

# TIES THAT BIND

OBSESSION SERIES



AMY BLANKENSHIP

Obsession Book

Amy Blankenship

**Ties That Bind**

«Tektime S.r.l.s.»

## **Blankenship A.**

Ties That Bind / A. Blankenship — «Tektime S.r.l.s.»,  
— (Obsession Book)

Sanctuary is a vast and secluded vacation spot hidden away on the top of its own private mountain. Angel Hart grew up in the family owned resort always protected from the real world. Surrounded by the three men she adored the most until her parent's divorce took her far away from them, Angel led a sheltered and privileged life. Two years later she comes home for a visit and has brought her new boyfriend. Suddenly, Angel finds herself the object of several people's affection and they have no intention of ever letting her leave Sanctuary again. Secret obsessions turn into a deadly game of possession, as the men that love her become the most dangerous people on the mountain.

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Chapter 1 “Sanctuary”

Angel Hart glanced out the thick glass of the window, wanting to cringe at the height of the helicopter as it flew toward the resort where she had grown up. She loved this place to death... but liked it so much better from the ground. Flying was her one phobia and she had been doing it for the last ten hours.

Blowing her bangs out of her eyes, she glanced toward her brother Tristian, wondering what had possessed him to meet them at the airport knowing he would have to fly in the helicopter on the way back home.

She knew for a fact that Tristian hated flying even more than she did and could see him texting someone on his cell phone to keep his mind busy. Maybe he'd faced his fear because they hadn't seen each other in almost two years, even though they had talked on the phone and texted almost every day. She didn't really care why he'd done it, because having him here with her had a calming effect on her and she was thankful for that.

To escape the noise of the helicopter, Angel let her mind drift back over the last two years. When their parents divorced, her dad had dragged her to California while Tristian had been forced to stay here at Sanctuary with their mother. Since it was so far to drive and neither one of them liked to fly... the distance had been the only reason they hadn't visited in person.

She hadn't realized just how much she had missed Tristian until she'd seen him standing there in the airport all by himself. He was leaning against the wall directly across from the door they'd come through. As soon as they saw each other, she took off running toward him as he held his arms out to catch her.

Her big brother... Tristian had always been the first one she talked to in the morning and the last one she'd seen before closing her eyes to sleep. Growing up, they'd even convince their parents that they had a problem with sleepwalking because they would get up in the middle of the night and fall asleep in each other's beds.

Their mother had tried to put a stop to it when they'd gotten a little older by locking their bedroom doors at night. Angel's lips thinned remembering what their mother had said the last time she'd caught them asleep in each other's arms.

“It's sinful, the way you two behave... you act more like lovers than brother and sister.” Isabel Hart's voice had changed from motherly love to loathing that night.

Tristian had quickly found a way around those stupid locks. He'd cut a place out of the wall in the back of his closet so he could easily step into the small thin corridors that secretly ran through the walls of the hotel they lived in. He'd done the same to her closet and every night he would sneak into her room and sleep with her... setting the alarm clock so they wouldn't get caught.

He'd told her that it was their mother that was the pervert... thinking their relationship was wrong and dirty. He had even pointed out that in a lot of smaller countries, the whole family would bathe and sleep together, and that in others, it was perfectly normal to even marry your sibling. Tristian had convinced her that it was mother who was the sinner by trying to keep them apart.

Angel had decided a long time ago to keep her and Tristian's secrets and that it was no one else's business... she trusted him.

Tristian hadn't changed much since she had last seen him, retaining his young, innocent appearance. But, at the same time, she could see changes that she had missed happening. His blond

hair had darkened some at the roots... highlights of platinum blond and lowlights of strawberry blond looked really well on him with his light tan and green eyes.

She smiled thinking he would fit in with the California surfer dudes with his alternative haircut. It was the same length almost all the way around and parted off to one side, leaving it to hang down over one of his eyes, way past his chin. She could also see the black leather of the cross necklace she had sent him for Christmas peeking out near his collar.

She felt like it was her that had changed the most though. When she'd left Sanctuary, she had only been sixteen. After being with Tristian, Hunter, and Ray almost every single day of her life... she had felt so lost and alone in LA. She'd never even been to a real school because their grandmother had always hired private tutors to home school them.

Going to high school in LA had been quite a culture shock. It was then that she'd realized, her family having so much money had only enabled them to keep her completely in the dark as to what was normal. Then she had met Ashton Fox. Every time she'd left her father's penthouse, Ashton would be there or he'd show up wherever she was... like fate. He quickly made her smile and started showing her a whole new world.

Angel made the mistake of glancing back out the window just as they passed over a low valley, making her feel like they were sky high.

She squeezed Ashton's hand even tighter, deciding to look at him instead of the dizzying sight. His ice blue eyes were laughing at her nervousness but she didn't care... not really. She was almost glad he hadn't listened to her when she'd tried to keep him from following her back to Sanctuary for the week.

Using the little com-link built into her ear guards she asked, "Ash, have you ever been in a helicopter? You seem to be handling this very well."

"Nope, but I'm loving every minute of it," Ashton grinned at her. "Your family is just a touch eccentric, don't you think? Having a helicopter pick us up from the airport while a limousine brings our luggage. And here I thought my family was wealthy." He wiggled his eyebrows trying to make her laugh.

He knew she was nervous by the way she was cutting the circulation off in his hand. Her vulnerability only endeared her to him that much more. She was nothing like the L.A. tramps he had always dated. His thoughts were derailed when her brother's voice came over the com-link.

"It's always like this," Tristian glanced at his sister knowing she would agree with him.

They had seen the adults of the Hart family play this stupid game all their lives. "The Hart family just has to try to outdo each other. The fact that our grandmother owns this helicopter and all of Sanctuary is her little victory over her three children... and the world," he mumbled the last part with a little more sarcasm.

"That's enough, Tristian." Malcolm Hart gave his son a disappointed glare then turned back to his latest girlfriend, Felicia. He decided to dominate the com-link for the rest of the ride so his son wouldn't have a chance to say anything else damaging about the family in front of their guest.

He smiled at the pretty redhead he'd started dating just a couple weeks ago. He'd seduced her with money just so he could bring her and show her off in front of his ex-wife, Lily. She had been the one who insisted on the divorce so he was about to viciously rub her nose in it.

Going into tour guide mode, Malcolm pointed out the window seeing they were almost there. "That's the resort just over the rise, Sanctuary... known best for its famous wedding chapel and bridal suites." Malcolm gave Felicia a sly grin. He knew if he kept her hopes up then she would play her part quite well in front of Lily.

