laugh.

She pulls on the clothes and they're too big for her, but they're nice and less constricting.

"I'm dressed, *virgin* ." she says all blunt and straight to the point.

"I'm not..." he stops to suck in a breath from his nose and just folds his arms slowly.

She doesn't hesitate to climb under the covers. It's warm and the bed wasn't made when she got here. She wonders if he was trying to sleep when she text.

"Are you just going to stand there?" She sighs, her eyes feel heavy and she doesn't know how long she'll be able to hold a conversation. "You can sleep next to me, I don't bite," she says, "and I trust you."

He just shrugs and leans against the dresser, he's watching her carefully when he says, "It's cool. Shut up and go to sleep."

She manages to get out a quiet, “*you* shut up,” and then she’s out cold.

There’s hushed whispers when she wakes up and her head is on fire. There’s a sharp pain behind her eyes and Cheryl must give herself away because the bed dips and she feels soft dainty fingers brush the hair out of her face and there’s that heavenly voice, “good morning, princess.”

She hums and rolls over, she’s met with the bright light from the window and she has to push her face back into the pillow to avoid losing her sight.

That gets a cute laugh. She wants to hear it again but instead she just groans and mumbles a quiet, “what?”

“She’s still drunk,” she hears Legs and if she didn’t remember everything that happened, that would be an insult. She’s *just* woken up. Jesus Christ.

Her hair moves again and a thumb brushes over her cheek so gently, “poor baby girl.”

Cheryl’s eyes snap open. Toni’s sat next to her, back against the headboard. Sweet Pea is on top of the dresser, his legs swinging a little, like a child. He looks amused and she thinks about throwing a pillow but she doesn’t.

“Could you not do that,” she whispers, and groans when she sits up. The hand falls from her face, but Toni doesn’t stop smiling. Cheryl finally sees the band t-shirt she’s wearing and god, she hopes nobody took blackmail pictures. This would *ruin* her.

“I mean, you *did* sleep with my best friend.” Toni says and she looks insulted, so Cheryl has to immediately just recount everything quickly to make sure she didn’t miss anything.

She’s kind of doubting herself when she says, “I didn’t…” but then the pair of Serpents start laughing and she rolls her eyes. Seriously, are they twelve?

Her cheeks are warm but she doesn’t hate the teasing, they’re not trying to make her uncomfortable.

Sweet Pea tosses her a bottle of water and she takes it and chugs half the contents before she’s satisfied. There’s noise outside and it’s nice, she hears kids laughing and she’s curious to see the place in daylight, but she feels like that might be overstepping. She wasn’t invited here, she kind of just invited herself.

“Feel better?” Toni asks delicately.

“Not really,” she tells her, she’s got a raging headache.

Toni reaches out, gently taking her chin and tilts her head to one side, like she’s checking to see if she’s okay. She doesn’t feel okay, she needs a shower to wash off the party stench, “You wanna talk about last night?”

Cheryl shakes her head just a little, she can't talk about this with her, "I should probably go."

She's taken aback when Toni's hand finds her leg and she's told, "you don't have to."

It takes her a moment to realize, but Toni and Sweet Pea are in the same clothes they likely slept in. It's weird, she hasn't seen them in pedestrian clothing. There's no leather and hell, Toni's wearing this cute oversized t-shirt and a pair of shorts, which are really *short*, and Legs is wearing sweatpants and a sweater, his sleeves rolled up to his elbows. How do they look so comfortable in just about anything?

Cheryl clears her throat because she doesn't know how long she's been staring at them, "what exactly do gang members *do* on a Saturday morning?"

She's looking at Toni, who just shrugs, "burn down mansions?"

She hates them, except she really doesn't. And this time, when they laugh, she grabs a pillow and tosses it so hard that it makes Sweet Pea fall off the dresser.

They let her steal the spare toothbrush while the Serpents argue over what movie to watch, and the whole thing is so painfully normal. Legs wins the coin toss and shark movie it is. Honestly, burning things *did* seem more realistic. But it's nice and comfortable. They talk as everything's set up and she's introduced to Sweet Pea's prized possession, a little goldfish he rescued from a carnival three years ago. She wants to hear the story and almost asks, but Toni is touching her leg again and it's hard to think.

Once the film starts, they all kind of settle down. Legs is lay on his side, his feet closest to the headboard. He's focused entirely on the movie because he loves *Jaws* and can quote it almost by heart. Toni's watching, but she's also drawing little patterns on Cheryl's leg and she has to swallow down the flutter of butterflies. It would be weird to have someone thirdwheeling, except it isn't a date and the tension between them *shouldn't* be there.

Around halfway through, there's a moment where everything gets quiet and she can feel the way her heart beats. She jumps, because she doesn't like sharks and while nobody acts like they saw it, the hand on her thigh moves up a little, while the feeling in her stomach moves lower. She's completely forgotten about the movie at this point. The hand doesn't move from that spot, except when the credits roll and Toni squeezes gently and lets her go. The cool air hits her skin and she realizes how fucking *hot* she is.

She's disappointed when Sweet Pea closes the laptop and sits up, but it's getting late in the day and if she's not home soon, her nana would worry.

They offer her a ride and she takes it. Sweet offers his truck because she's still in his sweats and she can't be seen in public like this. They don't understand but they roll with it and he punches her shoulder when they leave. Toni's given the keys and their hands find each others sometime during the drive. She weaves their fingers together and lets herself want something she can't have for just a little longer.

Her nana gives her a strange look when she gets inside the family mansion, and it's probably the clothes, but it could also be her smile. She's fucking smitten, and she knows it.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's only been two days since the party, but she already finds herself leaving another ambiguous text and expects to be picked up and whisked away. It's late and just slamming her bedroom door and locking herself in doesn't quite feel like enough when she finds her mother informs her of a secret will her father hid from the family, while her chemistry teacher stands half naked in the living room.

This was her fault, apparently, but she's sure that despite her actions, her mother bedding the entire town of Riverdale was not part of the plan.

She gets a text thirty minutes later that reads, *outside*.

There's nobody asking her where she's going in the middle of the night, or when she'll be back. There's no curfew. It would almost seem patronising for someone to care.

Once she rounds the gates to the house, she makes out the motorcycle just a little further down the street and Sweet Pea is lent against it. She's relieved he thought it out properly, so nobody could see the bike from a window. It's the first time she thinks he expects an explanation, because he's folding his arms and giving her this look, like he had better things to do. She wasn't stranded on the side of the road or stuck at a party, she just couldn't be *here*.

She kicks the ground and there's a tiny cloud of gravel that follows, and she just shrugs when she tells him, "I don't have anyone else."

It must not seem like a good enough reason, because he stands up. He looks so much taller than she remembers him, "You hang out with Jughead and his friends," and she knows it dawns on him too because his mouth forms a little o, "*his friends*."

The words sting, but it's nothing she doesn't know. They're not her friends, she just finds herself around them a lot. "Do you know anywhere quiet?" She asks, her arms wrapping around herself. It's warmer than it's been the last few nights, but it's still not quite the summer heat she misses so much.

He stares for a moment, and then just hands her the helmet. It seems like all the Serpents have the same kind of chivalry when it comes to putting her safety above their own. He tells her, "I can find a place," and throws his leg over the motorcycle.

They head for Sweetwater River, and she doesn't have the heart to tell him it's the last place she wants to go. She hasn't been back since last Winter, and she wonders what ungodly spirit thinks it's amusing to keep bringing her back there. Cheryl just hopes his motives are innocent and he's oblivious to everything that's happened at the lake.

It's so dark and the further away they get from the town, and once they pull off the road and touch down on a dirt path, they have to solely use the headlight from the motorcycle, because the torches from their phones are no use. They go as far as the bike can take them, but at some point Sweet Pea slows them to a stop, and motions for her to get off. She's getting better at dismounting.

"This way," he tells her, like he has a place in mind, and they walk the bike together until they come to the treeline. It's a quiet spot, far enough from the road so any of the noises they hear are from nature rather than traffic. She can't see the water, but she can hear it, she knows it's there.

She keeps walking until she can see it, and honestly, *she can almost feel his hand.*

There's a snap of fingers and she hates how she jolts a little. Sweet Pea's standing next to her, trying to get attention and looks a little lost when he asks, "you good?"

She's not sure he'd like the answer, so she just nods. *Whatever*, she can do this.

There's a bit of a ledge where the grounds eroded away and it makes for a nice seat. It's almost charming how Sweet Pea puts his jacket down for her to sit on, but she maybe he caught the way she was looking at the floor and sensed a lecture. It's a beautiful place, the lights can't pollute the sky from this distance and they can see all the stars. She wonders if Toni would like it here, and what level of lame it would be to ask.

"I used to camp here all the time with my pop, he taught me to fish and skip rocks," Sweet Pea tells her, and he doesn't look at her when he talks, and she's trying not to look so surprised by all the personal information he's sharing, because he's not usually such a big talker. She wonders if his father is still around, but from the way he stares at the water, she figures he's not.

It's strange, to share such personal things with a guy she doesn't really know, and she sits with the information for a while, she never had that kind of bond with either of her parents and neither did JJ. They had each other.

She finds him giving her a look, like to say it's her turn, and she swallows hard. She decides not to tell him that she's barely slept for the past week, because whenever she closes her eyes, she sees pink and leather, and a mouth that's made for her. Instead, she says, "this is the last place I saw my brother alive."

He didn't know. She can tell from glancing over and seeing the way his jaw clenches all tight, like he's grinding his teeth together. It's all too deep and she debates telling him about last Winter, but nobody really understands what she tried to do that day. She just wanted to be with Jason.

He bows his head, like he's giving her a moment to compose herself, so she does. Cheryl doesn't really find the words and she's thankful when Legs clears his throat and says, "ten bucks says I can hit the water from here."

There's a stone in his hand and she actually laughs, and tells him, "you're on."

It just barely makes it, hitting the shallowest part of the river, but she pulls out a little purse she was hiding in her pocket and holds up a note. He doesn't hesitate when he pockets it.

They stay by the riverside for another hour before Cheryl starts to actually get cold, so they get back on the road and drive back to Thistlehouse. Sweet Pea gives her this look when she's off the motorbike and she's standing there trying to think of a way to thank him without actually saying it.

He just tells her, "you could've called her too, you know. She cares."

She knows it isn't enough when she shrugs, so she admits, "that's part of the problem."

Strangely, she thinks he gets it, because he kicks the bike to life and leaves without saying goodbye. She makes another batch of cookies before she leaves for school the next morning.

They're sat on opposite sides of the cafeteria, but she can still hear Toni's laugh and feels a set of eyes on her at all times. Cheryl just needed some space and while the Serpent seems to have granted her unspoken wish, she's not making it very easy. She's pretty damn sure Toni's wearing red lipstick for her and she doesn't know if she wants to slap her or do the filthiest things to her, but she's leaning towards the former.

She's sat at a table with Josie and by obligation, the rest of the group. Archie brings up something about a new batch of Jingle Jangle that's made one of the guys in the football team have a seizure last weekend. It gets her attention, but it's all rumors and apparently he's fine. Jugheads the one hooked on the details and is basically conducting an interview, writing down the notes for his newest diary entry. The whole group eat this shit up.

It's not until Veronica nudges Cheryl and says, "hey, why is neck tattoo is looking at you?" that she pays any attention to their gossiping, because now everyone's either looking at her, or Sweet Pea and that's exactly what she didn't want.

She's kind of stumped for an excuse, so she shrugs, "I scratched up his bike, last week."

A crowned hat ducks around Betty and she tries not to roll her eyes when Jughead kind of stares at her. No doubt he's seen the bike in perfect condition, and he's slowly piecing it all together for a new chapter of *dear diary*. Cheryl just rolls her eyes and stands up, because can anyone mind their own fucking business? Nobody really makes a move to stop her leaving the table and it's telling, she wasn't really welcome anyway but she disappears from the group and nobody seems like they're missing her.

There's an empty table near the exit, but she's *not* sitting alone for lunch.

She struts right over to the Serpent table, smacks the cookie out of Sweet Pea's hand and walks straight out of the cafeteria. There's a tell tale step behind her, but she doesn't turn on her until they're outside and hidden behind a set of bleachers. She figures Toni would be at home here, where all the stoners hang out.

Cheryl just grabs her arm and pulls Toni to one side, before jabbing a finger into her shoulder. It doesn't really get the reaction she wanted so it totally makes her lose track when the other girl softly laughs. It's a problem, because it makes her cheeks burn, so she snaps, "you *have* to stop looking at me."

It's infuriating how Toni just tilts her head, does this thing where she furrows her brows and pulls her lip between her teeth, and god, she *needs* to stop doing that. Toni seems like she's considering it, but then she tells her, "I like looking at you," and god if that doesn't make her knees a little weak.

She opens her mouth and then closes it again. She looks down because she really doesn't know what to say anymore. It feels easy to fall for this trap when they're alone and nobody's watching.

Cheryl folds her arms and tries not to make a sound when the distance between them basically disappears and fixes her eyes squarely on Toni's boots.

When she feels a thumb slide along her jawbone, she looks up and her heart stutters in her chest when she catches the look in Toni's eyes. They're settled on Cheryl's lips.

"I'm sorry," Toni says, and swallows.

She doesn't want Toni to apologise for something so stupid. So she kind of just tilts her head and her lips catch Toni's thumb in a perfect chaste kiss. It's soft and brief, and it makes the other girl blush for the first time and Cheryl feels like a fucking winner.

The Serpent's hand drops, and she's lost the blush when she smirks. Cheryl just rolls her eyes and laughs, because she feels so hot and she's getting drawn in by it all.

"Just so you know, I like your jacket," Toni says, she's still leaning so close to her and Cheryl can feel the girl's breath on her cheek. It makes her eyes flutter to a close, "what made you choose leather?"

Cheryl breathes out roughly, looking away when she admits quietly, "I picked it out for you."

She has to close her eyes because Toni makes this little groan which shouldn't be so sexy.

There's a bell signaling the end of lunch and it kind of helps to snap her out of the bubble they're in, but neither girl steps back. She lets Toni take the lead, and Cheryl feels a mixture of relief and affection when Toni looks at the door and brushes past her.

