

Rules of Entanglement: Extended Waterfall Scenes

Without opening her eyes or breaking from her cover shoot pose, she yelled over to him to be heard over the splashes of the waterfall. “You’re taking forever over there. I didn’t realize you had to actually *make* the blanket before setting it out.”

Oh, really. Her smack-talking put a big-ass grin on his face and brought out his playful side.

“Be right in!”

Jogging around the edge of the pool to the path he knew well enough to navigate blind, he climbed up the rock formation to the top of the falls. Once he stood firmly on the large rock that jutted above the flow of the fast-moving water, he cupped his hands around his mouth and called out for the attention of the bathing beauty some thirty feet below.

When she caught sight of him she scrambled to her feet and yelled something that sounded an awful like a dig on his intelligence.

Pretending he hadn’t jumped from this very spot hundreds of times before was probably cruel, but the mischievous teen inside him couldn’t resist a little prank. “Don’t worry, I’m sure I’ll be fine! It doesn’t look too bad!”

Without another word he leapt far away from the rock wall’s edge and reveled in the sensation of free-falling with the rushing water. Feet first, he plunged into the cool depths, feeling instantly revitalized as he sank to the bottom and then pushed up to break the surface.

“Are you out of your mind? You could’ve slipped and cracked your skull open.”

He looked over to see a livid water nymph kneeling and gripping the edge of her rock, glaring at him for all she was worth.

“What’s the matter, Red?” he asked as he swam over to her. “Afraid you’d lose me over a little cliff jump?”

“Of course not. I was worried about finding my way back down the mountain by myself after you bled out like an idiot.”

Damn, he loved that smart mouth of hers. Laughing, he yanked her into the water with him. She squealed in surprise and tried wresting herself from his hold, but he refused to yield. Soon she was laughing with him, and they spent a good half hour splashing and dunking one another in a back and forth game of cat and mouse.

Breathing heavy from their play, they hoisted themselves onto the rock platform she’d been sunning on earlier. Their legs dangled in the water as they leaned back on their hands. She exhaled heavily and stared out at the scenery before them. “This place is magical, Jackson.” She turned to look at him. “Thank you for bringing me. For sharing this part of your life with me.”

Her words had his gut clenching and his heart swelling. He wanted to share so much more with her if she'd let him. And he planned on telling her. But not now. Now he just wanted to lose himself in her smell, her taste, her body. Her.

Leaning over, he kissed her, slow and gentle, savoring the eager response she gave him. He wondered if she had any idea how easily she unraveled him.

He pulled back. "Ever stand under a waterfall?" She shook her head. "Come on."

Jax guided her over to the right of the main falls where water still fell down the rock wall, but without the amount and force it had in the center. It also had a decent ledge to stand on being closer to the shoreline. Holding her hand to keep her steady, he helped her until she had secure footing.

A wide smile broke over her face as she lifted her arms in the air to cut through the thin curtain of water spilling behind her. Jax was spellbound watching her tip her head back and laugh with the sheer joy of experiencing one of Mother Nature's wonders.

Growing up in a land-locked state, he'd never known he had such an affinity for water until he moved to the islands. The first time he ever saw the Pacific, it called to him like the moon to a lone wolf. And ever since, water had become as much a part of him as his fighting. Which was why sex with an element of water—whether in a shower, hot tub, rain, or waterfall—was such a huge turn on for him.

And why his cock was thick and straining against the confines of his board shorts.

Jax stepped into her, crowding her against the rocks that had been smoothed by hundreds of years of streaming water. Her smile died with the firm grip of his hands on either side of her neck. Her breaths turned shallow, her pulse jackhammered under his touch, and her pupils nearly swallowed the green of her eyes.

He brushed a thumb over her lower lip, the way the plump flesh gave way to his touch so goddamn erotic. "Do you have any idea what you do to me?" His voice sounded harsh and broken, like he'd lost it the day before and it was only now starting to come back. "Every time I look at you, I fucking lose my mind."

"Good." She raked her nails down his abs, leaving trails of heated desire in their wake. Then she nipped the pad of his thumb. "That makes two of us then."

Needing her kiss like he needed to breathe, Jax descended and laid claim to her mouth. He moved his lips over hers, pushing her onto the rock until the water cascaded around her body, a fluid outline of the soft curves that tempted his baser self. Her arms hooked under his, her hands gripped the backs of his shoulders, and she pulled him in so not even air could pass between them.