"Since the top of the mountain is pretty much flat, this place has everything you could possibly think of including a spa, a huge pond, and indoor-outdoor swimming pools... among other things. We own everything for about 30 miles in all directions and have labeled the land as a game preserve

so no one can ever build on it and spoil its beauty. There's only one road leading up the mountain and the gate at the bottom keeps out trespassers."

"Wow... it's all so fabulous," Felicia cooed in that needy-sounding voice.

"And at the bottom of the mountain, there's an Apache Indian reservation," he continued. "Most of the employees at the resort are Apache." Malcolm's eyes glazed over with memories of the beautiful girls his parents had hired from the reservation. His teenage years had been ones he wouldn't change for the world.

"Real Indians?" Felicia batted her eyelashes and gave him a frightened look, leaning toward her new sugar daddy for protection. She'd really lucked out when such a rich older man had taken a fancy to her. If she played her cards right, she would never want for anything.

"What are you? Five?" Tristian reached up and turned his com-link off feeling nauseated and it wasn't from the helicopter ride.

He rubbed his temple in annoyance at the headache he felt coming on... lately he had lost all tolerance for stupid people. Reaching into his pocket, he took out the small alcohol flask, only this one didn't have alcohol in it. It was an Indian remedy for headaches that his friend Hunter had made him and it usually worked within minutes. He just hoped it was powerful enough to get rid of one caused by this stupid chopper and his dad.

He knew what his dad was up to. Felicia was probably in her mid-twenties and looked more like his dad's trophy slut than a girlfriend. It was moments like this that made him glad he didn't live with his father.

The whole situation still royally pissed him off. It wasn't Angel's fault that their parents couldn't get along, so why did she have to leave her home? The divorce had angered him when he'd found out that the local judge had decided one child per parent. Since Angel had been sixteen and he'd been seventeen, they'd been separated against their will.

If he had known then what he knew now... he would have never let that happen. Because he hadn't been smart enough to stop it... he hadn't seen Angel in almost two years and that was why he'd made the mistake of meeting her at the airport today. He had missed her way too much.

The corners of his lips hinted at a wicked smile remembering that the very stupid local judge that had split him and his sister up had been killed in a freak accident a couple days after Angel had been forced to move away. Tristian shrugged it off as he glanced back at his sister. Up until then, they had lived at Sanctuary all their life.

He and Angel were Grandma Hart's chosen favorites out of the seven grandchildren and things at Sanctuary had gotten even better when their grandfather had fallen down the stairs and broken his neck three years ago.

Tristian's eyes hardened at the thought. They hadn't shed a tear when it happened because neither he nor Angel could stand the old man. John Hart had been scary-mean... always glaring at them and saying hateful things when he thought no one was listening. Growing up, he and his sister had made it a game of avoiding their grandfather at all costs.

John Hart had always been the meanest to him... treating him different from his other grandchildren. Tristian stubbornly locked the memories away deciding the old man wasn't worth the brainpower he was giving him.

His gaze traveled from his sister to her boyfriend Ashton Fox. It was the first time he had ever known her to have a boyfriend. Tristian kept his expression hooded as he looked the college prep over. From all the information he had gathered... Ashton seemed all right, and he hated that fact because he wanted Angel to move back to Sanctuary. That wouldn't happen if she was enjoying her life out in California.

Ashton Fox was twenty years old but would turn twenty-one sometime this week... like he cared. Maybe he would throw him a birthday bash and let him get so drunk that he puked all over

Angel... maybe that would help break their ties enough to get her to come home. If not, then he was sure between him, Hunter, and Ray... they could come up with something.

Tristian kept trying to think of more reasons not to like Ashton. He had even asked his uncle Robert, who was a lawyer, to give the guy a thorough background check. Robert Hart had confirmed that Ashton came from money... just not as much money as they did. Still, Tristian had to admit that it was enough to keep him from dating his sister just for her wealth.

He did however find out that Ashton Fox had a criminal record of some kind... but it was sealed tight. Robert had said it was probably something minor like drunk driving as a teen or something. Ashton was also going to school to be a doctor, even though he looked more like a walking ad for Calvin Klein Jeans with his platinum blonde hair tied back, tanned skin, and ice blue eyes.

Tristian frowned thinking if Ashton and Angel's ages were closer, they could almost be twins... except for the fact that Angel's hair was longer. Even now, they were both doing that smiling thing at each other and it was really starting to grate on his nerves. Tristian slumped in his seat and decided to look out the window.

He growled silently wondering which view was worse.

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Isabel Hart set her teacup down as she heard her private helicopter in the distance. She wanted to rush to the window and watch them come home but she stilled herself knowing she had a part to play this week... the frail grandmother that needed her family home with her.

She'd recently had a minor heart attack and it had been enough to persuade Malcolm and Angel to come home... even if it was only for the Fourth of July vacation. It almost made the frightening experience worth it. She'd even closed the resort down to outsiders and agreed with Tristian to allow the staff to take the week off so it would seem more like home for her family.

If she had her way, she would get her missing child and grandchild to move back to Sanctuary for good... even if she had to pretend she was dying just to get them to do it.

Her children had always lived here with their families. It was a tradition that Malcolm's divorce had broken. Her oldest son Robert had become a lawyer, marrying his high school sweetheart Dianne. They'd had twin boys Devin and Damien, who were now twenty years old and worked for her as trainers in the gym that covered a huge area of the ground floor of the resort.

She had to keep her eyes on Robert because he was a lot like his father... greedy and calculating. She was aware that he was already setting it up to dispute her Last Will and Testament when she died, even though she knew he wasn't completely sure what the Will stated.

Little did Robert know that it wouldn't do him any good... that Will was concrete in every way. She'd also stopped him from handling the paperwork for the resort when she'd caught him cooking the books and siphoning off some of the profits into one of his own accounts. He had become quite a disappointment to her over the last couple years.

Her second oldest child, her only daughter Carley, and her three children also lived here. But Carley was nothing like Robert.

Her little family was full of spoiled brats who thought they were better than everyone else because they lived off the trust funds she had set up for them. Tiffany was seventeen, Paris twenty-two, and Jason twenty. But she couldn't really blame the children for their lazy ways when their mother was nothing but an alcoholic. Between the four of them, they'd run Carley's poor husband off years ago.

It had been three years since her husband John had passed away, and then she lost Malcolm and Angel only a year later. John had been an overbearing man with a heavy hand and the truth was... she didn't miss him at all. But with everyone else in the family so busy with their own lives, it had left Isabel lonely in her old age.

The only ones who really paid her any attention were Tristian and the two Indian boys that he and his sister were so fond of... Hunter and Ray Rawlins.