And then she honestly fucking *hates* her, because then she feels a gentle breath against her ear and she hears Toni whisper, "you'd look better in *my* jacket."

Toni 1 - Cheryl 0.

It's just Cheryl and her nana in the house that night, she doesn't ask where her mother is, and her nana doesn't bring it up. They understand each other that way, she wonders if they'd be happier alone, without constantly looking over their shoulders. It worries her sometimes, the way her mother whispers when she's on the phone and watches the older Blossom like she's waiting for something terrible to happen.

There's too much bad blood in her family, but she knows who she can trust.

As a child, she'd tell her nana elaborate stories of her future husband and the children she'd have. It would be a magical wedding, with a big church and doves. It's strange now how she pictures a different ceremony, where she could earn a jacket over a ring.

"You're distracted," she's told, and she doesn't deny it. Cheryl just nods, because it's the honest truth and it's nice for a change.

They don't discuss it any further, but her nana squeezes her hand before Cheryl dismisses herself, and it's weird. She wonders how much the older lady might know, because it feels like she has her blessing to continue.

She's just getting to sleep when the screen from her phone illuminates the entire fucking room, and she has to squint her eyes to read the message.

can you sneak outside

It might seem like it sometimes, but she wasn't actually a prisoner and her mother had absolutely no power over her. At least, not over a curfew. She texts back, *why the hell are you here?*

It's late and she doesn't even know why she's entertaining this idea, but she picks out a short, almost revealing dress instead of her pajamas, and tip toes out of her room when her phone vibrates again, *bring your car keys*

She almost turns around and goes back to bed, because she hates how they've just assumed she's okay with a bunch of gang members showing up at her house in the middle of the night.

The boys are lurking around her car when she slips out of the house, and it makes her snap a little because if anyone see them, she'll be crucified, "if you've left even a fingerprint I'll have you both strung up."

They kind of jump back a little, like they're not carrying knives and god knows what else.

"Thought it was time you paid me back," Sweet Pea says and smirks, before parking his ass on the car door and folding his arms. She catches him raise his foot, like he's about to rest it flat against the metal, but he must see the way her eyebrow pops up and it's back on the floor pretty quickly.

Cheryl's eyes get a little wider, because he's totally delusional if he thinks she's giving him the car, even for a fucking joyride. They may be friendly, but she still grinds her teeth when Fangs takes his chance, and rolls over the front passenger door. He lands ass first, and his legs are still hanging over the side, "shotgun."

She just rolls her eyes and fishes out the keys from her pocket "get your feet *off* my door, or walk."

The boys laugh and Sweet Pea is polite enough to open a damn door and climb in the back, he's careful to keep his feet off the seats. Neither boy bothers with a seat belt, and she's not their mother, so she doesn't tell them otherwise. She just starts the car and fixes her hair in the mirror as she says, "is someone going to tell me where we're going?"

Sweet Pea just puts his hand on her shoulder and squeezes, "trailer park."

They pull into the Serpent territory and get swarmed by kids running alongside the car and their greasy hands are probably messing up the pristine shine, but Toni's stood in the distance, watching with one of those smiles that makes Cheryl forget everything. She's sure they didn't get this kind of a welcoming the last time they rocked up in the middle of the night, so she figures it's a special occasion.

Once they stop, it's chaos. She doesn't even care when a few tiny people climb inside. There's this one kid that just jumps into the driver's seat and start moving the wheel and making engine sounds, and she really can't think of a good enough reason not to let them play in there. She does, however, look to the boys and tells them to supervise, because if anything gets broken, it's their balls she'll crush.

Cheryl leaves them to saunter over and meet Toni. She has to fight a blush when the girl takes her hand and makes her do this little spin, the boys wolf whistle from the car and she swallows *hard*.

They lean into each other and she knows there's barely any room to breathe when Toni whispers, "you look beautiful," and she fucking feels it.

"I know," she tells her, and puts her fingers around Toni's drink, stealing a sip. She doesn't know exactly what she's just drank, but it's strong and she has to turn away when she winces a little. Toni just lets out this little laugh when Cheryl hands it back.

She doesn't think to check the status of her car, because she's pulled further into the trailer park and there's a bonfire right in the middle of a clearing. There's music, and there's people are dancing, but it's nothing like the parties she's ever been invited to and she realizes it's *relief* she's feeling.

"It's no pool party," Toni whispers by her shoulder, and all Cheryl can think is, how. She's wearing flats but even still, she's pretty sure the other girl is still a good few inches shorter.

She shrugs, because she's half distracted, and also transfixed, and then Toni's mouth is hovering over her ear, intimate and in a lower voice than Cheryl's used to hearing, and she asks so quietly, "Do you wanna dance with me?" And *god yes*.

It's exhilarating, so with a smile, she nods.

They make their way through the crowd, pushing closer to the fire, hand in hand. There's this thing she's noticed, where Toni looks back every few moments and smirks, it's almost like she's checking she's still there. And honestly, she knows the feeling.

A group of people are dancing around them, and it makes it easier to feel like apart of the crowd, as if someone couldn't single her out from space. She's the only one wearing red, well except Toni's newly painted nails. *They're for her*.

She's handed a plastic cup and gets told to drink up. She feels her cheeks heat when Toni watches her take a small sip first, but it's nothing like what she can only assume was *gasoline* in the Serpent girls cup, so it's much easier to keep down. She sticks to letting Toni refill her drink, and tries not to think about the hangover in the morning.

"I'm glad you came tonight," she hears Toni tell her and holy fuck, she might stop breathing. She's only mildly pleased when that doesn't happen and something knocks into her leg and breaks the whole, staring thing they have going on.

She knows him, the kid that's staring up at her, looking like he'd ready to brawl for getting in his way. It's kind of amusing because she's sure Sweet Pea gets that same face with her sometimes, so she tells him, "hey."

The kid just does this little pout and waves his plastic pirates sword in her face, it makes Toni snort, she wonders if they're thinking along the same lines, and then there's a hand on Cheryl's abdomen, which was lovely, but it's gone too quickly for her to really enjoy it, because then she's being pushed to one side.

She sees someone older calling him over, which could be a parent, and she learns his name is *Tiger*. She wants to ask if the whole naming process was apart of Serpent tradition, but she just drags Toni back to dance instead because she starts to wonder what their children's names might be, and who's last name they'd take.

But yeah, it's actually not so much dancing anymore. It started off innocent, they had an appropriate amount of distance between them, and she let Toni lead, because she can't say no.

She doesn't know when they got so close, but holy fuck, that *body*. She can't do anything for the throb between her legs. Cheryl almost whimpers, and she has to stop herself by literally biting down on the inside of her cheek. She's positive she's never been so attracted to someone in her life, and god she's so wet right now. It's not *fair*.

She's just so *pretty*, and she's dying to reach out and touch her, so she does.

There's not much fight left in her as she brings her arms up and around Toni's shoulders, their foreheads just come together and she knows they're barely moving at this point. The way their hips turn somehow keeps in beat with the music, but it's more of a ruse, for her sake more than anyone else.

She's not an idiot, she knows what this is, and the chemistry between them was bound to make her do something stupid. But she still can't look Toni in the eye when she brushes their lips together. She feels her heart stammer when Toni sucks in a breath, and Cheryl's so *fucking* scared because she's betraying everything she's been told to believe is deviant, and worst of all, Toni's not reacting at all.

But then she feels the small pair of hands tighten on her hips, and Toni's lips move just the *slightest* bit.

It's *enough*, at least she wants it to be, she desperately wants to pretend like it doesn't make her sick with concern for what everyone around them thinks. If this gets back to her mother, she'd be sent to a *convent*.

She feels Toni pull her closer and she tries not to think anymore, because her bottom lip is between the other girls, and she kisses her slowly. It's gentle and *oh* so tame. And she hears Toni make this tiny whimpering sound and *fuck*. Cheryl loses herself, she brings her hand up and brushes her fingers by the girls hairline, just behind Toni's ear.

God, she's never needed anyone so desperately before. Not like this.

Her lungs burn because of course she's forgotten to fucking breathe, but she still can't bring herself to pull away, so she just moves her lips across Toni's jaw, down the side of her neck and across the column of her throat. It all seems to be heading in one direction, but then Toni's head tilts back and fuck, what are they doing?

She hears a soft, "Cheryl," and then there's a hand on her cheek, and *oh*. She's crying.

"Fuck," she mutters, right before licking her lips. She doesn't know what just happened, really, let alone what to say now. "*Fuck.*"

It's like there was a part of her that wanted to be punished for enjoying something. And for once, she really wanted to ignore it, but there's a sensation in her stomach that she can't shake. It was going too fast, and she's about two seconds from really losing her mind, because this was perfect and she managed to ruin it. Cheryl just pulls her hands off Toni's body and folds her arms tightly against her chest. It's pretty hard to make out from the distance, especially with a horrible tolerance for alcohol, but she can just about make out her car and she hopes Sweet Pea is still around to take her home.

"Hey," she feels Toni slide her hands up her arms in this delicate way, her palms just grazing her skin and even though she's embarrassed, she still melts at the gentle contact and pleads for the girl not to be scared off by her hot and cold act. "If you didn't like it," Toni just whispers, and she knows the girl is trying to give her a way out, as if it was that easy anymore.

She just looks off to one side. She's had too much to drink and she knows she has tears in her eyes. Cheryl hates the way Toni looks so small, like she's scared too and it makes her feel like they're really just on this ride together. So she ignores the way her hands tremble, and slips her arms back around Toni's shoulders. Cheryl even goes as far as to let her chin rest on Toni's shoulder, "I liked it," she tells her and breathes this heavy sigh, and the weight is lifted. She spent so long denying it.

A pair of hands slip around her waist, it's slow, like Toni's giving her a chance to push her away, but she just leans into her a little more. They dance through song after song and most of them don't fit with the way they're moving, but nobody seems to give a damn, and she certainly doesn't.

Once the music changes, she catches Fangs appear out of nowhere, grinning all cheshire cat and she takes his hand and gets pulled into a weird dance that's mostly just made up of spinning around. She feels free when Legs takes off his jacket and joins in, she's almost forgotten that she calls another place *home*.

They act like children and keep dancing until Legs starts to stumble and Fangs has to carry him home. She never lets go of Toni's hand.

They decide to stay until the last song, there's only a few people left standing, and they're sitting side by side, just listening to the music and fuck, does she feel at peace. She doesn't move for the longest time.

She wishes Jason could've seen it, could've felt how alive it all makes her feel. He would've loved it too. She clears her throat kind of roughly, and touches her neck, because the lump in her throat isn't going away. Cheryl doesn't even realize she's crying until a thumb touches her cheek. She jumps from reflex but melts a little when Toni gives her this small smile and lets that same fucking thumb wipe away the tear track that stops just before her jaw.

There's nothing she can do to stop the way her breathing speeds up and her heart thumps a symphony in her chest. She closes her eyes and flicks her tongue over her lips. She's only got so much restraint and god does she *crave* this. *Her* .

It's nice. And she's about five seconds away from dragging Toni into the first empty trailer and burying her face between the girls legs just to see how she tastes. Fuck. But she's just *not* ready.

She meets Toni's eyes when she reopens hers and it feels like they're content, and she's never really felt that in any context before. She moves a strand of hair that's fallen from Toni's beanie and it's stupid how good she looks in that thing, and then kisses the very corner of her mouth. She'll claim later that she was aiming for her cheek.

Her skin is warm, heated, and she doesn't say anything. The only real conscious thought she has when she pulls back is 'please don't push me away' and she knows she's shaking a little when Toni brings her hand up to the side of Cheryl's neck. She taps her fingers so gently that she barely feels it because her pulse is beating hard enough she's at risk of a heart attack, or something along those lines.

She can't bring herself to look Toni in the eye, so she just drops her forehead to Toni's shoulder and they keep watching the people dance until the fire starts to go out.

There are words caught in her throat that she can't bring herself to say, but she thinks Toni already knows because when the party's over, she's dragged over to a trailer and just when they're outside and she's just about ready to drop her panties or run, Toni looks over her shoulder and says, "Fangs is on the floor, he said we could take the bed," and christ, she just fucking *gets* her.

There's a soft snore when they creep inside the room and she's pressed up against Toni's back, she has to hide her face into the girls shoulder to muffle her laugh when she hears the light snore from the corner of the room where Fangs is lay on a mix of pillows and clothes. He's curled up in a little ball and she knows she'll do anything to help protect these people.

She gets comfortable against Toni and wraps her arms around the girls waist, it's a loose sleepy hold, but she lets out a hum. She smells nice. And then Fangs *chokes* on literally nothing for a split second, and they're both giggling again.

There's an undeniable energy between them, like one spark can set them alight.

They're lay on the bed, in little sleep shorts and another pair of t-shirts with bands whose names she doesn't even recognise. Cheryl doesn't know how it's going to play out, but she turns on her side and drapes her arm across Toni's body just below her chest and plays with the fabric of her shirt.

"You know it's going to be okay, right?" Toni asks so quietly, and slides her hand over the top of Cheryl's and it makes her squirm just a bit.

Honestly, no, she doesn't. She hasn't felt okay in a long time, and this isn't something she really ever lets herself think about, so there's a dozen ways this could end and she never really goes into things optimistically. So Cheryl just tells her, "I like this," and she hopes it's enough.

The words make Toni turn on her side and now they're facing each other. She feels Toni move and their legs graze together until their ankles are crossed under the sheets and there's a hand on her hip, she gets a chill when the girl's thumb ducks under her shirt and briefly scratches her skin. Cheryl watches the other girl's lips move when she whispers, "I like this too."

It feels like they're saying more than they actually are, and it doesn't feel like enough, but it will just have to be. It would be stupid to deny that anything is happening, and she doesn't really want to deny it.

They fall asleep in each other's arms, noses almost touching, and deep down she knows it feels right.

Chapter End Notes

And a little more Choni time. Thank you, a million times over, for all the support.

chapter 4

There's a pair of fingers softly drawing down the length of her spine and back up again, as soon as they reach the bottom of her t-shirt, they start over. Cheryl considers pretending to sleep just so it won't end, but Toni knows she's awake because the light touch has become more of a hard scratch.

She sucks in a breath and sighs, because it feels good and she can't really remember the last time she woke up feeling so at peace.