Shifting the lower half of his body, he positioned one of his legs between hers, grabbed her ass in both hands, and hauled her onto his thigh. Without further instruction, she rolled her hips to slowly grind her sex over his solid muscle. His tongue danced with hers to the music of the rushing falls surrounding them. She tasted of mint, coffee...and her.

No one tasted like her. No one felt like her. No one touched him—physically or emotionally—like her.

“Make love to me, Jackson.”

Fuck, yes. Wait... Gathering every shred of willpower he had, he said, “Not here.”

She retaliated with a “Yes, here” and bit his bottom lip before her tongue swept in and scattered his resolve to the four winds.

The woman was dangerous. She had the power to make him lose control, something he’d never experienced before with anyone else. He could easily lose himself in her emerald eyes, from the scent of her skin, or the power of her kiss. And he wasn’t sure he’d care if he never found his way back.

Jax shifted his weight and felt his foot slip a little on one of the rocks, reminding him of exactly *why* he’d said no to begin with. He wrenched his mouth from hers, but before he could reiterate his earlier statement and tack on the safety explanation, one of her hands snaked down to run the length of his stiff cock before lightly squeezing his balls.

He took a sharp intake of breath through clenched teeth and let it out on a groan as he pushed himself into her palm. She looked up at him with an impish smile, clearly proud of herself for eliciting such a reaction from him.

“You think it’s funny when you get me to lose my shit, don’t you?” he asked. She nodded, a glimmer of mischief in eyes framed by wet, spiky lashes. Her lips, swollen and red from his kisses, held the barest hint of a smirk, as though she knew enjoying the moment too much would get her into worse trouble than she already was. Smart woman.

Willful woman.

Jax untied his board shorts and yanked out the long, flat lace from the eyelets. Then he gathered Vanessa’s wrists behind her back, looped the lace around them figure-eight style several times, and tied them off. “Now,” he said, reveling in the shocked look on her face. “Let’s see how funny you think it is when the roles are reversed, Princess.”

#

Vanessa tried pulling her wrists apart behind her. No good. They were secured one on top of the other, with the tie from Jax’s shorts of all things, resting at her lower back.

“Okay,” she said calmly, “you have my attention. Now what?”

He didn’t answer by responding with words, but by guiding her with his hands. He pulled her hips forward, dragging her higher on his leg until only the balls of her feet touched the ground. The friction sent vibrations of lust tingling through her core, making her wet in a way that had nothing to do with the waterfall. The heated look in his eyes told her he’d known it would do exactly that.

Placing his hand on her chest, he gently pushed her shoulders back to the smooth rock face. With her body slightly angled, hands bound, and feet barely touching the surface of the rocks, there wasn’t much she could do. She was completely at his mercy.

Her heart raced and the roar of blood rushing in her ears matched the thundering of the falls. Once again she found herself walking a fine line, unable to let herself fall one way or the other. The Vanessa who demanded she remain in control warred with the new Vanessa who craved the freedom of giving up that control. The freedom of submitting to someone else.

No, not someone else, she realized. *Only him*. Somehow she knew she'd never feel this way with anyone but Jackson.

"Perfect," he said, appraising his handiwork as he trailed one finger down the center of her body, causing shivers to travel her spine.

Arching her back brought a sharp reminder that her hands were secured behind her. Ceding control was one thing, but she wasn't sure she could handle being physically bound and helpless.

"I—" Though surrounded by water, her throat was bone dry. She licked her lips and did her best to swallow. "I don't think—"

"Don't think. I know what you need, V. Not just your body, but *all* of you." He braced his forearms on either side of her and leaned in, his warm breath fanning her ear as he spoke. "Trust me."

Trust me. His words were a mix of command and plea with a hint of dare. Jackson bestowed feather light licks on her bottom lip, but when she lifted her head to capture his mouth, he kept just out of reach. Serious eyes locked with hers, cutting off her protest.

"Do you trust me?"

She did. Her mind continued to warn her against it, but her heart trusted him implicitly. Vanessa nodded.

"Not good enough." His voice was tight, almost as though he was bracing himself for an answer he didn't want to hear. "Give me the words, V."