She didn't really care what the rest of the family did... it was Angel and Tristian that were important to her. It didn't bother her that one of the siblings wasn't true blood... it was the heart that counted. When Tristian had been adopted, she had warned the other family members that if they ever told him about the adoption, they would be cut off and kicked out of Sanctuary without a second thought. So far the threat had held.

Tristian and Angel had no way of knowing it, but Sanctuary would one day belong only to them.

Glancing up, Isabel smiled inwardly seeing Lily Hart standing stiffly out in the flower garden. She had allowed Lily to continue living here when her son Malcolm had moved across the country. The only reason she had consented to the woman staying was to keep Angel returning as much as possible, and to keep Tristian living here.

As far as Isabel was concerned... it served Lily right to be unhappy. Malcolm had loved her but she acted cold and unbearable... pushing Malcolm away but not telling him why. She figured Lily had only stayed here because she was stupid enough to think that one day she would own part of Sanctuary.

Malcolm had always been a playboy before they had married, sleeping with half the Indian staff that worked at the hotel before moving on to bigger game.

He stopped his roguish ways when he'd married, so she knew that wasn't the reason for the divorce. He'd always loved the girls but Isabel knew he did love Lily the most because of her beauty... she still was very beautiful. Cold and beautiful... so emotionless that she never bothered to be a real mother to her children... even when they were little.

By the pained look on Lily's face, Isabel could tell Malcolm was finally here. She had told the pilot of her helicopter in no uncertain terms, that he would be fired if he dared to return for anyone before the end of the weekend. She had also paid Ray to disable every vehicle on the property in one way or another so no one could leave.

For once... the family would all be stranded here together... whether they liked it or not.

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Ray Rawlins heard the sound of the helicopter in the distance as he closed the hood of the last car in the parking garage. He looked around at all the expensive vehicles that were now useless with a sense of satisfaction. Isabel Hunter could be just as ruthless as her dead husband when she wanted to be.

Stepping outside the brick building, he swung his long dark hair out of his eyes while watching the chopper slowly descend to the helicopter pad. His thoughts turned to Hunter, wondering if his brother would be able to keep it together now that they'd found out Angel was bringing her California boyfriend to Sanctuary for the week.

Ashton Fox didn't have a clue about the web of spiders he was about to walk into.

In his opinion, most of the people that were born on top of this mountain deserved to fall off of it. Angel and Tristian were the exceptions. When they were growing up, he and Hunter had taken them under their wings and protected them as much as possible from the wickedness they had been born into... even their sweet grandmother could be treacherous when she wanted her own way.

He leaned back against the brick of the wall remembering their childhood. He and Hunter were only a couple years older than the siblings, but the four of them had always been inseparable. Together, they'd gone out into the woods of the mountain almost every day, with him and Hunter teaching them Indian survival techniques... although Tristian and Angel thought it was all fun and games.

His vision of the past melted away when Angel sprinted away from the helicopter with her boyfriend in tow. He shook his head as the wind from the chopper sent her platinum hair flying as if she were standing in the middle of some unseen storm.

He glanced up at the massive estate known as Sanctuary. He knew the people inside that claimed to be her family were about to play a new game... one far too dangerous for the little girl to play alone.

Ray pulled out the little flask Hunter had gifted him with and took a drink trying to clear his mind. He would need all his concentration if he was to keep Angel out of harm's way.

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Tristian waited until everyone was out of the helicopter before leaning toward the pilot, getting his attention. "Remember what Isabel Hart said," his face lost its smile as his green eyes narrowed in warning. "You go have yourself a holiday and don't worry about us. We won't need you this week, understand?"

Angel smiled happily as Tristian joined her and they all ran away from the wind of the propellers. She felt so much better once she turned to watch the evil machine flying away and taking its loud whop... whop... sound with it.

"Good riddance to the tornado." Angel gave it a mock salute. If she knew no one would laugh at her, she would have placed her hands on the ground and thanked it for her safe return.

Ashton ran his fingers through her silky blonde hair, loving the feel of it. "Oh, you're just mad because it messed your pretty hair up," he smirked, wondering how his fingers were running through it without hitting a single tangle. She was the closest thing to perfection he had ever found and when she said she was going home for a visit, he had been smart enough not to want her out of his sight.

Noticing her father and Felicia had already gone inside, Ashton slid his arm across her shoulders as they started up the hill toward the estate.

"So, little red riding hood, are we off to see your grandmother first?" he remarked, trying not to seem overwhelmed by the size of the mansion. He had listened to her father bragging about it but now that he was here, he realized it had really been understated.

Tristian winked at Angel before interrupting. "I think it's time to show Ashton to his room and let him get settled in, don't you? There's no need to tempt the big bad wolf too much. Grandmothers' already had one heart attack... I think introducing her to your boyfriend the minute you arrive might just send her over the edge."

Angel's smile wavered at the mention of her grandmother's heart attack. She'd almost flown home the second Tristian had called and told her about it, but her father had agreed they would come spend the Fourth of July week visiting, so she had waited. Tristian had told her on the phone that it was Hunter who'd found their grandmother just in the nick of time and probably even saved her life.

Her own heart pounded for a second as she pictured Hunter in her mind... Hunter Rawlins. She'd always thought of him as her best friend, but when she'd moved to L.A., Angel had slowly realized they'd been more than just friends... a lot more. She'd missed Hunter just as much as her own brother.

"Oh come on," Tristian nearly growled as he wrapped his arms around her and gave her a tender hug. "I didn't mean it like that." He pulled back and cupped her cheeks, making her look up at him. "You promised only smiles this week," he reminded her with a level stare.

"I know," Angel put the smile back on her face but it didn't feel quite the same. "I'll be all right once I've seen for myself that Grandmother's okay. You take Ash and go have fun. I'll catch up with you two later."

She leaned up on her tiptoes and kissed Ashton on the cheek before turning and heading toward a side entrance where she knew her grandmother would be.

Ashton watched Angel walk away, not liking the fact that they were being separated almost the same minute they had touched the mountain. While staying in L.A., her dad had never needed her for anything, so he'd had her all to himself. He didn't share well with others.

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Hunter shook it off as he pushed himself away from the doorframe he had been leaning against. Seeing Angel give her boyfriend even that innocent little kiss had left a really bad taste in his mouth along with an itch to hit something... preferably Ashton Fox. It took all of his self-control to prevent himself from following her as he watched her walk away from the others.

He could tell the moment Tristian noticed he was standing there because his steps quickened.

He and Tristian had been best friends for as long as he could remember, but in the last couple of years, they had both been introduced to their darker sides... all because Angel had left them. He watched as Tristian closed the distance between them then schooled his features.