It makes her wonder if JJ had ever felt this way about cousin Polly. Obviously the circumstances are extremely different, because she certainly isn't trying to create little twin inbreds, but she really does hope that in the short time they had, it felt something like this. This felt like love and it's something everyone should experience.

"You're thinking too hard," she hears, and she hides her face to keep Toni from knowing that just hearing her gentle voice makes her smile.

The fingers along her back don't stop, but they're moving in a different way now, from shoulder to shoulder and it takes a moment for her to put the pieces together. Christ. Toni's writing her name.

A small gesture, but it gives her goosebumps.

"I don't recall giving you permission to watch me while I sleep," she whispers, her throat is a little sore and her voice comes out a little roughly. It's probably all the smoke from the fire last night.

The fingers stop and she can still feel the hand hovering over her back and she almost lifts her body to chase the contact she so longs for, but then she feels Toni lean closer and there's a set of lips brushing against her ear, "you don't like it?"

It makes her swallow, hard, because Cheryl can *feel* how much she likes it and if she was brave enough, she'd ask the girl above her to push those fingers between her thighs so she could find out for herself.

"I didn't say that," she croaks and slowly turns, until she's on her other side and facing Toni.

They're a breath away and she knows how easy it is to just lean in, because she's got a taste for her now, but then Toni gives her this adorable smile and pulls the covers up and over their heads. They're immediately thrown into darkness and everything feels distinctively louder. It makes her feel giddy, like she's spinning out of control, because Toni's giggle is the cutest thing just about ever heard.

They're both breathing harder, and when a hand presses flat against her stomach, she knows that Toni hears the way she holds her breath. The fingers spread out, like she's trying to touch

as much of Cheryl as possible. It's gentle but she still lets out a tiny moan and breathes, "you're a terrible flirt."

The hand disappears as soon as she's spoken and she's glad Toni can't see the way she frowns and has to bite her tongue to keep herself from apologising.

She's convinced she knows Toni well enough to tease without insulting her, and she's proven right when the hand once again reappears, and slides up along the center of her chest and stops on her neck. Cheryl takes a second to realize what she's doing. The girl's fingers are on her pulse, and she knows it's betraying her.

"You're a terrible liar," she hears, and their noses brush together. It's unexpected and she takes in a sharp breath because she remembers how soft Toni's lips are.

The Serpent is hovering over her and there's a knee on either side of Cheryl's hips, it's a wicked style of torture and she feels Toni's chuckle deep inside her chest and it just leaves her with this itch, she wants to be the one in control.

She longs to see Toni as flustered as she makes Cheryl feel.

So Cheryl brings her hands up, circles her fingers around Toni's wrists and uses every ounce of remaining energy to push herself up. Their hips press together in this perfect way and she flips them over. She fucking *basks* in Toni's small but surprised shriek, and then pins the girl so she's trapped against the mattress.

Her heart is beating so fucking hard, because it feels like everything is happening right now and she didn't really think this through. The sheets have fallen away and she can actually see Toni just staring up at her, quiet and yielding.

It's not first time Cheryl's stopped to look at her, because honestly she's had some seriously impure thoughts about the necklace that's resting against Toni's chest, and that stupid leather jacket has starred in one too many fantasies. It's all there in her mind, but she's staring down at the real thing, and she's *beautiful*.

"Why are you so hot?" Cheryl asks, because it's easier than saying the other word. This one is less complicated, but she still closes her eyes and maybe licks her lips, because she's just a moment away from losing her mind.

It makes Toni chuckle again and honestly, she has to really stop herself from squirming because she's sat right on top of Toni's abdomen in barely acceptable shorts, and it would be so *fucking* easy to just start moving her hips and hump her like a true teenager. The thought alone makes her breathing speed up and there's nothing she can do to stop it.

Toni's got her jaw clenched all tight, like she's struggling to keep her composure too and it's nice that she's not the only one finding it difficult.

It makes her lean away slightly to sit upright and she lets her hands fall from Toni's wrists. The girl's hands don't hesitate for a moment, and they land on Cheryl's thighs. They're locked

in this staring contest that she knows she'll lose, and then she remembers something that's of vital importance, "show me your tattoo."

Toni's eyes are blown when she asks, "you really want to see it?"

Cheryl just nods a little, because fuck yeah she does. She's spent way too much time thinking about that tattoo. Toni swallows and just grabs the material of her t-shirt, sliding it upwards. It's purposefully slow, because her hands are shaking just a tiny bit.

Once she sees it, she fucking *whimpers*. The tattoo is marking Toni's rib cage and she's starting to wonder when she became that kind of girl, because she's never been attracted to someone who's doodled on their body, but this is far from a *doodle*. The line work is smooth and god, it's sexy as hell.

Cheryl slowly touches a fingertip to the head of the serpent and drags it along its body. She pulls a tremor from the body beneath her and then she lets go again, quickly, because it feels like she's crossing a line.

Toni doesn't seem concerned in the slightest, but this tattoo is everything the girl stands for and it's the symbol of everything Cheryl's afraid to submit to.

It feels so right, though, and she lets her eyes drift close again for just two seconds, only to open them and see this gorgeous fucking creature staring up at her. Toni's cheeks match the perfect shade of pink hair that's tied up in a messy bun on the top of her head. Cheryl isn't really thinking logically when she just pushes the girl's t-shirt up higher.

There's something about the darkness in Toni's eyes that set her alight, they're almost black when she brings her arms up and arches off the bed to allow Cheryl to remove the article of clothing and toss it somewhere behind her. She's probably the most beautiful thing she's ever laid eyes on and it's embarrassing how Cheryl's throat closes up when she notices the way Toni's nipples are pebbling against her bra.

She's lightheaded, and just focuses on the way Toni's chest rises and falls. She copies Toni's earlier gesture and moves a finger just below her bra, opposite side to the tattoo, and writes her name, in cursive, *obviously*. And when she looks up again, Toni's just smiling and she can't *not* smile back. So she writes it again.

It surprises her how none of it really scares her.

They let the moment go on for what feels like forever, drunk on each other. They're not even doing anything sexy, but when there's a sound of movement from behind her, she almost breaks her neck when she whips her head around to look because holy fuck, they're *so* not alone.

They break out in a set of hysterical laughter when Fangs sits up, his hair all over the place, and asks what time it is.

It seems strange to say she's never really held someone hand before, not like this. As soon as they left the trailer, she felt this urge to take Toni's hand, and the other girl must have been on the same page because their fingers entwined immediately.

It felt secure and unbreakable. She takes one look at Toni and knows this won't disappear.

Her car isn't far and she lets herself enjoy the moment. There isn't a disaster waiting for her, there's no scuffs, maybe a few footprints on the interior but nothing that can't be cleaned and forgotten.

On the driver's seat there's a drawing on creased paper, and her heart kind of jumps when she sees it's a picture of what she assumes, is her car and a few figures inside it. Honestly, it's more of a scribble, but when she turns it over, it's signed, *to Cheryl from Tiger*. It looks like someone has drawn dots for him to follow so he can write the names.

A chin drops onto her shoulder and she has to stop herself from turning to look, because they'd be too close if she does. And Toni just whispers, "that's Sweet Pea's little brother, he must like you."

It doesn't really make sense, because she's spent all of five minutes with him in total, but then again she doesn't try to understand children, "he hit me with a pirate sword."

A finger prods into her ribs and she jumps a little, and immediately rolls her eyes when Toni just replies in this teasing tone, "sweetheart, it was plastic."

She tries to piece together a response, but she's stuck on the word *sweetheart* and can't move on from it. So she just opens the door and climbs inside. They share a look and when she brings her hand up and fists the front of Toni's shirt. Cheryl just smirks at the wide eyed expression she receives and pulls the girl down and so very gently to meet her in a chaste kiss.

It's heart stopping, the way they both hang there, until she feels her phone vibrate once again in her pocket. It hasn't stopped all morning, so she leans back and tells her, "see you soon." It's a promise, because she doesn't know how long she can even stay away at this point.

That annoying smirk is back and Toni just folds her arms and watches her go.

As soon as she steps through the door, she catches the way footsteps approach. She's a little curious about the phone calls, because she doesn't remember the last time her mother actually needed her for anything. The woman just gives her this disappointed look and is staring a little too long at her clothes, it makes her nervous and she doesn't know why.

The bitch is furious and it's a ridiculous expression when matched with the homemaker apron that's tied around her waist. As if she even knows which drawer the cutlery is kept in. There's no doubt this was all for show, but who is she trying to con?

She's pulled from her thoughts when her mother just tilts her head and snaps, "where the hell have you been, Cheryl?"

It would be a lie to say she isn't considering if she could Hansel and Gretel her own witch of a mother and burn her in the oven.

"I had a sleepover with the Vixens, last minute thing," she shrugs, replaying the sweet memory of sharing half a bagel with Toni while they planned her excuse. It makes her feel all warm when she remembers the way their legs touched under the table.

A timer starts to ring from the kitchen and she's concerned that her mother is actually trying to cook a meal, but then the older Blossom screams for the maid and that clears that up.

Cheryl tries to make her escape, but her mother catches her wrist. It's a harsh grip and it hurts a little, but she doesn't let it show. She feels the woman's eyes scan over her attire and she knows she's deemed it inappropriate. She stole a pair of ripped jeans from Toni, and she's seeing the appeal of rendezvous with beautiful girls, or at least this one, because they're the same size so she also stole a shirt that she's definitely not getting back.

Honestly, there's no point in even denying the disdain in her mother's voice when she's told, "get dressed, your father's will reading is this afternoon and you can't be seen wearing *that*."

Fuck.

It's a weird sensation, like an out of body experience, because everything about this just felt so utterly *wrong*. It was almost like she didn't belong in this world anymore, she didn't

understand the false charade. The house was full with extended family members, most of which, she didn't even know.

They were all here to satisfy their own greed, because they certainly weren't visiting to share their condolences. There hadn't been any flowers after her mother shared the news, no cards or phone calls, but now there wasn't an empty seat in the house.

A part of her considered calling Toni, she needed the emotional support, someone to just hold her hand and keep her sane. It wouldn't fly, her mother was already watching her like a hawk so it's just easier this way. At some point she'll disappear upstairs, and she can stop pretending like she misses the man that destroyed her family.

It crosses her mind to wear white, but everyone was already looking at her and for once she'd like to blend into the background. She doesn't even prepare a speech.

Cheryl tries to stay to one side, she sits with her nana while the guests mingle among each other and she wonders how little they must have know of her father, to expect him to share his riches with outsiders. They'll leave disappointed for sure.

This whole thing was morbid as hell and it irks Cheryl that people are approaching her to pay respects about a man that killed his own son. There's no easy way of saying it, you can sugar coat that fact, but she still has to force a smile and try not to grimace because her mother has a hand on her shoulder and she's squeezing tighter.

It's almost a relief when she realizes that Betty has arrived with her father, not because she's found a friend, but her mother seems to zero in on the unwelcome guests and forget all about her. It gives her a short window of time to make herself disappear, but even that's short lived.

One of her cousins finds her while she's hiding in the kitchen, she's young, pretty, and probably completely naive to their family business and the shady activities that have built their wealth. It's almost cute, the way she holds herself, peacefully unaware and no doubt spoilt.

It's just inappropriate, because Cheryl has her head stuck inside the fridge, and yet the kid has been talking about the tragic news of Uncle Cliffords passing for the last two minutes, and she's one eye roll away from a migraine.

As soon as the girl mentions, "and poor Jason, you must miss him so much," all bets are off and she smacks the fridge door shut and spins on her heels to face the unnamed relative.

"You didn't even know him," she says, there's an almost poisonous edge to her voice and she's just about ready to break this girl down. It's infuriating how much she appreciates Betty, because she's at least self aware and understands when to give someone some space.

She misses the prickly cool air from the fridge, it was soothing.

"He was family."

“Not *yours* .”

They’re in a standoff. The girl is no older than Cheryl, maybe a little over fourteen, and she has the nerve to act as if she’s the one in control. There’s no doubt she’s a Blossom. It’s always a game with this family and it doesn’t matter which side you’re on, as soon as you decide to play, you lose.

It makes her long for the trailer park, the simplicity, the trust.

“Get the hell out of my way,” Cheryl says with enough venom that she sees the girls eyes pop slightly, like she isn’t expecting such candor.

There’s a kind of fire burning in Cheryl’s chest and it gives her a kick of adrenaline that she doesn’t know what to do with, other than approach the younger Blossom and lower her voice to a blunt whisper, “I don’t think you realize, I’m a lot more like my father than dear JJ ever was.”

It’s sweet how her cousin stumbles back slightly and her back hits the wall, and it’s almost too perfect, because Cheryl closes the distance and forces the most innocent smile when she tells her, “I however, don’t get caught.”

The slap is hard enough that it kind of surprises her.

The girls slips out and despite the uncomfortable heat spreading against her cheek, it all hurts less than hearing her mother’s steps, and the judgemental scoff. She drops her head down when her eyes start to blur, and just pushes past the older woman because there’s no point in pretending like she belongs here anymore. These people are just strangers.

There’s hushed words coming from the living room and when she walks past they’re all looking.

It shouldn’t make her feel so content when she sees how her dear has cousin broken down into tears and is making a spectacle of herself, she’s quite happy to pass on that torch. Cheryl doesn’t give her, or anyone else any regard, and simply scans the room for that rickety wheelchair. It’s kind of sad the way her nana just nods to the door, and she wishes things could be different, but they’re Blossoms and it would never be any easier.

She hears her mother yelling her name when she strides towards her car, she just holds up a finger and keeps walking. She doesn’t drop her hand until she’s starting the engine.

There’s three short marks on her cheek and a harsh red patch that’s visible from space when slapped onto a complexion like hers, so she can see the damage in the mirror. The cuts aren’t deep enough to scar, but they’ll bruise and she’ll need makeup to cover it.

It makes her jump when the passenger door is yanked open, but then Betty is climbing inside and telling her to drive. She doesn’t give it a second thought.

They stop just a block away from Thornhill, because Cheryl hasn't quite planned this far ahead and she has nowhere else to go. She considers just kicking her cousin from the car and driving back to the trailer park, but she knows Toni is at work tonight. While it all seems inevitable, she's determined to at least try to seem like she can handle being on her own.