Without hesitation, she tried to assure him with her eyes the way her arms longed to do, and said, "I trust you."

Every muscle in his face rippled as his relief was chased by the familiar intensity Jax exuded. Desire struck like lightning wherever skin met skin. Powerful currents traveled the length of her before they gathered and pulsed deep in her center. Need had become a living thing inside her, demanding to be answered. Demanding to be sated.

"Good," he said. "Because I'm going to teach you a lesson."

"What kind of lesson?"

"The kind where you learn that if I tell you something, I have a damn good reason." He slid the triangles of material covering her breasts outward along the bottom string until she was completely exposed. Her nipples tightened as the tropical breeze and the mist from the falls washed over them.

"Then what was your reason for saying no?"

“It’s not safe here.” He palmed her breasts, kneading them with strong fingers, swiping the rough pads of his thumbs over the sensitive buds. Warmth flooded her sex and she rocked her pelvis on his thigh, trying to relieve some of the ache. “It’s too easy to slip on these rocks if we’re distracted.”

“Then why—” The last part of her question was replaced with a loud *uhn* and another roll of her hips when Jackson pinched her nipples.

She barely heard his low chuckle over the sound of the water plummeting into the pool, but there was no ignoring his wolfish smile as his hands skimmed over her ribs and down her stomach. “Because you’re the only one who’s about to be distracted. Now,” he said, hooking his fingers in the front and back of her bikini bottom, “no more questions.” In one quick motion he swept the material to the side.

The searing flesh to flesh contact would have brought her to her knees had she not been straddling him. The lips of her sex, swollen and slick, tingled with the pressure of his hard thigh. But that was nothing compared to what he did next. Grabbing her hips, Jax guided her into a grinding motion—back and forth, back and forth—on his leg, the light dusting of hair adding to the sensations.

Every roll of her pelvis melted her core, little bit by little bit. Her clit felt as though he teased it with his finger in long, slow strokes, but his hands still braced her on either side. She tried to move faster to begin the race toward her building climax, but his firm hold kept her at the maddeningly slow pace until she thought she would die from it.

“Just like this, baby.

Her hyper-sensitive skin did nothing to protect her raw nerves from feeling as though each drop of water struck erogenous zones science hadn’t discovered yet. Her breaths were erratic at best and her nipples had pebbled to the point of pain.

He dropped his head and sucked one between his teeth, flicking it with the tip of his tongue before doing the same to the other. Vanessa gasped, the sensations overwhelming, pushing her closer and closer to that glorious edge. “Oh, I’m *so close*. I’m going to—”

“No,” he said calmly. “You’ll wait.”

She stared up into his caramel eyes and begged. “Please, Jax.”

He leaned over her body, bit her earlobe. The sharp pain arrowed straight to her clit, which tingled from every tiny movement, and he still had her grinding on his leg in that aching slow pace. She didn’t need a faster pace anymore. She was so sensitive she could go at any moment. It would be so easy to let go, to let herself explode and fall. But in such a short amount of time, he’d trained her to crave his control during sex. To crave her own submission.

After soothing the sting with his lips, he turned to speak in her ear. “Who gets to say when you can cum, princess?”

Her eyes drifted closed, the commanding tone in his voice like a balm to her soul, no matter how frustrated she became. “You do.”

“God, you have no idea what it does to me to hear you say that.” His hands slipped around to grab her cheeks before he stood tall again and said, “Go ahead, V. Let me watch you break apart.”

Without hesitation she held his gaze as she worked herself harder and faster on his upper thigh. Their pelvises were so close now that her inside leg brushed against him in ways that had the muscles in his jaw working. His fingers dug into the flesh of her ass, spurring her on. The vibrations inside her climbed higher, spread further, until they consumed her to the point of bursting.

Finally, with one last, hard rock the tension exploded. The world around her ceased to exist as serene darkness enveloped her and she sagged into the strength of his chest. She felt the tie around her wrists fall away and her suit readjusted to cover her, then she became weightless as he picked her up and cradled her in his arms.

With what little strength she had left she fastened her hands behind his neck and opened her eyes to find him staring down at her. She could almost see the flurry of thoughts in his mind, he looked that intense. But no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't begin to guess what they were. Did they have to do with what just happened? Or something about here? Were they good or bad? Shit, when did she become so neurotic?