Lifting his lips in an all-out smile, Hunter headed toward them. "Glad to see you survived the helicopter," Hunter teased as he placed a friendly hand on Tristian's shoulder and squeezed, then nodded in greeting toward the other guy.

"Yeah, one day I'm gonna get a bazooka and blow that thing right out of the sky," Tristian shrugged as Hunter laughed. Changing the subject, he added, "At least that's everyone we've been expecting for the week. The last of the guests left over an hour ago so we are now down to just family and friends. I don't think I've ever seen this place so empty, but it feels really good."

Watching Hunter's reaction closely, Tristian stepped back so he could introduce them, "Hunter Rawlins... meet Ashton Fox."

Ashton stuck his hand out and gave Hunter a pretty tight grip as they shook hands. He had expected Hunter to tighten his grip in return and was surprised when he didn't. The Indian kept the handshake friendly to match the smile he was wearing.

And to actually think he had been worried about meeting the Apache boy he'd heard so much about from Angel. To hear her talk about Hunter and Ray... one would think they walked on water plus could do everything you had ever seen an Indian do in the movies.

"Welcome to Sanctuary," Hunter repeated the same thing that he would have said to any guest. "Are you ready to have fun this week?" The words sounded like a double-edged sword to his own ears but the other man didn't seem to have a clue.

"Why not?" Ashton smiled, glad he wouldn't have to open the lid on his testosterone just yet. "But first, I think I could use a shower and a chance to unwind after being in the air for almost ten hours straight."

"Say no more," Tristian said, leading him toward the main entrance. "Hunter, what room did you put him in for the week?"

"I'll get the key," Hunter said, moving past them into the lobby and making a show of opening the register books as if he was checking the list of names.

He knew exactly where he had put Ashton... right beside the room Ray stayed in for easy access, just not the easy access the boyfriend would have wanted. Ashton Fox had gotten one of the two rooms that seemed to angle off around the corner of the first floor hall, on the other side of the massive indoor swimming pool... away from all the other rooms.

Swinging around, Hunter grabbed the right key off the wall and handed it to Tristian. Glancing at Ashton, he made it sound like a good thing. "You're lucky, the indoor pool and hotel gym are both right next to your room."

Tristian noticed the number on the key and turned away from Ashton as he hid his expression. He was glad Hunter hadn't put Ashton near Angel's room, but he had thought it would at least be on the same floor... not that he was going to complain. If he had his way, Ashton wouldn't be staying the whole week.

"Is everything ready for the pool party?" Tristian asked, knowing Angel loved to swim. He desperately wanted to remind her of all the things she had been missing since she had moved away.

Hunter nodded, "Yeah, Carley's kids have several friends over for the night and they've already opened the Tiki-bar for self-serving." Seeing Tristian give him a knowing look, he added, "Jason has given their guests the rooms next to him and his sisters... not that they'll be sleeping in them."

"True enough," Tristian smirked knowing signing them into the extra rooms was for looks only. He hated the fact that his cousins were always trying to act like they owned the hotel when they were really just freeloaders who did nothing to earn their keep. They were known for having new

boyfriends or girlfriends every month, week... sometimes every day. All they were really good for was sex... other than that, their dates usually didn't stick around for very long.

"We'll see you out there later," he called over his shoulder.

When Tristian took off with Ashton, Hunter turned and grabbed the key to the best room Sanctuary had... one of the bridal suites on the fourth floor. It wasn't like anyone would be using it this week and Angel would probably get a kick out of staying in one.

"Who's staying in the bridal suite?"

Hunter swung around seeing Ray standing right on the other side of the counter with a box of fireworks tucked up in under his arm. He and Ray had been at odds ever since their mother had died a month ago. They had called a truce though they both knew it was only a thin line. He loved his brother but lately Ray had been acting odd enough to keep him on high alert.

"So, you've decided to do the fireworks tonight?" Hunter quickly changed the subject as he slipped the key into his pocket.

Ray's dark eyes followed the protective movement but he let it go for now. "Yeah, we wanna start the week off with a bang, don't we?"

"Sure. You coming to the pool party later?" Hunter asked, not liking the fact that Ray was keeping an eye on him.

"Yeah, I'll be... around," Ray answered with a leveled gaze as he grabbed some matches out of the bowl on the desk and tossed them into the box of fireworks before turning to leave.

Hunter stayed where he was until Ray was out of sight then slowly reached into his pocket to retrieve the key. Turning around, he started to hang it back where it was supposed to be but instead he slipped it into one of the desk drawers. Turning back to the key rack, he wiggled his fingers as if thinking, then grabbed the key to the room right beside his.

He would feel safer if he could keep a close eye on Angel... especially at night.

Chapter 2 "Secrets"

Angel stood in front of the glass doors looking in at her grandmother. She figured Isabel Hart would be in the huge sunroom overlooking the gardens this time of the day. She felt her chest tighten seeing her grandmother touch the buttons on the wheelchair as it moved closer to the terrace doors leading out into the garden.

The last time she had seen her grandmother, she had been standing tall and proud, wiping the tears from her cheeks as she told them goodbye. Placing her hand against the huge glass doors, Angel took a deep breath and opened them.

"Grandmother!" Angel smiled and rushed across the room toward her. Her smile brightened even more when her grandmother's eyes widened in delight. Leaning down, Angel gave her a heartfelt hug. "Oh gosh, I've missed you so much!"

Isabel closed her eyes enjoying the real hug. That's what she loved so much about Angel and Tristian... the fact that they weren't fake like the rest of the family. When they loved someone... they loved them wholeheartedly.

"There's my angel," Isabel patted her weakly on the back. She felt some of her strength returning to her by just being near Angel. The girl always did have a way of lifting her spirits and making her feel loved. But, that wasn't going to stop her from playing the illness for all it was worth. "I'm glad you made it back to see me one last time," she let her voice hitch as if it was such a sad thought.

"What?" Angel breathed then pulled back so she could look down at her grandmother. "Grandmother? What are you talking about?" Just hearing her say something like that made her heart hurt and her eyes tear up.

"Oh, let's not talk about me dear-heart. Tell me everything I've missed in the last couple of years and who is this so-called boyfriend I've been hearing rumors about?" Isabel gave her a soft frown. "I can't believe my baby granddaughter is trying to grow up in a place so far away that I can't even watch it happen."

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Tristian stepped out of Ashton's room, closing the door behind him as his cell phone vibrated in his pocket. Seeing it was Ray, he quickly answered. "Hey Ray, what's up?"