All she needs is a few hours to compose herself.

"Milkshake?"

Her eyes snap to Betty and she almost forgot about her passenger, they hadn't uttered a single word to one another. The blonde has a look on her face and it makes Cheryl realize that maybe she isn't the only one avoiding something, because they both seem desperate for a break.

It's not like she has any better offers either, so she starts up the engine and turns the car around to head straight for Pops, but not before telling Betty she's paying.

They sit on opposite sides of the booth. It's not too busy inside the diner, so there's just enough chatter to make the silence semi comfortable until their drinks are brought over. It's almost serene.

A small part of her wants to ask Betty why she attended the will reading, but she knows it had everything to do with her father and nothing to do with her. Cheryl *almost* felt some pity for the man's desperation, because he'll be one of the many people walking out of that house empty handed tonight.

It doesn't make much sense why they're here together in the first place, because they've never really done this, at all actually. Cheryl figures she's the only person available, otherwise there'd be someone else sat across from Betty right now.

"Trouble in paradise?" Cheryl asks, because her cousin keeps checking her phone and frankly it's a little insulting that she's so desperate to find a replacement.

“No,” Betty huffs, but she’s still got her eyes on the screen and she’s bouncing her foot on the floor like she’s waiting for something.

It might not be a total lie, but she still rolls her eyes because something is wrong.

Betty almost seems exasperated when she tells her, “it’s complicated,” and then stabs at her milkshake with her straw. And yeah, it’s piques her interest, because Cheryl really doesn’t understand why her cousin is sat here, and not enjoying a therapy session with her trusted cohort.

The girl looks like she’s probably wondering the same thing, but she still doesn’t move.

Cheryl just sits up a little straighter and says, “try me.”

There’s a tiny part of her thinks Betty might actually open up to her, but then she just shakes her head and that stupid ponytail waves from side to side when she says, “it’s just *Serpent* stuff.”

Serpent stuff. It shouldn’t have bothered her, but she stares at her from across the table and she feels protective. They’re kind of her people and she wants to know if they’re in some kind of danger. Is this what it’s going to be like from now on? She can’t just sit by while her girlfriend gets herself hurt. Fuck. *Toni isn’t even her girlfriend.*

It feels like the booth is ten times smaller when she says, “I slept at the trailer park last night.”

Cheryl just watches the way Betty opens her mouth and closes it again, like she can’t really find the words. It probably seems like the most unlikely scenario there is.

“You slept at the trailer park?” Betty repeats back to her slowly, narrowing her eyes like she’s not sure she heard it correctly. She could try and take it back, but she doesn’t.

Cheryl just shrugs, and rolls her eyes, “yes.”

There a beat of silence and she thinks Betty is starting to piece it together, but then she’s just frowning again and all hope is lost, “I don’t understand.”

It would be easier to explain to a fucking *donkey*.

“I think I’m seeing someone, maybe,” she says, and she’s being sincere and she hopes Betty can see that, because she really doesn’t know what she’s doing, and she’s forgotten why she even mentioned it in the first place, but when she thinks about Toni, it feels real.

Betty has her eyes glued to the table when she asks, “Sweet Pea?”

She just shakes her head and glances out the window, because it makes her stomach churn a little when she thinks about saying it out loud.

“Toni.”

It doesn't surprise her that Betty is a little stumped for what to say, but it makes her breathe a little easier when she pulls her attention back to the girl and realizes she's not being judged.

Betty just simply gives her this silent, questioning look, like she's trying to calculate the chance that she's being honest. Cheryl just nods and sucks in a breath.

"You really like her," Betty says, softly, and Cheryl knows the girl wasn't expecting that.

"Yeah."

"Why?"

Cheryl lets out a short laugh, sips her milkshake and shrugs, "I don't know."

It's the truth. Cheryl *really* doesn't know what it is about this particular girl that's unhinged her so completely, she's acting like a fucking lovestruck teenager. That's probably the most annoying part about this, because she's not completely foreign to feelings, but they don't exactly appeal to her either.

It almost slips her mind that she only shared so much information to get something in return, but then Betty's phone is vibrating on the table and the moments gone.

They don't bother pretending this is something it's not, so when Veronica rolls up, they say a quick goodbye and Betty just leaves Cheryl in the booth alone.

All the lights are off in the house when she eventually returns, she found herself driving around for a while, but this time she made it home without any help. It should make her feel proud that she made it through the night without needing one of the Serpents to rescue her, but she's back in an empty house and that doesn't feel like a win.

Her bed feels too big and it's cold, she rolls around until she's finally comfortable, but she still looks at her phone and wonders why Toni isn't texting her back.

She's half asleep when her door rattles, like someone is trying to open it. Cheryl sits up when it gets louder, because she's not dreaming. There's only one person who knows about the lock, so she *knows* it's not her nana trying to get inside.

It stops when she climbs out of bed, she must've made too much noise, because there's steps leading away from her door. She doesn't know what makes her open the door, but the hall is empty anyway.

Fuck, she's not staying here.

Cheryl pulls on the pair of sweats she kept from Sweet Pea and takes her phone and a jacket when she bolts through the door, she doesn't bother to be quiet.

There's more motorcycles outside than usual and she knows by Betty's tip that something has gone down with the Serpents, so she didn't bother stopping by the trailer park. It doesn't really occur to her that she might look terrible until FP is staring down at her, there's a flicker of anger that flashes over his face when his eyes land on her cheek, but she just shrugs and looks past him.

He folds his arms, but he must give her the benefit of the doubt, because he nods to the back half of the bar and tells her, "she's with Jug."

Seriously. Does *everyone* know?

Cheryl suddenly feels like she's intruding, but then there's a gentle hand on her back and FP whispers, "she'll be happy to see you," and he gives her a little push that somewhat quells her fears.

She might as well be wearing a bell, because she's not even close to the table when Toni turns and gives her a look that, if she's not mistaken, is purely predatory. She must be dreaming it up because then Toni's attention is back on Jughead and they're talking close, and she really hates the paranoia that they're talking about her.

There's a bruise across Jughead's cheek and he looks worse for wear than she does, but he's also able to pull it off and she's totally distracted when Toni stands up.

Cheryl doesn't say anything, she just takes Toni by the hand and pulls her towards the ladies toilets. It's much quieter once the door shuts behind them, so she's got some space to think but then Toni's right in front of her and touching her cheek. It doesn't hurt but she still winces, because she's sure it looks awful.

"Who did this?"

"Nobody."

Toni just narrows her eyes, because it's bullshit, but she really doesn't want to talk about her cousin or *anything*. She meant to bring Toni in here so they could say hello without having to

shout over the music, but what happens instead is that Cheryl just grabs her, and pulls Toni against her as she leans back against the wall.

It all happens quickly, but Toni's thigh ends up pressed between hers and she knows they're on the same page.

They're kissing, hard, and Toni tastes like beer.

A hand slides down over Cheryl's ass and she grinds against Toni's thigh because she's just so desperate for something, hell *anything* . The way Toni works her tongue across Cheryl's bottom lip feels like there's a promise she might get what she wants.

"Fuck," Toni gasps, and she needs more of this, more of this taste, and this soft tongue, and the way Toni's hands seem to be touching her everywhere all at once.

Cheryl can feel her chest heaving and she knows how desperate she must look with Toni's thigh still pressing against her in that way, and god does she want it, but not *here* .

It must hit Toni around the same time, because they stop to look at each other. Cheryl can feel her chin tremble and that hand comes back up to touch her cheek, this time she finds herself leaning into it. Their eyes lock and she feels her heart beat a little faster at the way Toni smiles softly.

"Are you okay?"

"No."

They don't pull away, she just narrows her eyes and for a split second when she considers telling Toni to go fuck herself and never talk to her again. It's a fleeting thought, because the Serpent opens her arms and Cheryl finds that she fits perfectly. They stand there for a while, her face buried in Toni's neck until she's stopped crying.

They're hand in hand when they walk out, and she immediately smiles at the way Sweet Pea is leant against the wall, arms crossed and there's a line of impatient women all waiting to use the restroom.

He was guarding the fucking door.

It makes her feel stupid that she ever doubted them.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They crawled into bed around 3.30 in the morning, and by crawled, they actually flopped into the bed and giggled like children because they drank a lot back at the Whyte Wyrn. It just seemed appropriate considering she'd just dipped from her own father's will reading and nobody wanted to be the one to stop her.

It was the right kind of distraction and she almost forgot about the bruise on her face, until they were in bed and Toni kissed the marks left on her cheek. It was gentle and she's pretty sure she's fucking in love.

There's noise outside the room, little whispers and there's a kid's distinct giggle but she's not moving anywhere because they're sprawled out in Sweet Pea's bed with their legs tangled, and there's a heavy arm that's resting over Cheryl's stomach which she can't bring herself to move.

Instead she lets her fingers graze along the skin as she draws out each of the six letters in her name with just enough pressure to ensure the touch is felt.

"You're a little possessive," she hears the words lazily spoken against the crook of her neck and she's sure there's something better those lips could be doing other than criticizing.

"I —" her voice is quiet, hesitant, and she feels this rush of excitement flood through her when she confesses, "I never liked sharing."

The lips drop a gentle kiss to her throat, and then her collarbone and she's almost embarrassed when her body shudders at the feel of teeth scraping against her skin. Cheryl feels a sharp sting and there's a little voice in her head telling her not to moan, but *Toni bit her* and the tiny gesture shouldn't feel so monumental.

"I really, *really* like kissing you," Toni says, and pauses to catch her breath, her voice is almost unrecognisable, in a way that makes something inside Cheryl jerk a little violently. They press together, closer than before, and Cheryl has to close her eyes because seeing Toni straddling her abs, makes her stomach dip and knot. She can't do anything to stop it, "and I like that you want me."

It feels like an understatement, because this is all she can think about and all that she's wanted for a long time, "I *crave* you, TT."

She can count all the people she trusts on one hand, but it doesn't feel quite as scary to admit that Toni is one of those people now, she's *her* person.

"I —" the word comes out strangled and broken, and Toni's blushing when she trips over the word, "good."

The tips of Toni's fingers are just skimming along her skin when Cheryl darts forward with all the certainty and speed of someone who knows exactly what they want. She catches a glimpse of the smile curling Toni's lips before she closes her eyes and finds her mouth. She's already too hot, but she wants this. She wants *her*.

Cheryl snakes her arms around her waist and with a firm tug, she brings Toni's body against her tightly. The action pulls a thrill through her, it's white-hot and raw, she can feel the heat off their skin and hear the way Toni's breath catches with every inhale.

She takes Toni's bottom lip between her teeth and tugs just enough and it makes her feel sexy when she hears a moan. It feels so natural, despite how uncertain she feels and there's a little pull in her stomach that reminds her how terribly wrong this could all turn out, but Toni's smiling at her so softly and there's this tenderness in her eyes that Cheryl's become so accustomed to and she feels unequivocally safer.

It's all so soft and steady in an innocent way, and Cheryl is hyper aware of the girl that's leaning over her, every place they're touching, and the way Toni's mouth perfectly slants against her own. She can feel Toni holding back, like she's careful not to scare her away. It swells her chest, because nobody's ever been so attentive to her needs, and she doesn't exactly know what she's supposed to do with all of that.

"Do you trust me?"

" Yes. "

They regard each other for a moment and she thinks about the night before, and how she found herself at the Whyte Wurm in Toni's arms and how she stayed in that hold until she fell asleep. It was safe and it should completely wreck her, but when she's here, she feels unbreakable.

"I trust you too," Toni tells her and takes her time moving her hands up and down Cheryl's thighs almost tortuously, she always considers just undressing herself, because if Toni doesn't hurry up and *touch her*, she might start whining for it. She doesn't want to go there, yet.

Her patience somewhat breaks when Toni rocks her hips, so she digs her heels into the small of Toni's back, and tries to sound like she's still the one in control when she says, "shut up and kiss me."

She's half convinced Toni is taking her sweet ass time on purpose, but then the Serpent flattens her tongue against Cheryl's neck and licks upward, nipping at her earlobe. By this point, Cheryl thinks she's done with words.

She feels Toni move lower, dragging her mouth along Cheryl's collarbone. It makes her breath hitch and her hips lift off the bed when she feels Toni's nose bump the curve of her breast, skim over the material of her shirt and she deeply regrets wearing a bra to bed.

It makes her heart flutter and the tingling in her toes starts right as Toni starts to push her shirt up her legs. They stare a look and Cheryl nods quickly, no doubt in her mind that she's okay with everything happening, and she wants Toni to know that. She trusts her, undoubtedly.

Cheryl hears herself sigh when Toni helps Cheryl pull the shirt over her head and kisses the spot just below her bra, and she starts to lose herself in the tingling sensation travelling down her body.

“You’re so beautiful, Cheryl.”

The words completely shatter her composure, and she allows a throaty moan the freedom it’s longed for. Cheryl’s never been shy in the bedroom, or anywhere, she’s confident and relaxed when it comes to people seeing her body. She knows she’s pretty, but it’s different when there’s a girl between your legs, seeing you at your most vulnerable.

And Toni’s looking at her like the words have a deeper meaning, but she swallows the thought down because she’s hot and can’t think about that while her body is overheating with every mark that Toni leaves on her.

She’s *really* glad she wore matching underwear.

“You drive me crazy.” Cheryl tells her, she can feel a heavy breath against her hip, and she knows how close they are. It makes her hands twitch.

A set of teeth graze over a patch of skin, just above her panties, “in a good way?”

Cheryl just laughs, breathless, and licks her lips, because she shouldn’t need to ask. Toni knows exactly what she does to her, “don’t fish for compliments, sweetie. It’s not an attractive quality.”

“*Really?*” Toni just gapes at her, half amused, and Cheryl thinks also a little outraged, because then her body is so much colder and Toni is kneeling at the bottom of the bed. The hands that were holding her thighs have disappeared and she’s slowly making a move to climb off the bed however slow her progress.

It’s cute for maybe ten seconds, but then Toni’s actually got one foot on the floor and this whole thing just got incredibly offensive. Cheryl lets her body think for her. “*Toni,*” she tries to sound serious, but she knows her voice croaks but actions speak louder than words anyway.