“Everything okay?” she asked.

He blinked, then gave her the smile that made her insides melt. “Better than okay. You hungry?”

“Famished.”

“Good. I brought some things I think you'll like.”

He carried her over the rocks as easily if they'd been flat, dry, and she weighed little more than a feather. Such grace in a man so large not only defied basic physics, but spat in its face. It also turned her on something fierce.

Once they reached their blankets, Jax set her down and started to rummage around in the small cooler. The sun bounced off his tan skin and the dark images in his tattoo. The waves almost looked as though they rippled from the way his bicep moved with the simplest of motions. She loved his arms. So strong and sure, Vanessa couldn't remember ever feeling so safe and protected as when Jackson wrapped his arms around her.

Lowering herself to the blanket next to him she said, “I'm suddenly hungry for something other than food.”

His mouth quirked up in the corner as he turned to look at her. “That's the dessert menu you're talking about, princess. That typically comes after the main course.”

She bit her lip for a second and then remembered that one of her co-workers told her that she has special days with her kids where they have dessert for dinner and then watch movies. “But it's a special day, right? So on special days we should be able to have dessert first.”

“I don't know,” he hedged. “That sounds an awful lot liking breaking the rules.”

Her jaw dropped a second before he started to laugh. She retaliated by smacking him on the arm and pushing him away when he tackled her for a makeup kiss. She lasted all of two seconds before releasing the fit of giggles from her chest and giving in to the magic of his mouth.

A minute later he set them both to rights again and said they could indeed skip to dessert. So she was confused when he continued to take out plastic containers from the cooler instead of building on the amazing lip-lock they had going on. But since he'd agreed, she decided to let it ride and see what he had in mind.

He retrieved a bottle from the cooler, then two plastic flutes from his backpack. "Thirsty?"

"Ooh, champagne. Absolutely."

Holding it over the grass he freed the cork and waited for the initial foam to stop running from the bottle. He poured each of them half a glass and handed her one, then set the bottle on the lid of the cooler and turned back to her holding a small, white box. When their eyes locked, all humor had been replaced by an intense seriousness. Something she hadn't seen much from Jackson.

His natural settings were Charm and Flirt. She had a feeling most people rarely saw his serious side. He covered it up with the jokes and playful personality he portrayed so well. But he'd shown her what lay beneath in their talks about their pasts. And he was showing her now...but for what reason this time?

"Champagne *and* a gift?" she asked, raising an eyebrow. "Someone's stepping up his game."

"I'm not playing games with you, Vanessa. It's important to me that you know that."

For a long time she studied him, hoping his underlying meaning would appear in his caramel eyes or on the stern set of his stubbled jaw. She didn't find it, but what she did find was sincerity. Something honest, something pure, letting her know she wasn't just another conquest. Another notch on his headboard.

"I believe you," she answered softly.

A palpable relief settled over him. "Open it."

She removed the lid and pulled out a beautiful silver necklace. A two-piece pendant hung from the bottom. At the top, a square aquamarine sea glass bead dangled from its corner, and beneath that was a pewter—

"Starfish."

She smiled up at him through watery eyes. "Sea star."

He flashed her that brilliant white smile that hinted at his dimples. "Whatever. Here, let me help you put it on."

A few seconds later it was fastened and the cool metal of the sea star warmed where it rested in the center of her chest. "I love it, Jackson. Thank you so much."

“You’re very welcome, princess.” He kissed her firm and quick. “Now let’s eat.”

Setting his glass on top of the cooler next to the bottle, he started to remove the lids on all the containers. Chilled green grapes, big chunks of juicy pineapple, huge ruby-red strawberries, and peeled orange sections. The sight was practically orgasmic.

She took a grape and delighted in the crisp snap as she bit through the skin and its juice, the perfect combination of tart and sweet, flooded her mouth. “Mmmm, that is so good. What are in those two containers?”

“Ah, well, if the fruit is the cake, these would be the icing,” he said, removing their lids. “Homemade whipped cream and dark chocolate shavings.”

“If I wasn’t already letting you have your wicked way with my body, this would have done it. Just saying.”

“Good to know.”

He picked out a strawberry, dragged it through the cream, then sprinkled the fine shavings on top. Vanessa eyed the decadent concoction as though her life depended on sampling it. Jax braced his weight with his free hand behind her, leaning close into her body, holding the strawberry in front of her.