"The limousine just left and your girlfriend is on her way up the mountain. It seems to be the last of the allowed traffic. Do you still want me to lock the gate down here?" Ray asked knowing it had been Isabel Hart's instructions.

"Yeah, grandmother is adamant about not wanting any uninvited guests showing up." Tristian confirmed. "Just close it down tight and head back up here for some fun. If anyone needs out... then they'll just have to have an escort off the mountain."

"Sounds like a plan," Ray murmured.

He clicked the cell off and pulled the heavy iron fence closed. Snapping the three thick padlocks together, he looked up at the high spiked fence. Seeing the cell phone tower out of the corner of his vision, he took off in that direction. It was the only cell tower for about fifty miles and he had a feeling that it was about to become useless.

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Angel stepped out the terrace doors needing a moment alone to absorb the shock of seeing her grandmother looking so fragile in that wheelchair. Every time she had brought up the question of her health, Isabel had sidestepped the topic with questions of her own.

After only a short visit, her grandmother had claimed she was tired and needed to go lay down for the rest of the day, but she made Angel promise to come back and see her in the morning. It worried her that her grandmother was going to bed so early and she wondered just how sick she really was. Her grandmother had been in such good health before she'd left Sanctuary to go to California. She had even blossomed after grandfather's death.

Angel's lips thinned at the thought of the old man she'd always thought of as a monster. She had never hated anyone in her whole life, but a few hours before he had fallen down the stairs, he had caught her and Hunter coming back from swimming alone at the pond.

Her grandfather yelled at her, telling her she was too old to be playing with the Indian riffraff from the reservation. He told Hunter to get the hell off his mountain then slammed the doors behind him. Seeing Hunter leave like that was heart wrenching. When she tried to speak up on his behalf, her grandfather had turned and smacked her so hard that she'd fallen down.

Angel had cried out in pain but hadn't said anything else knowing her grandfather was probably right. He hadn't even known she and Hunter were doing things they shouldn't have been doing... kissing, touching, and experimenting. If he had known about that, he would have hit her more than once.

"See, told you it wasn't a statue of an angel. It really is Angel," someone laughed from behind her, startling her right out of her melancholy. Swinging around, she smiled seeing Uncle Robert's identical twin sons, Devin and Damien.

"Oh my gosh, you guys have grown up!" She smiled as they took turns hugging her and swinging her around in circles. They were the same age as Tristian, but they had somehow outgrown him in the last two years. Standing at least six foot, two inches, they looked like bouncers. Both of them were in skintight, black t-shirts with the logo, 'Sanctuary' on the front of them.

She placed a hand on each one of their upper arms, watching the pride flash in their gray eyes. "I guess that tells me what you two have been up to," she giggled. "Been staying out of trouble? Or causing it?"

"Who? Us?" Devin laughed as he set her back on her feet, letting his hand caress her thigh and hip on the way down.

"You should know us better than that," Damien rolled his eyes at his brother as he slipped his arm around Angel's waist and pulled her out of Devin's hold. It was a game the twins had played for years... always trying to outdo each other when a pretty girl was nearby.

“Lucky for you guys that she does,” Hunter glared at the twins then smiled as Angel turned at the sound of his voice.

Angel’s lips parted as she laid eyes on Hunter for the first time in almost two years. Suddenly, all kinds of memories flashed through her mind, making her knees weak and her pulse race. Emails and phone calls just didn’t stand a chance against seeing him in person.

His hair was longer than she remembered, going halfway down his back in inky darkness. He looked just like one of those guys on the front of a historical romance novel where the Indian and the white girl are pictured in a hot embrace.

Blushing at the mental picture, she untangled herself from her cousins and stepped toward him. “You’re taller,” she breathed as she looked up at him. Hunter was the one person who knew more about her than her brother did.

“No, you’re just shorter,” Hunter taunted right before he wrapped his arms around her and lifted her into the air. “Unless, I do this.” She always had been light as a feather to him. He growled inwardly as she reached down for him, ending the childish ride with a tight embrace. He inhaled her scent, reminding him of all the reasons he had waited on her to come back.

Knowing they were being watched, Hunter quickly set her back on her feet and looked over her shoulder at the twins. “The pool party’s starting and there’s someone out there asking for you guys.”

“Stacey!” the twins high-fived each other. “See you two later.” They took off as if it was a race to see who could reach the girl first.

“So they finally learned how to share?” Angel asked with a straight face as she watched the twins leave then giggled lightly at her own joke.

“I think they just like the competition,” Hunter mused. “This Stacey girl shows up all the time just so they’ll fight over her... so far, neither of them has won.”

She smiled softly as she turned back to Hunter, noticing a long lock of ebony hair that had fallen into his face when he’d picked her up. Reaching for it, she tenderly moved it to the side, and tucked it behind his ear. “I feel like I can finally breathe.”

“What was stopping you?” Hunter’s voice was just as soft as hers. He knew what she was saying because he could feel it too. He felt it so much it was making his eyes burn.

His gaze lowered to her pouting lips and he felt himself getting closer... wanting to kiss her like he used to do before she left. He had been the one to teach her to kiss though he knew she had never taken it as seriously as he had. To her, it had only been childhood experimenting... to him, it had been the ties that bind.

“A person should never be separated from their best friend... it hurts,” Angel sighed and then hugged him again.

Hunter froze at the words ‘best friend’. Something she meant as an endearment had always felt more like a punch in the gut to him. Wrapping his arms back around her, Hunter leaned down to kiss the top of her head while trying to control his voice. “I know.”

She had used the term ever since she had told him all her secrets... even the secret about her and Tristian. She had once even told him that she thought she was in love with her big brother. Hunter had then started taking her into the mountains... just the two of them... and showing her all the things he could make her feel that her brother couldn’t.

That was the turning point between him and Tristian... because he knew Angel's secret feelings had never been one-sided. To his dismay, he’d only wound up convincing Angel that she was in love with both of them.

Making himself pull away, he laid his arm across her shoulder and started walking her out of the garden. “I bet you haven’t even had a chance to wind down from your fright-flight,” he smirked, knowing she hated the helicopter as much as Tristian did.

“You know... you could have talked grandmother out of doing that,” she said as she bumped against him. “You used to be able to talk her in and out of just about anything.”

“Oh no you don’t,” Hunter smirked. “Don’t blame me for that chopper ride. “Besides, I’ve been letting your grandmother get her way more often lately.” They walked across the grass out into the open. He knew they were in full view of Ashton’s room so he slowed down just for spite. No one had ever accused him of being a saint.

“You’re my hero... you know that?” Angel pulled him to a stop so he’d look down at her. “If you hadn’t found grandmother when she had her heart attack...” her voice softened to a mere whisper, “you saved her life.”