She kind of topples into her and she hears Toni’s little squeak before they lose their balance and roll off the bed with a heavy thud that vibrates throughout the trailer. They land awkwardly, but this time Cheryl’s the one straddling Toni and there’s a moment where they just stare at each other and she wonders why she’s the only one with most of her clothes off, but then the girl below her starts laughing and she feels a gleeful excitement buzz throughout her body.

“What the hell, Cheryl.” Toni says, and she’s trying to glare, but her eyes are so wide and bright and beautiful and Cheryl’s pretty sure she could look at them forever. “You know I’m in a gang, I could’ve —”

“Could’ve. What?” Cheryl asks, her confidence seeping back in by the bucket load, and she finds her demeanour completely changing when she leans over Toni with devilish smirk.

A hand drops against Cheryl's thigh, and it moves up until Toni's found her way to her ribs and she slowly scratches her fingers along her skin. "I—" She wavers again and Cheryl stares because she's never seen Toni lose her words quite like this before, "will think of something awful, later."

"I'm *terrified*."

"Cool."

They're both staring with dark eyes, because maybe there's some truth to it, but she knows Toni wouldn't do anything to hurt her and that means *everything*. She wants to explore this, because she's *just* learning to let herself to enjoy what's happening without fear.

They meet each other halfway, it's long and slow, and feels like it goes on forever. There's a gentle push and pull and Toni jerks herself roughly out of the kiss with a sharp moan that's yanked from the back of her throat. Cheryl struggles to blink her eyes open, but when she does, Toni is looking at her with this breathless desire and it makes her fall so much harder.

It's a perfect distraction, because Cheryl is completely lost in her own thoughts when Toni uses whatever leverage she has to flip them over until they switch places again and Cheryl is on her back. She opens her mouth to protest but their gazes are still locked, and Toni just smirks and presses her thigh into Cheryl with enough force to make certain the other woman knows how intentional the movement is.

Cheryl's mouth falls open in a blunt display of shock and wanton arousal, because *fuck*, that's exactly the kind of pressure she's needed since she woke up. It fuels Toni further and when they meet for a single, hard kiss, one of the Serpents hands drop to either side of Cheryl's head as she rocks her thigh into her again.

"Ton—" the 'i' gets lost beneath a broken cry and there's heat racing through her.

Cheryl's hips shift, angling up in a sharp motions. She has a moment to regret wearing panties to bed, but then Toni's mouth closes on her neck and she's left squeezing her eyes shut.

There's an itch that she can't scratch and it's in the kind of way that feels good, but it's almost too much to bare.

"It's okay," there's that reassuring voice, and it's consuming. When she looks at Toni, her pupils are blown and cheeks flushed, they match her hair and she looks just as turned on as Cheryl feels.

A sound that's between a breath and moan leaves Cheryl as Toni's hand slides down towards her backside and she's forced to choke back a moan when her hips jerk up to meet Toni's once again. She feels like a horny teenage boy, but it doesn't stop her.

She slips her hand along Toni's side, pawing mindlessly as Toni kisses along her jawline, and when she tips Cheryl's head back with a persistent touch of her nose against the underside of her chin, she slips her hand underneath the fabric of the Serpents shirt, dragging her short

nails along her spine. *She wants her.* It starts to get cloudy and the air is hot, and she lets out a strangled cry when Toni palms the underside of her breast. It's infuriating, to think how Toni got so good at this but she's really not trying to think about *that* number right now. She's never even done this with another girl before and that doesn't seem fair.

"You're so hot," Toni pants against slick skin and Cheryl just shifts up sharply into her again, it's almost primal the way her body craves to be touched. It's getting harder to deny that with every buck of her hips. She's already close and Toni's barely touched her.

She tries not to whine, but as soon as Toni's spoken, her lips attach to a patch of skin and she drags her teeth over it, she knows her throat is marked and she knows how hard it will be to cover, "I know" she breathes, as cocky, but her tone is less confident than usual.

The words, "shut up, babe," tumble past Toni's plump lips, and she wants nothing more than to follow the instruction. She feels like she's about to shatter and Toni has the nerve to smirk and tease, it should cause some kind of warning bell, because it's fun and every piece of this scenario feels so good.

Her next cry worries her for half a second because they're in someone else's house and there's bound to be people inside, so her hand finds the back of Toni's neck immediately, and pulls her down for a kiss that's *really* fucking dirty. She can hear how much Toni loves it.

It hits her quickly, and she swallows hard, gripping Toni's back as she rocks into her with another desperate motion, over and over, "Toni, shit."

It's sloppy, and the whole thing is a mess, but it feels so damn good and Cheryl's pretty sure she's melting into the fucking floor. And at this point, it's fine with her.

Seconds later, Toni leans down and wraps her lips around one of Cheryl's nipples through her bra, and she's done. The noise she makes when she comes is loud and her hands dig into Toni's skin as her body tenses, she gasps out Toni's name and her eyes snap closed while she tries to catch her breath.

Her thigh is trembling and their eyes lock when Toni's hand starts caressing her leg so gently. It makes her feel okay. They're kissing lazily and Cheryl doesn't know what the fuck to say. This wasn't on the agenda.

Just as she starts to regain some of her consciousness, there's a knock at the door, and she doesn't know who's more disappointed when she hears Sweet Pea through the wall, "hey are you guys going to like, spend all day screwing in my room, because I thought we had plans?"

She doesn't want to laugh, but it's hard to deny her amusement when Toni deflates on top of her with a hard groan and her forehead drops to Cheryl's shoulder. They share a look and a quick kiss before they separate, and when Toni whispers, "you owe me," she's honestly okay with that promise.

They talked about taking the car and driving to the middle of nowhere at some point the night before and maybe she suggested setting up camp, it was kind of a passing comment, but the subject stuck and they spent the majority of the night putting their drunk plan into action.

It's not like Cheryl even cares, she really doesn't, she's never liked camping. The only reason she's even going is because of Toni and because she didn't have anything to keep her tied to Riverdale for one weekend. There's enough money in her purse to cover gas and any supplies they might need. So the space from Thistlehouse would be a nice change, even if she hadn't spent much time there lately.

She lets the boys pack up the car with all the camping equipment they borrowed and she tries not to laugh when Sweet Pea's little brother tries to hide in the trunk. And maybe once they're actually ready to go, there might've been some excitement, because they've got a fold out map because they're doing this old school apparently. Fangs and Legs both take their bikes, but it's silently decided that Toni is riding with her, and she's totally okay with that. She gets a rush when their hands just find each others.

They leave before noon and the weather's hot the boys are driving shirtless under their leather jackets and Cheryl keeps the roof down on her car and she realizes that it's Toni's first time in the convertible and the girl takes full advantage when they hit a big open empty road.

It's definitely illegal to stand up like Toni's doing, but the girl looks so free so fuck it. *Her girlfriend is a Serpent.*

The boys are driving just a recklessly and god, she wonders what people might think, and she kind of likes the thought. She's apart of this now.

The drive to the location isn't long, it's just a small lake on the outskirts of town that everyone knows about but Sweet Pea swears is top secret. Once they hit the halfway point, the boys start bickering over what they should do first. They're shouting over the vehicle engines and at one point Cheryl decides enough is enough, and cranks up the stereo in the car enough to drown them out. Toni kisses her shoulder and she pretty sure that classes as a 'thank you'.

Once they're parked up, they all have different ideas of what they should do first. Sweet Pea says food, because all that boy does is eat, and Fangs says alcohol and swimming, but Toni chimes in before Cheryl can go all HBIC and orders the boys to make camp.

"I've never set up a tent," is the first thing Fangs says, and holds his hands up in surrender like he's scared of the damn thing.

Sweet Pea gives the other boy a judgemental look, and starts unpacking the bags. He seems to know what he's doing, but Cheryl isn't convinced, because no matter how confidently he

claims he “was a Boy Scout,” there’s something about the way Fangs chuckles that makes her believe otherwise.

They wind up sharing duties and Fangs seems pleased to be left reading the instructions. It takes a little over an hour, she’s pretty sure that time could’ve been cut in half, but they had to start over on the boys tent twice because Sweet Pea set it up backwards. She learns that he only made it through a week of Scouts before he got kicked out for starting fires.

“So the tent isn’t very insulated, we might have to resort to survival tactics to stay warm,” Toni whispers in her ear while the boys are distracted and fighting with two metal rods they can’t find a use for.

She knows she’s blushing, and when Toni runs her fingers up Cheryl’s arm, the touch feels electric. There’s a different feeling in the air, and it’s pent up frustration, she did kind of leave Toni hanging earlier. So she smirks, and whispers as seductively as possible, “I brought extra blankets, babe.”

There’s a playful smirk on Toni’s lips when she rolls her eyes and suggests they change into bathing suits and head out to the little dock that rests over the lake. It’s almost like the boys tune back into the conversation, because Fangs immediately agrees and Sweet Pea isn’t far behind him. Everyone’s happy. She’s barely changed, wearing a cute red bikini when Legs yells through the material of the tent for her to hurry up. It should probably annoy her, but she took her sweet ass time on purpose because Toni was pretending not to watch and she got distracted by the attention.

They climb out together and she sees both of the boys completely shirtless besides weirdly matching board shorts and it occurs that they’re a super hot foursome, because Toni is just rocking a pair of denim shorts that are sitting low and her hips and a white bikini top that’s just delectable.

“Nice ass,” she calls to Sweet Pea when he heads down towards the water, and she’s sure that Toni has a subtle possessive quality herself because as soon as she’s spoken their fingers tangle and the girl squeezes gently to just remind her she’s there.

It doesn’t feel like too much because Toni’s wolf whistles when Sweet Pea adds an extra sway to his hips and shouts back, “you know it, ladies!” and they’re all laughing when he puts a little too much sass in his step and trips.

She doesn’t go in the water and nobody makes a move to force her, but both of the boys swim like fish and dive right in with a nice cannonball and Toni saddles up beside her and they roll out their towels to sunbathe.

It makes her heart sore when Toni reaches out and takes her hand.

“This is a terrible idea.”

There’s a bottle of tequila on the dock that Fangs went back for, as well as a stockpile of beers and even a cheap champagne that nobody can account for, but apparently everyone but Cheryl thinks it’s a great suggestion when Fangs starts handing out shots because really, it’s not even 3pm and they’ve only just got here.

“It’s vacation, we should be drinking,” Fangs argues and they only have plastic cups, but that isn’t a good enough deterrent. She’s all about relaxing but she doesn’t need another night like yesterday.

Sweet Pea just holds up his cup and says, “hear, hear,” because of course they’d stick together and there’s no going back then.

They clink their cups together and she can see that Toni is trying not to smile, but the girl cracks and shrugs her shoulders when she whispers, “bottoms up, babe.” It goes down as roughly as she expected, it burns and she honestly wishes she had the kind of composure that would’ve kept her face as stony as Toni and Sweet Pea’s.

“Whatever,” she huffs when the Serpents start to laugh and she drops her sunglasses back onto her nose at an attempt to hide her embarrassment.

The moment is over quickly when Fangs makes a grab for the beach ball and jumps back into the water, and this time Toni is the one to follow.

“Eyes to yourself, Red,” Sweet Pea tells her, and Cheryl realizes she’s been caught watching Toni undress from her shorts and while it’s slightly mortifying, she swallows it down and ignores his laughter.

Sweet Pea stays behind with her, claiming he needs a rest, so she watches Toni ‘go long’ while Fangs tries to keep himself afloat at the same time as holding the ball. It makes her stomach lurch every time he sinks under the water so she turns away and realizes Sweet Pea has been watching her. She thinks he’s going to say something, but he just hands her a beer poured into a plastic cup because apparently that’s classier. .

“Having a good time?” he asks, and it sounds gentle, like he’s asking something else, because he’s the only person here that knows how much the water bothers her.

“Didn’t expect me to?” she smirks and sips her drink, which is definitely cheap beer.

“You just didn’t seem as stoked for the trip as we were, I figured maybe you were only doing it for Toni,” he shrugs and wraps his arms loosely around one of the knee that’s pressed against his chest. In his own weird way, she thinks he’s just checking in on her.

She doesn't know what to say to that, because he's right. So she just looks out to where Toni is now in possession of the ball, she thinks they're playing some form of volleyball without a net.

They have two drinks together until Toni and Fangs eventually get bored of their game, that makes zero sense anyway because when she asks who's winning they both look at her like she's grown a second head. She finds out they're not keeping score, so she loses interest quickly. She's a competitive player.

A small part of her considers jumping in, testing the water, but there's a louder part of her that's completely against that suggestion, so she just tips back the drink she's holding and leans back to catch more of the sun, but she's starting to feel the heat and she knows she's going to start to burn soon. Her complexion isn't made for this weather.

She thinks Sweet Pea can sense that something's wrong, because he gets up and scratches his head awkwardly before asking, "wanna do something stupid with me?"

"I'm not sleeping with you."

His eyes pop open when he says, "not what I was suggesting, *at all*."

Cheryl lifts her sunglasses slightly so she can peek under them, and she can't fight the little bubble of laughter that topples out when she sees the light blush on his cheeks. When she points it out, he claims it's sunburn, she knows it's not.

They don't bother telling Toni or Fangs where they're going, because they're more focused on their weird game and they won't be gone long.

She follows Sweet Pea blindly as they make their way back into the camp and she's left alone for only a minute whilst the boy dives inside his tent and returns with a plaid t-shirt without any sleeves and a bottle of water, which she's highly thankful for.

They walk up along a little trail close to the water that diverts away from the edge the closer they get up, she starts to regret the decision only five minutes into the hike, because she came here to relax and not explore the wilderness, but once they come to a clearing she bites her tongue.

"Pretty nice, huh?"

She doesn't want to prove him right, but it's just high enough to overlook the lake and she can clearly see Toni and Fangs still bouncing the ball back and forth across the water. There's a small cliffed edge that's a sharp drop, so they sit further back than they probably need to for added safety measures, because Sweet Pea doesn't want to get his fucking 'ass whooped for accidentally hurting Toni's girlfriend' and she doesn't argue.

They take a seat in an area with shade and Cheryl's skin is eternally grateful for a few moments of needed relief, she almost asked to borrow his poor excuse for a t-shirt on the way up the trail but it wouldn't have done much good.