When it was only a few inches away, she opened her mouth, but it was pulled back.

“No.” The commanding tone he used during their sexual encounters both surprised her and sent a rush of heat between her legs as she looked up at him in question. “I’ll tell you when.”

If a man had spoken to her that way before, she would’ve laughed in his face and told him to kiss her lily-white ass. But she rarely dated high-handed men to begin with for just that reason. She’d made the decision all those years ago that she’d never give up control to a man like her mother had, and it had bled into her everyday life until she turned into a total control freak. In most cases it served her well, especially professionally.

But what she hadn’t realized until just a couple of days ago was that her need for control exhausted and frustrated her. After years of never letting up, her brain desperately needed a break. A chance to let go and trust that someone else could take over and give her what she needed without taking advantage of her vulnerability.

Jackson gave her that.

He was so in tune with her and her body. He’d known she secretly craved to submit her control even before she did. He knew how far he could push her and when it was far enough. And in only the few days they’d been together, he’d somehow trained her subconscious to instantly let go of her need for control when he slipped into his more dominant role with her.

Feeling herself fall into her role opposite his—along with the electric way her nerves tingled in anticipation of his touches, his kisses, his bites—was an erotic overload all on its own.

Jax brought the strawberry to her mouth again, but this time she kept her lips as they were, slightly parted. He painted her upper lip with the chocolate-sprinkled cream.

“Use that pretty tongue of yours and lick off the cream. Slowly.”

Gazing up at him through her lashes, she did as she was told, licking all the way across and then dragging the decadence into her mouth. She closed her eyes on a blissful moan as the chocolate and cream melted together.

“Goddamn that was sexy.” Opening her eyes once again, she watched his turn a deep hazelnut color that flayed her with their heat. “My turn.”

This time he did it on her lower lip, then bent over her to lap it up slowly with his tongue. “Mmm, you’re right. That *is* good.” He bit into the strawberry, then used the open flesh to slick the juice over her lips. “But this is going to taste even better.”

He dropped the half-eaten strawberry back in with the rest, tangled his hand in her wet hair, and descended upon her mouth with a voracious hunger. Using her fisted hair, he angled her head and took the kiss deeper, devouring her in ways that shut down her brain and fired up her senses. Thinking was no longer her burden to bear. Her only responsibility now was to focus on the sight of the man over her, the feel of his mouth and hands on her body, hear the ragged breaths they shared and his gruff commands at her ear, and smell and taste their unique combination of honeysuckle, ocean, sweat, and arousal.

Breaking off the kiss, he pressed his forehead to hers. Both were trying to catch their breath. She’d almost done it, too. Then his hand released her hair and traveled down her neck and finally stopped at her breast to give it a light squeeze and a tug on her nipple through her bikini. She sucked in a breath and arched her back in a plea for more.

“So responsive, my *pupule wahine*,” he said with admiration. “Take off your suit, then lean back on your elbows. You can leave your legs straight or bend them, but I want them open. I’m about to make a feast out of you.”

#

Jax watched Vanessa untie all four bows that held her suit to her lithe body and set the dangling scraps to the side. Though she’d used a ton of sunscreen all week to prevent burning her fair skin, she’d still gotten enough sun for a light base and a few new freckles. He’d never thought tan lines were particularly sexy, but he loved how her breasts and the triangle over her sex were still milky white against the light tan everywhere else.

She leaned back as he’d asked, holding herself up on her forearms. Her legs were bent at the knees, but only separated by a few inches. He narrowed his eyes just enough to make his point. “Wider, *wahine*. I want to see how wet you are for me.”

He knew it still made her slightly uncomfortable to take orders from him, but that was part of the pleasure. To him, comfort meant complacent, and neither had a place in his lovemaking. Things were better with the woman slightly on edge. When she never knew what he’d choose to do next.

Slowly she spread her legs. His eyes zeroed in on her folds as they opened like a blooming flower basking in the sun. Glistening with her juices and blushing shades of pink, it beckoned his mouth, his fingers, his cock. From the first time he'd tasted her, she'd become his drug, his addiction, his obsession.

Grabbing an orange segment, Jax knelt between her legs and braced his free hand on the blanket by her ribs. Pinching with his thumb and forefinger, he squeezed its juice onto her lips, then licked and kissed her until all traces of citrus were gone.