Ashton wrapped the towel around his waist as he left the bathroom. That was what he needed, a long hot shower to start the week off. Maybe he could make a really good impression on Angel’s family and stake his claim on her. He’d never worked so hard to impress a girl as he had Angel.

His last girlfriend wound up being a two-faced backstabbing whore that he’d had to teach a lesson, but not Angel. He could tell she was still a little sweet homegrown virgin that he’d had to con into getting just the simplest of kisses from. It hadn’t bothered him though. If he wanted sex... there were enough whores willing to put out, and then go away so he could spend time with Angel.

Looking in the dresser mirror, he started towel drying his hair then stopped, noticing something in the reflection. Turning toward the window, he frowned seeing Angel and Hunter standing so close that it looked like they were whispering secrets.

He clenched his teeth, making the muscles in his jaw jump as he watched his girlfriend and the Indian boy she so fondly called her best friend. Somehow, he didn’t think Hunter would feel the same about that nickname... no guy in his right mind would.

“Angel, your grandmother has always been good to me and Ray... even when she had no reason to be. I hate what happened to her,” Hunter sighed knowing that was a lie. If Isabel Hart hadn’t had her heart attack... then Angel wouldn’t be here right now. He cringed inwardly knowing what he had done.

The Shaman from his tribe had taught him all about herbs and what they did to the body as far as healing or harming. He had taken that knowledge and mixed the right concoction to cause Isabel’s mild heart attack. It had been the only thing he could think of that would make Angel come back.

“I don’t deserve any praise for finding her,” Hunter admitted with a guilty conscience.

Angel smiled softly knowing Hunter didn’t have a conceited bone in his body. Wanting him to know just how much she appreciated what he had done, she rose up on her tiptoes and gave him a soft fleeting kiss on the lips.

As she drew back from him, their eyes met and held. Angel inhaled sharply feeling the little lightning bolts streak down her stomach and up her thighs. This wasn’t the first time he had caused this reaction inside her... but it was the first time she wasn’t supposed to feel this for him. She had a boyfriend now... crushing on Hunter was taboo.

Angel swallowed as she took a step back. “Thank you for saving my grandmother. I don’t know what I would have done if I’d lost her.”

Hunter narrowed his eyes knowing she was denying what they had both just felt. Maybe not denying it... but definitely ignoring it. He had no intention of letting her get away with it... as a matter of fact; he intended to remind her that he was not that easily forgotten.

Reaching out, he grabbed her hand and started for the front doors. “Come on, let’s get you settled in.”

Ashton gripped the windowsill so tight he heard the wood make a popping sound. Angel had never given him a reason to be jealous before, but he didn’t like the way she looked at Hunter... the way she had kissed him. He didn’t like it one bit. He hadn’t let her come home only to watch her throw herself at other guys.

Angel stepped into the elevator shaking off the last of the electricity that kissing Hunter had caused. “So, where will I be sleeping?” she smiled knowing it was a game they used to play.

The four of them, Tristian, Ray, Hunter and herself, would sneak the register away from the desk and switch people's rooms around just to cause mass confusion. They used to get in so much trouble for it that it was kind of amusing because now, Hunter was in charge of the very thing that used to get them yelled at.

Hunter shrugged, "I figured that you would want to be next to your brother." He reached out and pushed the button for the fourth floor. "So I put you in your old room."

"Glad to hear I still get a big room," she smirked knowing the ones on the top floor where huge compared to the ones downstairs. Plus, it would be nice to feel completely at home again. "Thanks."

"I always did think you two were a bit spoiled," Hunter teased. "That's why I decided to move in too." He fished the key out of his pocket. He had taken the room right next to hers when he had moved in last month. It had let him feel closer to her even though she was so far away.

"When did you finally move into Sanctuary?" Angel asked. He and Ray had always driven back and forth every day so they could stay with their mother at night... even before Ray had gotten his license. He and Ray loved their mother dearly and made sure she was always taken care of.

When the doors opened, Hunter put his hand on the edge of the elevator door to keep it open for her. "I'm sorry Angel... I told Tristian not to tell you. I didn't want you to worry about us." His eyes darkened knowing she would have every right to be mad at him if she wanted to be.

"So tell me now." Angel had a bad feeling. Hunter had never kept secrets from her and she wondered if being gone all this time had caused it. "What don't I know?"

"Our mother died last month when the house accidentally caught fire," he swallowed still not wanting to talk about it. "The fire department said it looked like she had been cooking and must have fallen asleep."

Angel's lips parted when his dark eyes became luminous with unshed tears. "Oh my god Hunter... I'm so sorry. I wish you had told me... I would have come back sooner."

"I didn't want you to... see me like that," he confessed as she wrapped her arms around him for the third time in the last half hour.

Letting go of the door, he let it slide shut as he reached out and touched the stop button. Placing his palms against her back, Hunter couldn't stop himself as he pulled her flush against him, letting the smell of her hair soothe the ache inside him. This ache had nothing to do with his mother.

Angel hadn't meant to do anything other than comfort him, but as soon as their bodies touched, she found herself pressed back against the wall of the elevator and one of his legs pushed between her thighs making them both go up in flames again.

"Oh God, Angel," Hunter murmured against the soft skin at her neck as he felt the heat of her center all the way through the cloth that covered his leg. Grinding his thigh up against her, he lifted his head and caught her lips in a frustrated kiss. His hands traveled down her arms to capture her hands. Sliding his fingers through hers, he pressed them to the wall knowing her well enough to remember a little domination was a turn on for her. If almost counted as sex... then they had been lovers for a long time.

At first, Angel kissed him back, losing herself in the sensations he was causing, but then an image of Ashton flashed in her mind and she turned her head, breaking the kiss. She moaned softly when he breathed hotly down her neck. Pulling her hands from his, she placed them on his chest and pushed.

"Hunter?" Angel kept her eyes on the floor, suddenly afraid of what she would see if she looked up at him. "I'm sorry. I..."

"Shhh," he gently placed his finger under her chin and lifted it so she would look up at him. He already knew why she was stopping. Ashton Fox had already lost... though she didn't know that yet. His eyes darkened attractively as he listened to her near ragged breathing from only a simple kiss.

“Don’t be sorry... you should never be sorry for loving me. At least I know you forgive me for not telling you about our mother.” Hunter let go of her, forcing himself to step back and press the button so the elevator doors would open for her.

Knowing he would talk about his mother when he was ready, Angel turned and fled the elevator, no longer trusting herself to be alone with him. Once she was sure he was gone, she slowed her steps.