“So, are you like, thinking about your brother or something?” Sweet Pea asks, and she almost snaps her neck to look at him. She appreciates that he seems a little more pensive than usual.

It would be easier to lie, but she finds herself shaking her head, “actually I was thinking about drowning.”

“Uh —” he meets her eyes and looks confused when he asks, “are you scared of the water?”

She just shrugs, because she doesn’t know anymore, “I didn’t used to be,” she whispers and decides she’s done talking about this, because god knows she doesn’t need to think about that stupid lake right now and Archie Andrews.

They fall into a comfortable silence and she doesn’t know how much time passes, but at some point she remembers what intrigued her to follow Sweet Pea partially up a mountain.

“Do you class walking up here as stupid?” she asks him, and gives the boy a pointed look when she says, “because unless you’re scared of heights, this is weak.”

Honestly, it shouldn’t surprise her when he rolls his eyes pulls out a joint and a lighter from the pocket of his shirt, but it does, because she totally forgets sometimes who she’s hanging out with.

“I don’t smoke,”

“You don’t smoke, yet,”

She rolls her eyes, because it’s the lamest attempt at peer pressure, but then he smirks and she finds herself oddly interested. She’s never even smoked a cigarette and that’s a well kept secret because she’s lied about it in games of ‘never have I ever’ so she doesn’t seem boring.

“You don’t have to,” he shrugs, but lights up anyway and takes a long drag. She watches him a little curiously, at the way he holds his breath before the smoke leaves his mouth.

It smells funky, but there’s a gentle breeze moving in the other direction so there’s just a hint in the air. A part of her wonders how much it would irk her mother and that thought alone almost tips her over the edge.

They sit there and she doesn’t hate anything about this trip, she wishes it could always be like this. Cheryl’s never felt so comfortable with herself.

“You know, Toni really likes you.”

“I know, I’m awesome.”

They laugh, and she’s sure he’s giggling because the marijuana has started to kick in, but she doesn’t know how long it takes, and honestly who cares. She’s never heard him laugh like this and she likes it.

“You know she called dibs,” he says and that surprises her, because Cheryl’s never heard this before.

“Dibs?” she asks, for clarification, because she’s not sure whether she should be insulted or turned on. It’s a mix of both right now.

He just takes another long drag and nods, “when she first saw you,” and then holds out the joint and twirls it between his fingers, he’s got a detailed metal lighter in his other hand and she intricately crafted. Cheryl makes a mental note to ask him about it later.

“What honestly makes you think I’ll smoke that?”

Sweet Pea just grins and tilts his head, slowly blowing the smoke out of his mouth and aiming it towards her. It’s tempting, as much as she hates to admit it, because she’s all about trying new things lately that could ultimately lead to her mother disowning her, and the smell is even growing on her, “I— don’t know what I’m doing.”

Legs just gives her a strange look, but she takes it anyway. He lets out a low chuckle and she feels her cheeks warm when he shrugs, “you don’t have to inhale it, just suck and hold,” he shrugs. It takes everything not to scoff.

She’s careful when following the instructions, but it burns in her throat quicker than she expects and she pushes the smoke out a lot quicker than Sweet Pea had been doing it. She doesn’t cough and it feels like an achievement.

“It’s gross,” she says and when Legs starts laughing, she does too.

“It gets better, trust me,” and she doesn’t know when she started doing that, *trusting*, but the words sit with her. He doesn’t offer her another hit.

“There’s Orion,” she says and three other pairs of eyes all look to where she’s pointing, she’s been finding star constellations since it got dark enough to see the sky.

Cheryl never expected anyone to listen, but they’re just lay on a floor of blankets next to the fire because they weren’t quite ready to say goodnight, and after she educated the group on *Taurus* and the story behind the stars, Toni asked if she knew anymore, and she did.

She’s pretty sure she’s drunk, because when Fangs says for the fourth time that he sees a dinosaur constellation, the group just laughs.

The champagne was popped open because nobody felt like beer and it’s being passed around like it’s water, when it’s Cheryl’s turn, she almost chokes because Toni’s using her stomach as a pillow and the girl picks that moment to roll onto her side and wink.

It's childish, but she mimes 'i hate you' before passing her the bottle and she really does cough when Toni nips at a patch of skin by her ribs.

It's probably the most relaxed she's ever felt and when Toni crawls up beside her so they're face to face, somehow their hands become intertwined on top of Cheryl's leg. The serpent just smiles when she whispers, "you don't hate me."

Cheryl gets this overwhelming urge to kiss Toni's cheek, so she does, and then pulls back. She sees Sweet Pea look over, smirk and then flop back down. She just touches the tip of her finger to Toni's nose and says quietly, "maybe."

She decides she likes camping.

Chapter End Notes

This one took a while to get out, I wanted to make sure it was just right, so I hope you all enjoy this chapter!! Let me know what you think!

chapter 6

Chapter Notes

thank you for your patience, I hope it was worth the wait.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The first time Toni asked her about Jason, they'd only really known each other a week. It kind of throws her, because there's a lot of different stories about her brother; some of them were better than the truth, and some were worse, but everyone knew that he died and nobody really has the nerve to ask her about it anymore.

It's a sore topic, so she lies and tells her it was an accident. The words just slip out and then she changes the conversation to something lighter.

Once they get closer, it occurs to Cheryl that her half-assed attempt to avoid facing her issues won't stand and the more time she spends with Toni, she finds herself opening up. It's the little things really, and she feels like she's allowed to enjoy herself.

So when they're tucked up inside their tent, two days into their wild adventure, and Toni is doing her best to recover from a rough bout of hiccups, she realizes life doesn't have to be so tragic.

They're not really talking about anything specific when Toni asks her, "So you're not a camping person." It's a statement and she knows it. A spider somehow got into their sleeping bag earlier and she almost torched the tent.

"I wasn't really girl scouts material,"

"Aren't you an entrepreneur by blood, Cheryl Blossom, of Blossom Maple Farms?"

It takes her a while to respond, because she's a little enamoured by Toni's frankly adorable attempt at mimicking a reporter. She even holds an invisible fucking microphone in her hand while she talks, which is currently held out and waiting for an answer.

"I wasn't the *true* heir to that throne,"

The microphone is forgotten quickly, and Toni's got that look on her face, like she's preparing herself to say something stupid, so it doesn't surprise her when she just blurts, "Are you now?"

Cheryl just nods, because it's easier than saying she lost her best friend and she hates him for leaving her all on her own. She wishes that dreadful feeling in her chest wasn't so normal to her.

“What if you wanted to do something else?” She speaks slowly, like she’s being careful not to overstep, but the topic almost calls for it.

“I don’t know,” she whispers, and sighs, in frustration, mostly. “Does it matter?”

“No,”

She can feel the way Toni sink down closer, with her wide brown eyes looking up so sweetly at Cheryl, “Please don’t pity me.”

“You know I don’t, Cheryl.”

It’s true, she does know that. Toni’s never looked at her like she’s weak, but it still made her stomach twist, because she just wants something normal and judgement free. And it almost doesn’t make sense that Toni cares for any reason, other than to get something from her.

There’s a weight on her chest, it sits heavy and takes her breath away. She avoids looking at Toni and keeps her eyes focused on the roof of the tent. There’s a small tear, where the fabrics split in a line, it’s small, but it’s enough to pull a cool breeze from outside.

“He was so much better than me,” Cheryl says quietly, and it takes her nearly 10 seconds to find the courage to look Toni in the eye when she whispers, “I miss him, so much.”

Toni’s hand moves over Cheryl’s thigh under the cover of the sleeping bag they share, and her fingertips rub circles in a slow, hypnotising motion.

“I’m not trying to be a bitch, Cheryl. If you don’t want to talk about this, then we won’t” and she knows Toni’s intent isn’t to hurt her, “I just... want to know you.”

There’s a lot of things they haven’t talked about and she knows she’s desperate to ask her own questions, but it’s *so* new. If she says the wrong thing, it could all go away.

“A question, for a question,” Cheryl offers, rolling onto her side, she moves her arm under her head, and she closes her eyes for just a beat when the fingers on her thigh slip an inch higher.

There’s something about the way Toni leans closer and smiles, that eases the tension along her spine. She feels safe.

“Hit me,”

Cheryl blanks briefly, because Toni smirks at her like she’s a totally open book, but she knows that underneath all the pink dye, the leather jackets, and sexy fishnet tights there’s things that bother her and she’s scared to ask.

After a moment, Cheryl very carefully asks, "Are you sure?" and waits for Toni to change her mind and/or storm out, but it doesn’t happen. The other girl just nods, and smirks with one of her brows raised all confident.

“Cheryl,” and she really loves the way Toni says her name, “just ask.”

She waits a beat.

“What’s the deal with your parents?”

The look she gets from Toni is a mix of amusement, and almost disappointment, which isn’t really what she expects. It felt like a loaded question because for the most part, they go totally unmentioned around the trailer park, at least from what she’s seen.

“There’s no deal,” Toni shrugs, and sighs, “My mom died when I was really young so I don’t really remember her at all,”

Cheryl hates that her heart breaks a little, for both of them.

“And my dad is... kind of absent.” Toni admits, “He shows up when he needs money or a place to stay and then he’s gone again so, which is totally fine, I don’t need him anyway.”

Cheryl takes another heavy breath, then laughs when she realizes that they’re both crying. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to make us cry.”

“Apparently it doesn’t take much,” Toni comments and laughs again, dabbing her eyes with her fingertips.

They both giggle and Cheryl actually feels good about all of this, she considers it progress.

There’s dead air in the room and Toni is just sitting there, watching her, so she blurts, “Have you ever like, fooled around with Fangs, or Sweet Pea?”

“Oh, my god!” Toni laughs, pushing lamely at Cheryl’s shoulder, “No.”

It doesn’t seem as outrageous as Toni’s suggesting, because they spend every day together and she figures at some point the thought must’ve crossed their mind.

She just looks up at her suspiciously, “You share an underwear drawer with Fangs, what was I supposed to think?” she whispers, like it’s a secret, but all she gets is an eye roll.

“I couch surf, where else can I keep my—” Toni pauses, when she flushes a cute pink that matches her hair, and it’s hard to remember she’s involved in a gang when she whispers the word “delicates,” under her breath with a breathy laugh.

Toni’s smile morphs into a smirk and she raises one brow. Her hand slides down Cheryl’s arm and lands on her waist, her fingers stroking lightly through the thin material of the shirt that she borrowed from Sweet Pea to sleep in. *That* was apparently becoming a thing.

“I like this,” Cheryl admits quietly, her eyes on her hand, the contrast of the tones of their skin.

“I know,”

Their eyes meet and Cheryl feels something flutter in her stomach, it’s this strange and terrifying mix of nerves and arousal. They’re moving fast and she’s so fucking okay with

that.

“I don’t want to go back,” she whispers and her voice breaks in the middle of the sentence, it feels disrespectful to say, *deviant* even.

There’s a little tug on her hip and Toni pulls her closer, brushing the wisps of hair that fall against her face. She knows her cheeks are burning, and there’s an uncomfortable prickle of tears. Toni looks at her, and maybe it’s pity, maybe it’s something else entirely, but she’s done talking and it must be obvious because Toni leans forward so slowly and closes the distance between them.

Cheryl moans as soon as Toni’s lips are pressed against hers.

She’s been waiting for another chance, and she hasn’t stopped thinking about the next time and the time after that. Cheryl’s hit with a mixture of relief and affection when Toni turns into her a little more and melts into the kiss, bringing up a hand to Cheryl’s cheek and it sinks into her hair.

Her fingers dig against Cheryl’s scalp, and she lets out this embarrassing purr sound that she wishes she’d held in, because now Toni’s smirking against her lips like she’s so proud and it’s a little infuriating. At this point, Cheryl’s lost count of the score, but she knows as well as Toni that she’s losing.

“Toni,” Cheryl breathes out, her hand coming to rest daringly on Toni’s thigh, her fingers slip just below the hem of the tiny shorts the girl is wearing and the two of them sink down on their tiny makeshift bed.

It feels so, so good. It’s better that well— it’s just *better*.

Toni’s lips are soft, and gentle, and when her tongue darts out to pry Cheryl’s lips apart, there’s a voice in her head that tells her she’s never felt a kiss so *right*. Toni knows what she’s doing and she tries not to think about *that*, but she’s confident in every move she makes.

Cheryl’s hands are a little shaky, but she’s distracted and can’t be at fault for that, but she still manages to slide her fingers over Toni’s shoulder, her nails digging in just enough to pull a deep moan from her throat. Toni shifts her lower half until they’re so much closer, but it’s still not what she needs.

She presses her forehead against Toni’s and their noses rub together, which is sweet and it reminds her just how different it is, there’s no pressure. And she doesn’t feel stupid when she brushes their lips together and whispers, “you taste... amazing,” and then the moments over and Toni’s forehead drops to her neck to hide her chuckle, because they both catch onto the sounds of teasing from the other tent.

There’s obnoxious kissing noises that gradually get louder, like the boys are trying to imitate them and she almost jumps out of the tent when Sweet Pea stage whispers, “I love you,” only for Fangs to answer back with the same high pitched tone, “no, I love *you* .”

She can feel the almost *pained* sound from Toni, who pulls her lips away from Cheryl's throat and just shakes her head, "those assholes."

"We heard that," both boys yell back in sync with each other.

And she really doesn't hate the way Toni rolls off her, but keeps an arm thrown across Cheryl's stomach when she barks back, "I wasn't trying to be quiet."

"Could've fooled us."

Cheryl just groans, because she can't believe she thought Toni would ever want to get involved with those two idiots.

The second she steps out of the car, she feels a weight press down against her shoulders, like her body is naturally reacting to danger. Cheryl thought about following Toni back to the trailer park, but she needs space to think, to breathe. She's too comfortable.

At some point she has to return to reality.

The drive back wasn't necessarily tense, but she wasn't exactly comfortable, either. Toni offers to take the wheel and barely says two words, which was fine because Cheryl just lets herself to drift off with her Serpent jacket balled up between her head and the door, the soothing sound of distant motorcycles lulling her to sleep.