He picked out a grape, bit it in half, then teased a nipple with the juicy flesh, watching it pull tight and drops of juice stream over the round swell of her breast. He fed the rest of the grape to Vanessa then lowered his head to draw the fruity nipple into his mouth before repeating the process on the other side with a piece of pineapple.

Her soft moans and sharp gasps made his cock swell and his balls ache. Twice she'd asked to touch him, but he denied her. As good as it felt to have her soft hands around him and her nails trail over his sac, he knew he'd blow within seconds if he allowed it. Jax didn't know if it was because he knew this could potentially be their last day together or if it was just the culmination of his feelings for her pouring into the mix, but he was holding onto himself by a thread.

He needed to make this count. To create a memory so powerful it would stay with her forever, even if the rest of their days together slipped away over time. He could say it was ego, but he knew better than that. It was fear, plain and simple. Fear that she didn't feel for him as he did for her. That she would leave and he'd be nothing more than a collection of memories. But memories faded, and the thought of not even having that small place in her life rattled him to his very core.

Jackson sat back on his heels, ran a finger through the whipped cream, and dragged it down the center of her body. Next he picked up the bottle of champagne and held it over her.

"Open, V," he ordered.

As her lips parted, he carefully poured a little in her mouth, then streamed it between her breasts. The champagne river flowed through the cream and over her belly before creating a waterfall down her pussy. Setting the bottle aside, he locked eyes with her and stretched out on the blanket between her bent legs. The intoxicating scent of her arousal mixed with the scents of the fruit and champagne made his mouth water.

His hands gripped her ass. She bit her lip.

His face lowered and held. She held her breath.

His lips met the soft flesh of her inner thigh before his teeth nipped her.

She gasped before dragging in short bursts of air, her hands fisting in the blanket.

He'd normally make her wait, make her beg. Build the anticipation until she was dripping and writhing without him even touching her sex. It sounded cruel, but in reality it only made her orgasms that much more explosive.

But he couldn't hack it this time. He didn't have the strength to hold out on her like he should. He needed to taste her, to drink of her, and he needed it right fucking now.

Feeling weak and selfish, he took exactly what he wanted.

Vanessa cried out the moment his mouth met her wet pussy. As he feasted, he watched her throw her head back, bowing her body, her pale breasts thrusting up to the sky like an offering to the sun.

He tasted hints of the whipped cream and champagne, but they only enhanced what he was truly after: the essence of her. Nothing else in the world compared, nor would it ever. Everything about her was unique, and this was no exception.

She felt like silk on his lips as he explored her moist folds, and when he fucked her with his tongue he thought he'd burn up from her heat and the way her body clamped around it.

"Oh, Jesus, Jax," she said on a harsh exhale. "You're killing me."

Not yet I'm not.

He moved up slightly and found her clit. He flicked over it with the tip of his tongue, then pursed his lips around it and sucked hard, then repeated both steps until her hips began to rock instinctively, searching for that final thing that would make her see stars in the middle of the day.

And he was only too happy to get her there.

He eased three fingers into her opening, knowing she could take them, but staying aware of how tight she was in the beginning. Slow, but firm he pressed forward, feeling the walls of her channel clamp down on the welcome invasion. Once she'd taken their entire length, he met the rhythm of her hips thrust for thrust and went back to work on her clit with his mouth.

She reached through her legs and fisted a handful of his hair like grasping the horn of a saddle as she galloped toward her climax. His dick throbbed, wanting the friction his fingers currently had the pleasure of feeling. Unable to control himself he started grinding himself into the blanket, both loving the little bit of relief it gave him and hating that it wasn't what he wanted.

He growled against her pussy. Her breaths became moaning pants, which became keening cries, and finally a scream that rent the air as her entire body curled into itself, her muscles contracting and then convulsing with the pulses of her release.

Before she had a chance to come down, Jax yanked his shorts off, gently laid her the rest of the way on the ground, and poised himself at her entrance. One of her pussy's contractions kissed the sensitive head of his cock. He groaned and pushed in to the hilt. Again her back bowed, but this time her breasts pressed into the hard planes of his chest until she relaxed beneath him.

"Vanessa, baby," he said, his voice no more than a rasp. "Open your eyes."