Poor Hunter... and Ray. They had always been so gentle with their mother and she had loved them dearly in return. Angel remembered often wishing she and her own mother had that kind of relationship. But her mother was a stranger to her... always had been.

When the elevator doors closed behind her, Hunter placed his hands against the same wall he had just held her against... pushing at it in frustration. If counting to ten only worked. Closing his eyes he did it anyway, forcing his breathing to return to something resembling normal. When he straightened and opened his eyes, he was perfectly calm once again.

Flipping his cell phone open, he dialed Tristian’s number to tell him his sister was settled. Hunter frowned seeing there was no signal on the cell phone.

Angel walked into her room and smiled seeing they had left everything like it had been before she’d moved. She threw herself backwards onto the mattress with a happy sigh as she closed her eyes. As soon as she did, what she and Hunter had just done in the elevator came back to haunt her and make her body burn.

She had been gone so long that she’d figured he wouldn’t want her like that anymore. Tristian had started dating someone... why hadn’t Hunter?

When she’d started dating Ashton... she had tried to block out the memories of Hunter and Tristian. But now that she was back, it felt like her heart was already being pulled apart again. She’d been in love with both of them for so long that it was the reason she had started dating Ashton in the first place... to forget. But when Hunter had touched her in the elevator just now, it had confirmed her worse fears... she wasn’t in love with Ashton Fox and he would never make her feel like Hunter just did.

She flattened her palm against her lower stomach and then slowly slid it down between her legs, arching her body as she did so. She closed her eyes when the imaginary image of Hunter wavered and was replaced with the memory of Tristian’s heated touch.

### Chapter 3 “Jealousy”

It was almost dark when Tristian switched the mellow music out for some alternative rock then grabbed the bottle of wine he had hidden down low inside the Tiki-Bar. As he picked up three glasses, a hint of a smile flickered across his lips. He had recently found his grandfather’s hidden wine cellar within the secret hallways that ran under and through the huge building.

Keeping the other family members from knowing about the narrow hallways was the only thing Tristian was glad his grandfather had done. Now he had his own little secret and so far only one other person knew about it, Angel, and she wasn’t the type to go exploring the cobwebbed catacombs.

Seeing Ashton come in the side entrance, he called to him and waved him over. “It’s time to start meeting the family.” Tristian led them to one of the upholstered picnic tables where the twins were entertaining Stacey.

“Okay. I haven’t even started drinking yet and I’m already seeing double,” Ashton joked hoping it would be a good icebreaker.

Hearing them, Damien and Devin both glanced up seeing the bottle of wine and letting their gaze follow it as Tristian set it down on the table.

“Hey, that’s one of the bottles from grandfather’s secret stash. I saw him and dad drinking one a long time ago.” Devin grabbed it and started prying at the cork. “Where the hell did you find this one?”

Before Tristian could even answer, Damien nodded toward Ashton. “Tristian? What’d you bring him for? We need another guy like we need a hole in the head.” He slid his arm around Stacey while his twin was distracted.

“Ha ha,” Tristian set the glasses down. “I would like for you to meet Ashton Fox... Angel’s boyfriend.” He raised his finger and actually pointed as he introduced them to Ashton. “And this is Devin... and Damien, our cousins... along with Stacey, who just comes to torture them when she finds the time.” He winked at Stacey knowing she wouldn’t deny it.

Ashton stuck his hand out and tried not to cringe as the twins took turns almost breaking his fingers with their grip. Flexing his hand to get the blood flowing again, he smiled and said, “Angel told me a lot about you guys. It’s good to finally meet the twins.”

“So, our little Angel told you about her favorite kissing cousins?” Damien asked with a straight face.

“Yeah, she also told me about the bloody nose you got for the effort,” Ashton said just as seriously, if not a little bored. If he was fated to crank up the testosterone... then so be it.

Tristian laughed loudly and smacked Ashton on the back, “That-a-boy, get him.”

“Are you serious?” Stacey asked, laughing with Tristian as she reached for one of the wine glasses Devin had just finished pouring.

“Hardly ever... as far as I can tell.” Damien grabbed his glass and downed it. It was sad to see that Angel had managed to get herself yet another bodyguard. Wasn’t the Indian brigade enough?

Ignoring the twins, Tristian tapped Ashton on the shoulder to get him to quit glaring. “Over there is Uncle Robert and his wife Diane,” he pointed to the couple that was climbing into the hot tub. “They stopped having children after the twins for some reason.” He tried not to laugh when that got a smirk out of Ashton.

“Who’s your friend?” Tiffany came over, putting her knee beside Devin and leaning on it like she was bored but curious. She was wearing a baby-blue bikini that was several sizes too small with a sheer wrap tied around her waist.

She flicked Devin on the ear when he turned his head to stare right at her breasts. “Ewww, stop that you pervert.”

“Give it up Tiff, he’s taken,” Devin said in a pitying tone then winked at her. “I guess you’re stuck with me after all.” He growled when he noticed Damien trying to kiss Stacey. “Damn it Damien, I can’t turn my back on you for a minute, can I?”

When the twins tried to lean toward each other to argue, Stacey was still in the middle of them. She put a delicate hand on each one of their shoulders and pushed. “Cut it out guys or I swear I’ll go home again,” she warned them.

“Tiffany, meet Ashton... Angel’s guest for the week,” Tristian downgraded Ashton from boyfriend status to guest on purpose. If Tiffany wanted to take a shot at Ash... then who was he to stop her. “Tiffany here, is our youngest cousin and she has two siblings around here somewhere.”

“They’re in the pool with their friends,” Tiffany pouted feeling just as sulky as Devin. Rolling her eyes, she grabbed Devin’s hand and pulled him out of the chair. “Come on... let’s go get wet.”

“Sure,” Devin slapped Stacey on the butt as he followed her toward the pool.

Ashton cocked an eyebrow but bit his tongue refusing to say anything out loud. Besides, the family would probably just gang up on him if he said what was running through his mind.

Tristian pointed toward the dark haired girl climbing the ladder of the high dive, “That’s Paris, Tiffany’s older sister. And the strange man coming up the ladder behind her is probably her new toy for the week because I have never seen him before.” He turned in his chair looking towards the other end of the pool. “And one of the two people making out in the kiddy section would be Jason, their brother.”

“What’s in the wine around here?” Ashton asked, hoping it sounded like a joke.

“Why do you think I’m not drinking it?” Tristian smiled liking Ashton more and more... sometimes life sucked. “Their mom should be showing up soon. Aunt Carley.” So Damien wouldn’t overhear, he leaned toward Ashton and added in a whisper, “That is, unless she is so drunk that she can’t walk.”