It's not really cold, but there's a light breeze, so when they stop in front of Thistlehouse she slips her arms into the leather jacket and 'forgets' to give the jacket back. Toni didn't ask for it, either, maybe she likes the idea of Cheryl in her clothes, or it just slips her mind.

Once the bikes start driving away, she thinks about texting an apology, but she knows Toni won't actually care. Cheryl just hopes she doesn't get cold.

She doesn't really want to talk to anyone anyway, even her, *especially* her, because Toni has this infuriating way of making her feel fucking indestructible and she knows the second she steps over that threshold, that just won't be true. It makes her wonder if she's ever actually felt comfortable at home with her family, or if she was just always good at pretending.

It's colder inside than it is outside, like someone left all the windows open overnight. To give her mother some credit, the house might not feel like home, but it's always warm and that was oddly comforting now that it's gone. She can't remember the last time she was here

alone, even the maid is missing. It's weird, sure, but she doesn't really question it and starts to unpack and sort between her dirty laundry.

She lets her phone charge for the first time all weekend, and a little *Apple* icon flashes back at her, so she knows it's working, and she dreads switching it back on.

It's the longest she's ever stayed away from home without her mother knowing exactly where to find her. She ran away as a child only once, mostly because there was nowhere to go, but also because her attempt went unnoticed, or they just didn't care. Jason was the one who found her huddled up in the treehouse at the far end of their property, as a child it seemed far enough. Jason sat with her a while until he convinced her to return home, Penelope told her "it was a waste of time," and never even spared her a second glance.

As soon as she was done fixing the mess she made, Cheryl basically collapsed in the middle of her bed and hid her face in the pillow, it doesn't smell of Toni and she's grateful, because she was intoxicating. Cheryl had some intent of reaching for her phone and responding to any of the messages she's missed, but it's not long before she falls asleep.

It's the ass crack of dawn when she wakes up to a call from her mother. The conversation lasts under ten seconds and then she's left scrambling for her car keys.

It helps that Riverdale is a relatively small town and everyone knows each other, so there's a nurse by her side almost immediately. Their hospital is a simple facility; they don't cater to much and you have to go out of town for any larger operations, so it's not hard to follow directions and when she turns the final corner there's only one room with the door closed.

She can see her mother through the glass, talking closely with a doctor, and her skinny fingers are wrapped around his wrist. It's tasteless. Her mother-in-law lay unconscious not a foot away and she was seducing the staff.

There's a flicker of something in her Penelope's eyes when she notices Cheryl, and more so the jacket weighing her down. It's far from remorse, and it's gone in a beat, quickly replaced with a stoic expression that almost resembled boredom.

She feels unwelcome, but this is exactly where she needs to be. She surrounds herself in the cold leather, it feels tighter than before, squeezing in all the wrong places and reminding her of exactly where she belongs. It was a last ditch effort to rebel. It felt tighter than before, but now it feels stupid and she feels out of place.

There's a gentle symphony of machine sounds and it feels louder than it actually was, but it's a small room and there's so much happening that it's claustrophobic. There's monitors and wires all hooked up to Nana Rose. She looks *small*. There's bruising along her arms and her face, it paints her skin a dark purple.

"How did she fall?" Cheryl asks as she reaches for the covers, straightening the sheets. They're rough to touch and she feels a wave of guilt for sleeping so comfortably.

"I'm not her keeper," her mother says, looking ever more burdened the more time she wastes in the hospital. It's a simple reminder of who she was dealing with. "I can't be expected to watch over her. If she requires that level of care, she should be in a facility more attune to her needs."

It's a line she's heard so many times before— except in the past, her father had always there to defend the older lady. It seems too coincidental. It seems rehearsed. Nana Rose is a frankly, old and wheelchair-bound lady, she shouldn't be capable of falling down the stairs, she can barely move.

When the doctor arrives, she's relieved for the additional company, and she manages to avoid the cold gaze while the middle-aged man takes centre stage. The news isn't good, she's still considered to be in critical condition, and given her age it could still go either way. They don't seem optimistic.

They tell her to 'be prepared' and she knows it's going to be a long few days.

She feels a strong hand on her shoulder and any comfort it may have provided vanishes when her mother says, "she's an old woman, Cheryl. Your grandmother has lived a long life," as if she's already gone.

In total, she thinks it's the longest time she's spent in the same room as her mother, practically alone. Cheryl doesn't look back at her and she feels her body seize up when the hand on her shoulder moves down her back, it rests on the Serpent patch.

"It's such a shame," the words are whispered so candid, and honest, there's no malice in her tone and the back of her neck prickles with goose-bumps.

"It's just a jacket," she says, but she doesn't even believe it herself; it's a symbol of everything her family stand against.

She notes her mother's silence as a response.

They don't talk anymore, because then visiting hours are over. It takes a little sweet talking to convince the nurses to let her stay, but they agree under the pretense that she stays out of the way and behaves herself and doesn't she always?

There's a look she gets from her mother when the older Blossom leaves, and she hears the echo of Penelope's voice long after she's gone, and the words, "control yourself, Cheryl," are fixed in her mind. It's enough to justify her reasons for staying alongside her Nana.

It's rather frustrating that the more she thinks about everything, the more confused she is. That isn't even the right word, because she's not *confused*. She knows that her mother is responsible for whatever happened, and she knows she's next.

Cheryl isn't scared, but she also isn't the same girl that burnt down Thornhill. That girl was just buried so deep, she doesn't know where to find her.

The house feels so much bigger without Nana Rose, she's almost become apart of the furniture and she doesn't want to get used to the idea of living without her. It sometimes seems like their family curse went beyond the twins, and the bloodline sought out violent ends for every victim

In the next few days she spends most of her time going back and forth between school and the hospital. Cheryl had taken to sleeping in her own bed, only because her mother seemed to be watching her more carefully now and noticing her absence.

Time moves slowly and over the following week she makes a point to never ask Toni to bring her to the hospital, she wasn't welcome, she just hopes it's because she's a Serpent.

One night she finds her mother hovering over Nana Rose, she's standing so close and her head is tilt, and the look breathes *compassion*, for a brief moment she thinks she's misjudged her, but then she clamps her index finger and thumb together, and there's a tube caught in the middle.

It feels so wrong to find her so exposed, it's like she wants to get caught.

There's heat that boils up inside of her, a rage she never really knows how to control and when she kicks the door open the handle bounces against the wall. Her mother doesn't flinch, until a nurse pushes past and her fingers slip.

Her heart drops when Penelope steps back, completely innocent, and nobody is any wiser. It's an act she must have learnt from her late-husband.

Cheryl doesn't move until her mother is out of the door. She can practically hear the words, "*be careful, Cheryl,*" and they mean so much more now.

As soon as she knows she's alone, she sends one text, "*ground floor, room 6.*"

It's selfish, but she gets impatient while she waits for a reply, but she half-expects Toni to have nothing better to do. Cheryl isn't very good at *doing nothing* and there's only so many

times that she can re-organize a room with only the bare essentials.

She's a complete ball of nerves when her troupe of delinquents show up within the hour and she tries not to smile when she notices the cup holder balancing on the palm of Toni's hand.

"Is that—"

"A cherry cola, for Cheryl Bombshell."

Her heart stutters in her chest and she watches Toni's eyes. They're on her lips.

"We brought monopoly," Fangs announces, with a smile so big and proud, but he gets shoved to one side when Sweet Pea blindly follows after him with at least four pillows stacked in his arms.

Her mother is *so* wrong about them.

"How did you get past the nurses?" She asks, because they're not in the least bit conspicuous.

Legs smirks when he says, "I sweet talked them, obviously."

She catches the way Toni's eyes narrow, like there's another story but she holds her tongue and lets him have his moment of glory. When their own eyes meet, her heart beats so fucking hard when Toni blows her the tiniest of kisses and shuffles close, until their legs are touching.

There's still a steady beat from the monitors and she wonders if Nana Rose could hear them but she doesn't want to go there. The doctors tried to get her to talk like she was listening, but it was too much. Cheryl will talk when she wakes up.

It doesn't feel like family game night, the only argument they have is when the boys fight over who got the car, and Toni just snatches it up before it gets heated. There's no life lessons on the importance of capitalism whilst they play, and honestly, she's pretty sure Fangs is only buying the colors that "look nice" so it's pretty laid back.

There's also a hand drawing over her back, because Toni strong-armed both of the boys into letting them team-up, so her head is resting on Cheryl's shoulder and every now and then she offers the odd comment.

"I'll buy," she says, and she's met from groans from both Fangs and Sweet Pea. They're loud enough that a nurse shushes them from somewhere outside of the room. They all try to fight it but a weird noise escapes Fangs while he holds back his laugh, and they fall apart.

They probably shouldn't be laughing in such a moment, while people are hurting around them, but the reality of her tragic position made it all the more uncomfortably funny.

They manage to keep their laughter under their breaths, but Monopoly has gone forgotten, she's pretty sure she's won anyway. She just bought *Boardwalk* and already safety held *Park Place* in her possession.

It was game over.

They sit in a comfortable silence, and when she locks eyes with Sweet Pea, he gives her one of his annoying knowing smiles. It kind of hits her all at once that he's the reason for all of this and she can't be more grateful, because he's the reason she has Toni.

She mimes, 'thank you'.

He just winks back.

There's a knock at the door, and she already knows it's her mother, because he always knocks the same way, it patronising and it drives her crazy because it's too loud and quick, like she's in a rush.

She also has no idea what to do right now, because her mother is standing in the doorway and there's a lack of emotion on her face, she's just watching the way Toni is almost completely lay over her. She feels bile raise in her throat.

There's no hiding. She has a pair of legs over her own, and Toni's face is tucked into her neck in a way that screams intimacy. When she tries to sit up, she hears a quiet, "shh," and she wants to scream because she honestly thought Toni was sleeping.

Deviant.

It takes a moment, and Toni barely has her fucking eyes open when she realizes they have an audience. Cheryl doesn't mean to smile, but she does, because Toni composes herself quickly and just stands up with that winning smile, "Hi, Mrs. Blossom."

Her mother isn't so easily won over.

She looks straight past Toni when she says, "Your grandmother should be resting, it's time your *friends* leave."

There's something about the way that Toni holds herself, it's compelling.

"We were just... supporting, Cheryl." Toni says and it's weak.

"Supporting?"

Her stomach does this little lurch when her mother takes a step forward and it's supposed to be intimidating, but it's taken as a threat and both boys are on their feet. They're so quick to stand in line behind Toni. She didn't know they were listening.

"Stop."

The focus is pulled back to her, even though her stance feels weak. Maybe she's not the girl that burnt down Thornhill, but she can still defend herself. Sweet Pea looks back at her strangely but says nothing, but he must be able to see the conflict in her eyes, because he tilts his head a little and his eyes soften.

"Let's go," he says, and touches Toni's back.

She watches them leave.

"They're beneath even you, Cheryl,"

The words don't sting like they used to, because somewhere along the line, she thinks they stopped meaning as much. They haven't even moved, so there's still a half-played game of monopoly still scattered on the floor somewhere between them, and a jacket hangs over the back of a chair and she knows from the little tear in the elbow that it's Sweet Pea's.

"They're my friends," she says, and that proves the wrong answer.

"Cheryl, dear god," her mother breathes, almost spits, "you don't honestly believe that?"

She does.

"They're waiting for me," and she has no way to confirm her theory, but she likes the way the older Blossom's face twitches when she reaches for Sweet Pea's jacket and pulls it over her shoulders. "Don't wait up."

She pushes past her mother and when they're stood side by side, Penelope's fingers circle her wrist, and she squeezes hard enough that it hurts, "think very carefully about what you do next."

"I'm done *just* thinking about it."

They're loitering by her car as expected, and she feels something swirl low in her stomach when she sees that Toni's the first one to stand. She doesn't slow down, she just tosses her keys over to Sweet Pea and tells him, "don't scratch it. She doesn't even make eye contact when she takes Toni's hand and tugs her towards the motorcycle that she's become almost fond of.

She likes the way Toni allows her to pull them along, arms outstretched. She feels a breathy laugh when she stops a little abruptly, and Toni bumps into her back.

"Where are you taking me?"

Cheryl doesn't answer until she has her leg over the bike, "you're taking me home."

"What about your mom?"

It's completely irrelevant and she's a little insulted that Toni's really thinking about her mother at this exact moment in time, while her back is pressed against her bedroom door and a pair of hands bracket either side of her head. She gets it, their clandestine rendezvous have gone undiscovered for now, simply because Toni has never stepped foot inside Thistlehouse, but the impending threat seems less important now.

"Just kiss me," Cheryl says into Toni's ear, her hands are on Toni's hips and when she digs her thumb into her hip, she gets a filthy moan she hasn't heard before.

She doesn't have to ask again. Toni just bites her lip, and puts her hands on Cheryl's face and kisses her gently, then a little harder until they're pressed together.

"We could've done this at the trailer park,"

"No we couldn't," she says, like it's a fact, because she's not being caught fooling around by the boys again. There are so many different ways she's thought about this playing out, and none of them involve someone else's bed, with a fucking audience.

Their eyes meet and Cheryl feels something flutter in her stomach, it's a terrifying mix of nerves and arousal.

"You're just..."

The only way Cheryl can think of proving to Toni that she's serious, and not craving attention, or acting out against her mother is to tug her closer and press her lips to Toni's. "I'm yours," she says against her mouth and Toni moans into the kiss immediately and she feels like she's dying.

Christ.

There's a thigh pressing against hers, which is tame by her standards, but then Toni leans over and whispers, "I want you so bad," and there's hands in her hair, pulling her into a kiss that's unlike the others. She bites down, gently, on Cheryl's lip.

"Show me," she says, and the words come out breathier than she intended.

"Fuck." It's almost a grunt. Cheryl still finds it attractive. She just whimpers as Toni's hand moves down Cheryl's neck as they kiss and god, Cheryl's just so aroused thinking of what *else* Toni can do with her tongue.

It's not as if she wants to take control of this whole thing, not even a little but, but she feels like she needs to keep moving things along and she wants it to be balanced. Cheryl might be slightly more inexperienced in this department but she wants this to be special. Toni's always so careful, she never oversteps and never goes too far, but that's exactly what she *needs*, so she pushes on the girls shoulders and makes some space between them when she says "take my dress off."