Long, auburn lashes fluttered open to reveal lust-hazed eyes the color of wet moss. Her hair had dried partially in the sun giving it multiple hues from brilliant red to deep mahogany. She was beautiful and

amazing and...

“You’re mine. Right here, right now. Only mine.”

She reached up and trailed the tips of her fingers over his brow, down his nose, across his cheekbones, his lips. Finally, she placed her palms on the sides of his face, looked up at him with her heart in her eyes and whispered, “Only yours.”

Two words. Three syllables. Nine letters.

Something so small shouldn’t have such a tremendous power over him. Shouldn’t be able to bring him to his metaphorical knees or make him want to climb mountains for her if she asked.

But they did. And it felt...right.

Jax took her mouth and then her body. He wanted as much of himself in her as possible. To mark her. Brand her. Claim her.

They moved as one, as though they’d made love thousands of times rather than only a handful. And this time they were connected more than just physically. Everything about being with her like this felt different, more intimate, more...just *more*.

Holding himself up on one forearm, he let his other hand roam. Over her breast, down her side, her hip. A quick squeeze of her ass, then down the outside of her thigh before hooking under her knee and pulling it forward to allow him in that little bit more.

Their kiss broke off as they both needed more air than a lip-lock allowed. Her hands found his back and her nails found his skin. He tucked his head and licked a path from jaw to shoulder. When he dragged his teeth back up the cord in her neck and bit down, he felt a shudder ripple through her.

As he continued to pump into her, their hands and mouths and tongues and teeth explored every inch they could reach. Somewhere along the way he’d lost his mind, unable to gather a coherent thought to save his life. Their movements became more feverish, the coming together of their bodies more explosive. It was like a runaway train heading toward the unfinished bridge that would send them careening into space before they knew what had happened.

But Jax didn’t want that. He wanted to be aware of every passing second, to hear every hitch of her breath, and see every emotion on her face.

He deliberately slowed his rhythm, and lifted his head to peer down at her.

“No,” she whined. “Faster. So close!”

“I know, baby, I’ll get you there.” She opened her mouth to argue, or maybe even beg, but he cut her off. “Vanessa, trust me. Let me make love to you.”

She drew the center of her lip between her teeth for a moment, then nodded her head.

He still held her leg behind the knee. Not wanting to lose the position or depth it allowed them, but needing more contact, he pulled it against him and held it there. Now she was sandwiched from knee to hip between his side and his arm.

Though the pace had lessened, the intensity had not. He thrust hard and still hit deep. Her heat and the way her body gripped his cock on every withdrawal killed him over and over again. It was the sweetest death he hoped to never survive.

“You’re so fucking perfect, you know that?”

Her eyes filled tears until they spilled over her temples. She grabbed onto the back of his neck, her fingers splaying into the hair at his nape. “Jackson, I think I might...Oh, God, I think I—”

“Shhh. No more words, baby.” He was pretty sure he knew what she’d been trying to say, and though he wanted to hear her say it more than he wanted his next breath, he wouldn’t handle it well if later she told him it was a heat-of-the-moment thing. Those words should never be uttered for the first time during sex. Ever. “Feel my skin on yours. Feel me inside you. Feel how perfect you fit me. Just feel, okay?”

Again she nodded, losing another pair of tears. Jax adjusted his position, lifting up slightly to make sure his weight wasn’t crushing her. When she gasped on his next thrust he realized he’d found the bull’s-eye. Keeping the slow and steady pace, he hit it again. And again. And again. Each time pushing her closer and closer to that waterfall edge, and each time feeling himself follow her that much more.

Her eyes started to drift closed as the tension consumed her. “Keep them open, Vanessa. Watch me. I want to look into your eyes when I make you come. I want to see you acknowledge who does this to you, who makes you feel this way.”

She didn’t argue, she didn’t deflect. She simply obeyed. And knowing she did so, no matter how far from her comfort zone it led her, was the last addition to his perfect storm for both of them.

This time Vanessa’s cry stuck in her throat. Her body tensed, eyes widened, and lips parted, but nothing came out. She was a living, silent work of art. The feel of her pussy milking him hurtled him over the edge, and with one last drive forward, he buried himself as far as he could go and spilled himself deep inside, branding her with every lash of his seed the way she branded herself on his heart.