“I bet that’s her,” Ashton nodded toward the entrance since he had been scanning it watching for Angel. The middle-aged lady looked like the girls but with shorter hair and way too much makeup. She kind of looked tired... or wait a minute... did she just stagger?

“Yeah... that’s her. I bet she goes straight for the liquor.” Tristian made a winning bell sound when Carley picked up a bottle of crown royal from the Tiki-Bar and took it to a lounge chair not even bothering with a glass.

“And who is that?” Ashton asked pointing back toward the entrance, seeing a girl around Angel's age with long brown hair and fair skin.

“That would be our other cousin,” Tristian left his chair and met the girl halfway. Knowing this would really freak Ashton out; he dipped his head, giving Shae a long passionate kiss. Once he thought it was good enough of a show, he breathed against her lips. “Don’t get mad at me... but I just told Angel’s boyfriend that you were one of our cousins. Did he fall out of his seat yet?”

Shae giggled, “No, but is he always that pale?”

Tristian glanced over his shoulder and almost choked on his laugh when Ashton instantly looked in the other direction as if he hadn’t been watching. “Okay, let’s go let him off the hook.” Tristian led her by the hand back to the table noticing Damien and Stacey had joined Devin in the pool.

“This is my cousin Shae,” he grabbed his ribs when Shae elbowed him. “I mean my girlfriend Shae,” he smiled guiltily.

Ashton crossed his arms over his chest and tilted his head studying them. “Where’s that sister of yours? I suddenly feel the urge to hide behind someone.”

“Is my brother giving you a hard time?” Angel asked from directly behind him. She was smiling at Shae, having overheard the cousin remark.

“Thank god,” Ashton leaned his head back as Angel leaned down and gave him a light kiss on the lips. He was suddenly jealous because it wasn’t half as passionate as the simple kiss he had seen her slip Hunter. “I know I won’t be twenty-one for a couple more hours but your brother is seriously trying to drive me to drink.”

Pulling her around beside him, Ashton couldn’t help but glance behind her to see if the Indian was dogging her heels. Seeing a man leaning against one of the thick polls of the Tiki-Bar watching them, he frowned at first thinking it was Hunter... then realizing it wasn’t. This man was Indian, but something about him seemed more dangerous than the one he had already met.

Ray didn’t bother to look away but instead locked eyes with Angel’s boyfriend. Giving him a cold stare, he started walking straight toward them... never breaking eye contact. Seeing Angel follow the boy’s gaze, Ray softened his expression to glance at her, not caring what Ashton thought of him.

Angel’s eyes instantly lit up, “Oh look, its Ray!”

She started to push away from Ashton so she could go to him but Ashton only tightened his hold on her hand and jerked her to a stop. She bit her bottom lip curiously, then settled for smiling brightly and waiting on Ray to reach her.

Tristian noticed the heavy-handed maneuver and frowned. Angel would want a hug from Ray after not seeing him in so long, so why was Ashton being so possessive? He stood up ready to inform Ashton that being a dick was uncool but his lips twisted into a smirk when Ray walked straight up to Angel and gave her a hug anyway.

From the unhappy look on Ashton's face, Tristian hoped this would be the beginning of a wonderful argument.

“It’s good to see you back at Sanctuary,” Ray said, hugging her for a few seconds longer than normal just to piss the glaring boyfriend off. He even went a step further and gave her a kiss on the cheek before slowly pulling away. His eyes darkened several shades as he gazed into her blue ones. “If your hand starts going numb, just tell me... and I’ll break his fingers.”

“Heh?” Angel breathed then realized what he was talking about. As a matter of fact, her hand was starting to go numb. “Oh no,” she gave Ashton’s hand a squeeze as if hers didn’t hurt at all, than winked at Ray. “He’s not giving me any trouble. This is my boyfriend, Ashton.”

She smiled reassuringly knowing Ray really would break Ash’s fingers if she had told him anything differently. One thing he had always done was keep her safe.

Angel blinked remembering just one of those times. Ray had given Hunter and Tristian a serious beating when they had conned her into climbing the old oak tree that hung out over the pond. He’d forbid her from doing it several times in the past and then showed up just in time to catch her as she fell from a high branch that wasn’t on the water side.

Ray completely ignored the introduction to Ashton. “It’s good that you have come back home Angel. Maybe your grandmother will have her wish granted and you’ll stay.” He leaned close to her ear as if to whisper but kept his voice loud enough for everyone to hear it. “I’ve got a surprise for you later.” Ray gave her a secretive smile then nodded at Tristian and Shae. Without saying another word, he walked around the huge pool and out the back gate.

“Well that bites,” Angel pouted. “Why didn’t he stick around?”

“He’s probably off getting your surprise,” Tristian hedged, knowing where Ray was going.

Turning back to the picnic table, Angel sat down beside Ashton, absently rubbing her hand when he finally let go of it. She wanted to ask him why he had squeezed so hard but decided against it as she looked across the table at Shae. If Ashton wanted to be mean... then he could just be ignored. She felt like celebrating, seeing her favorite girlfriend for the first time since leaving the mountain.

“So, has my brother really been behaving, or has he been lying to me all this time?” Angel inquired playfully.

“Probably lying,” Shae looked at Tristian and winked as she stood up. “I think I’m going to steal your sister for a minute so we can catch up.”

“What? You can’t gossip in front of the guys?” Tristian asked, glad that Angel would have a reason to get away from Ashton and Shae would have a reason not to cling to him. He had mainly invited Shae for the week just so Angel would have another reminder of why she should move back home.

“That would take all the fun out of it,” Shae informed him with a mischievous twitch of her lips.

“Fine. After all, I did steal you away from her first,” he admitted without remorse as Shae walked around the table and grabbed Angel’s hands, pulling her away like they were a couple of schoolgirls.

Glancing back at Ashton, Tristian could see the change in the guy’s personality as if it were night and day. Ashton’s lips were thinner and he could almost feel the anger rolling off him in waves.

He sighed in relief knowing he had finally found another reason not to like Ashton Fox. It seemed the boy simply didn’t like to share. That only confirmed the fact that Tristian would have to find ways of taking all of Angel’s time away from her boyfriend while they were here.

“Let me know when you’re ready for that drink,” Tristian grinned as he pulled his own flask out of his pocket. “It might be a while before they come back.”

Ashton didn’t answer as his jealous gaze followed Angel’s every move.

“I’m so glad you’re back,” Shae led Angel toward the Tiki-Bar. “Your brother isn’t the only person that missed you, ya know.” She pushed Angel gently toward one of the stools while she slid behind the bar tapping her lips with her finger. “I think this deserves a toast... how does Long Island Iced Tea sound?”

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