There's this moment where she thinks Toni's going to say no, but then all at once, she drops to her knees and looks up at her and *fuck*, if it's not the sexiest thing she's ever seen. She acts with her instincts, and it's not as though she's taking control of this whole thing, but she likes when Toni goes along with what she wants, because she wants to experience it all.

She's pictured it all, down to the very last detail, but her imagination is nothing compared to the real hands that gather the bottom of her dress and the fingertips that run along her thighs as it's pushed up to her hips.

There's a pair of lips on the inside of her knee and they're moving up with the dress. She's so overwhelmed by what's happening that she can't focus on anything, when she looks back at Toni, she's lost her shirt and she's just kneeling there in a black lace bra and a pair of shorts. As soon as she feels a soft breathy chuckle against her inner thigh, she loses it, and she's pretty sure she can't fucking breathe. Toni leaves *one* tortuous kiss, just below the hem of her panties, and then she's standing again.

Her dress is balled up to her waist and she helps Toni lift it over her head, so that she doesn't tear it and ruin an expensive dress, or something ridiculous like that. She stands still, her back rigid and she relaxes slightly when she sees Toni smile and throw the dress somewhere by their feet, and she's left wearing only her panties.

"Should I say something charming, right now?" Toni asks, a little smirk on her lips.

"Shut up," she says, with a mix of laughter and annoyance.

Then Toni sinks down again, and there are lips wrapping around her nipple. She grabs at Toni's arms and arches into the touch. She almost loses her balance but it seems like Toni has that under control, and hands gather at her hips to guide her to the other side of the room.

She should say something. There should be something she can think to say. But she's still at least a little afraid that if she talks, she might think of a reason not to go through with it, and she's never wanted anyone like this before.

Cheryl's chest is moving as she breathes and Toni kisses the swell of skin just above her chest, and Cheryl's hands sink into her hair. She gasps when Toni nips the skin with her teeth.

"Bed," she whispers, it's rough and she can hear how different her own voice sounds.

They tumble backwards and it's sloppy, but she doesn't care. Toni's mouth is everywhere and it doesn't seem like they're coming to a stop anytime soon. They just sink into each other as Toni's tongue darts out to pry Cheryl's lips apart. It feels so, so good.

"Cheryl," Toni breathes out, her hand coming to rest on Cheryl's thigh, and the tips of her fingers play with the hem of her panties. "I just..." And then she pulls away and presses their foreheads together. It's *charming*.

She giggles and it feels so stupid, but it slips out before she can stop it, because Toni eyes keep slipping to Cheryl's chest and it's so fucking sweet.

"This is going really fast."

Cheryl can't really see how that's a bad thing, so she lifts her hips and wets her lips.

"Not for me."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes,"

She realizes how quickly she replies and Toni must too, because she smirks and just kisses her once more. It all feels so *spectacular*. There's no doubt that she's exactly where she's supposed to be.

It's not like she knows how this works, other than what she's read in books and the odd late night online in-private browse. It was never with two girls, never, *god* and she hates that she didn't do more research in advance, because she doesn't know how she's supposed to react when fingers trail over her collarbone. Toni settles a hand right over her breast, massaging gently, and Cheryl finds herself arching up to feel more of it.

She's letting Toni do all the work, so she dares to slip her hand around the girl's back, her nails running up the length of her spine. When the girl lets out a low moan, she knows she's doing something right.

Cheryl grins when she snaps the back of Toni's bra open, and it falls loose on her shoulders. There's a moment where she wishes she could see them together, it had to be beautiful.

“Don’t close your eyes.”

“Don’t stop.”

"Fuck," Cheryl groans, pressing her lips firmly to Toni's again and slips her tongue inside without warning. They only part again so Cheryl can tug Toni's bra strap down and pull at the cup. It's a little primitive, but she doesn't have time to think about it, because her stomach coils hard when they make brief eye contact, and then her eyes drop and she licks her lips at the sight of Toni's bare chest.

“Breathe, babe,” Toni chuckles, and she hears the faint sound of material hitting the floor and it just leaves her swallowing hard and trying to remember the basics, like needing oxygen.

"Oh, my god," Cheryl whines it and Toni grins down at her. "I can't believe *I'm* the one saying shut up and kiss me."

Toni laughs quietly and slides her fingertips down to Cheryl's bare side, and she draws her fingers over that spot on her left side, a heart.

Is this what love feels like?

“My heart's beating so fast,” Toni whispers, and it's like the most endearing thing she's ever heard. She copies her slightly, and rests her warm hand against Toni's chest, and she can *feel* it. She looks up at her and she's dumbfounded, because *she's* doing that. And she doesn't understand how.

She wants to touch Toni everywhere. *Everywhere* . She doesn't know where to start, so kissing her hungrily seems like a good plan, until it becomes the only thing they do for a good long while. Toni's tongue works in and out of Cheryl's mouth, and dear Lord, she's the best kisser Cheryl's ever had the pleasure of kissing.

She could get off at just the feeling of Toni's tongue in her mouth. It's fucking heaven. Cheryl could easily let this go on forever, but with the way Toni's hips are rocking against hers, she knows she isn't going to last long.

“Holy fuck, you're so cute, Cheryl.”

She wants to be offended, but then Toni is kissing her again, and there's a hand sliding along the waistband of her shorts, and no, she is not really in a position to start complaining.

In all honesty, she's frankly terrified of doing something wrong. She's never gone this far with a girl, or even gone beyond a quick secret kiss. It's all new. So, she's really just trying to keep her hands in the right place so things don't get off track. It would be mortifying if she was responsible for something that caused Toni to *stop* .

Any sense of control she thought she had disappears when Toni hand moves down and slips right into Cheryl's panties. She doesn't move for a moment, like she's waiting for Cheryl to kick her off and run out on her, but she's done running. Really, she just wants more, so she whispers Toni's name and that seems to work.

She gasps when Toni *really* touches her for the first time, long, slender fingers moving over her. A mixture of heat and arousal has Cheryl's blood rushing down from her brain and back to her core, making her all kinds of dizzy.

"You're so wet." Toni whispers, and she's staring as though she hadn't really believed it until now.

Cheryl can't really form words and she's left trying to grab onto something, anything, to keep from bucking her hips too hard.

"Just..." She swallows and Toni moves her fingers in a way that makes Cheryl's back arch and she spreads her legs a little wider. "Yeah." And really, who needs words when you have *this* ?

Toni circles Cheryl's clit and then backs off, fingers dipping lower and then sliding back up, and it becomes very hard to think of anything. It's all so gentle, but it's also the most painful sensation Cheryl's ever experienced—being worked up like this, teased so intensely her core is throbbing. She can actually feel Toni smirking against her neck, and it would normally be frustrating if it wasn't so goddamn hot.

When she looks down and sees Toni's hand moving beneath the cotton, she moans loudly and snaps her eyes shut, letting her head fall back against the pillows. She's almost embarrassed that it's taken her no time at all to get this close. She's also never wanted to come quite so desperately, ever.

She can smell Toni and sex, and feels hot all over, feels her stomach jump when there's pressure on her nerves again. She runs her hands through Toni's hair to keep from doing something irrational, like using her own fingers to move the process along.

Toni isn't even really kissing her anymore, she's idly pressing her lips down her abdomen, over her bellybutton, and towards that place where she needs Toni the most. She's voicing none of her smaller complaints at all.

There's a moment where she panics, because Toni is between her thighs and her fingers are hooked on either side of her panties. And then Toni is looking up at her, "I... can I take them off?"

Cheryl gets an inappropriate amount of satisfaction upon hearing the hitch in Toni's breath and the way her voice is shaking. She waits for permission, even though she doesn't need it and as soon as Cheryl nods, Toni pulls her panties down and off and her hips buck when Toni presses her tongue flat against the skin between Cheryl's thighs and drags it up so slowly.

She whines like a bitch when Toni peeks up at her with this drowsy smile, eyebrows furrowed adorably as she leaves kiss after kiss against her center.

"Fuck," her voice is rough, and she can feel how shallow her breath has gotten and when Toni flicks her tongue against her in just the right spot, Cheryl rolls her hips, chasing an orgasm that seems to be so far away.

Blunt nails scrape up and down her thighs so gently it makes Cheryl shutter and rock her hips into a steadier rhythm before chancing a glance down at her lower body, and she shivers at the sight of the Serpent staring back up at her from under her eyelashes.

It's kind of trippy how sincere Toni still manages to look as she practically digs her tongue into Cheryl, as if she's never tasted anything better, and Cheryl's just left with her mouth hanging wide open when she traps Toni's head in between her thighs. She gasps when Toni unexpectedly adds a finger into the mix, and everything is building so fast, her stomach clenching like an unwound coil.

Cheryl comes a few seconds later, her back arching off the bed, and she allows a muffled cry to escape as her eyes blur with not only the intensity of her orgasm but with unshed tears. It spreads through her faster than when she does this for herself, but Toni strokes her through it, lazily, "Fuck."

Toni kisses her hard and Cheryl reaches up and sets her hand on the back of the girl's neck to keep her close, keep them pressed together. "That was perfect."

Cheryl can't really do anything more than hum in agreement as she tries to breathe like a normal person. The smell of sweat and sex fills the air with a thick, heady scent, but Cheryl has never felt more comfortable and sated in her life laying right here with Toni.

She somehow keeps herself from doing something embarrassing like saying thank you.

"Kiss me," Cheryl says, and Toni gives her this smile that's just too beautiful, and leans down. And then she gets a kick of excitement when she tells her, "my turn."

She half-expects a protest, but then she realizes who she's dealing with, and she actually finds herself giggling when Toni kisses her as she slings her leg over Cheryl's hips and rolls them over until they've flipped positions.

She's straddling Toni and looking down at her when the girl below says, "it won't take much," and *fuck*. She did that and she hasn't really even touched her yet.

Cheryl just laughs, "You're like, weirdly sexy when you're bossy TT."

"It could also have something to do with being mostly naked." Toni drawls out, biting back a smirk when she adds, "And I just got you off, so."

She leans down and sets her hands above Toni's shoulders on the mattress, she almost loses her mind when their breasts brush together. She finds it to be far more erotic than it really should be. "You're beautiful," she says before she can stop herself.

"I'm also really fucking wet, so, *please touch me, Cheryl*."

The girl beneath her grits her teeth, jaw clenching rigidly as she breathes out through her nose.

"I've never done this before. I'm..." Cheryl pauses and actually looks up into Toni's eyes and ignores the little smirk on her fucking lips. "What?"

Toni just relaxes the smirk, and Cheryl's left watching Toni push down her shorts and reveals that the girl isn't wearing anything underneath, and they're kicked away somewhere in the bed. She doesn't get a chance to think about how sexy that image is, because then her hand is pulled down and she's guided between Toni's legs.

There's a pleasant and warm wetness there, just like when she touches herself.

"Cheryl, please."

She sees it as a challenge, and she does not like to lose.

Cheryl takes her time and lets herself savor the moment, fingers stroking the outer lips of Toni's sex. She dips a finger inside, slowly and teasingly, all the way down to the knuckle and watches Toni's reaction closely. The girl beneath her grits her teeth, jaw clenching rigidly as she breathes out through her nose and digs her nails into Cheryl's shoulder.

They both breathe out at the same time when Cheryl pulls in and out, her fingers flexing as she takes in Toni's thoughtful expression. She adds another finger, and then asks, "How are—is this okay?"

She's confident she's never experienced anything as heavenly as Toni's face pressed against her neck and repeating her name over and over. It's oddly empowering. And so fucking hot.

"So good," Toni murmurs, lips against Cheryl's jaw.

She's actually inside her, fucking Toni with her fingers, and Cheryl looks on, her own restraint breaking as she works her hips down into the back of her hand and she wonders if it's selfish.

Fisting the sheets, Toni writhes underneath her, and Cheryl watches, completely mystified at the sight of the Serpent like this—so beautiful and exposed and vulnerable. Toni's fingernails rake down Cheryl's back, and over her ass, squeezing hard and delightfully, kneading the flesh. She wraps her legs around Cheryl's waist and rolls her hips with a lustful kind of need.

It's a warm night, and they're both sweating on top of her sheets. And then Toni actually mewls, and it's the sexiest noise Cheryl has ever heard in her entire life. She can't believe she's known Toni for this long and has never heard her make that sound.

Cheryl rests her forehead against Toni's, scrunching up her nose at the look of total concentration sketched across the girl's face. "Are you close?" she asks breathlessly. "Please tell me you're close."

Toni nods so jerkily and Cheryl can barely tell if that's a yes or no, but she ends up getting her answer a second later when Toni's breathing picks up, and then she lets out this gasping whimper that Cheryl knows she'll be hearing in her dreams for the rest of her life, because Toni orgasming is perhaps the sexiest thing Cheryl has ever experienced. She continues to slowly move her fingers in and out as she brings Toni down from her high, and then it's quiet for a long time afterwards. Her shaky arms give out on her, and she flops beside Toni with a groan of exhaustion.

Cheryl breathes out a sigh. She thrives off of having Toni in her bed like this—naked and damp and just so beautiful. Toni moves slowly but eventually rests her head against Cheryl's chest, and she finds herself shivering once again as Toni drops a light kiss to her collarbone. A set of pillowy soft lips press against hers, and Cheryl's eyes roll back when she tastes herself on Toni's tongue.

They stay like that for a while, just comfortably engulfed in each other, skin to sticky skin, making out slowly. And *god*, can Toni kiss. Cheryl is so absorbed in those full lips that it takes her a moment for everything to sink in and god does it feel good to be wanted.

Cheryl smiles lazily when Toni tucks her face into Cheryl's hair. Exhaustion seeping into her bones the longer she lays there. Toni's breathing eventually evens out, and Cheryl slowly closes her eyes with a yawn, but then a shiver crawls up her spine at the sound of a very familiar voice in her head, whispering, "*Control yourself, Cheryl.*"

But she'll face that in the morning.

Chapter End Notes

so this took a while to get out. I'm currently freelancing and it's taking up a lot of my time, and I also wanted this chapter to be perfect, so I hope it's good enough. thank you so much for the lovely responses so far, I love reading comments.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!