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Edgecli Point, 2013

Richard paced around his large kitchen as Leela prepped dinner. He'd demanded she phone her daughter, it's been a bit over a month since he'd last seen the damn vixen and his conscious was beginning to wither and die. He needed to know she was okay, so he forced Leela to speak with Imani. Bad fucking decision— no, worst fucking decision! Because now he was pissed. Beyond pissed, livid, in fact.

She was going out… With some other little grimy mud*he thought only sent red, hot fury down his spine. "Fuck it!" he grunted out, storming through the kitchen and towards the front door. He couldn't hold it in any longer, he'd really go completely insane if he tried! Swiping his keys up along the way, Richard slammed out of the house and moved in the direction of his vehicle. His movements were jerky, rushed. Fuelled with liters of adrenaline, the man keyed the ignition.

Under a minute flat, the large brute was on the M1 and heading towards Westridge Valley. It was time he gave his little Imani another reminder, a much firmer and physical kind.

In a little under an hour, Richard had pulled up in front of Imani's apartment. He le his car and made his way to the front door, banging his hand on the hardwood his sanity and rationality prayed she'd answer. There was no response. Clenching his jaw, he took a deep breath through his nose and released it through his mouth, he spread his booted feet and leaned against the hard panel behind him. The darkness seeped into him and shadowed his form.

Minutes ticked into an hour, his patience was thinning and he was close to tracking the damn woman down. Then he saw a vehicle slide up behind his, his eyes zeroed in on the interior and he felt his gut clench. He couldn't make much out of the driver, but he knew the passenger was Imani. He held in his anger, knowing nothing good would come from him pummelling the bastard driving her home.

With slanted eyes, he watched her curvaceous body exit the Toyota. Wrong move, baby.

Her nerves instantly took a spike and she became aware of her surroundings, Ben needed to leaveTurning to face the young man, she smiled politely, he could see the shi in her expression. "I had a great night, Ben. Thank you," she went to open the door, but his hand came out to clasp around her wrist. She impatiently turned towards him once more, she knew she didn't have long before Richard would see her.

"Will I see you tomorrow?" Ben questioned, nervous that she'd simply disappear on him. He liked the new face on campus, enjoyed her company a little more than he'd expect.

With a so sigh, she replied, "yeah, probably. We have class." Imani gave him another smile and this time she forcefully tugged her hand free of his hold and exited the vehicle. She closed the door with a so thud and moved quickly, succinctly. Hoping he'd leave promptly, for his safety that is. The young woman knew nothing good would come if he stayed…

Ben at first just kept his eyes locked with Imani's then he saw her eyes flicker up to the car in front of theirs, he pulled away from the curb and br her, despite the warning bells ringing in his head. That was probably the first mistake he made, of many. Turning a blind eye.

Worried and beyond anxious, Imani made her way to the black vehicle, with her heart rate increasing and her blood pressure following the same rate, she rounded to the driver's side and leant down. Nothing Through the dark, tinted windows she saw nothing. Straightening her form, she kept her head lowered as she made her way to the front door. Maybe it wasn't his car..She took quick steps and fumbled with her bag to find her keys.

Richard saw Imani make her way to him, she had her head lowered and was unaware of his form resting against the front door..his fists were clamped against his sides. It had taken all of his control— when he saw her with that kid… Fuck.he didn't want to think about it. As soon as she was within touching distance, Richard wrapped an arm around her waist and placed his free hand over her mouth. "Don't scream, Imani."

With her body pressed against his, he could feel her heartbeat. Her breathing was laboured and he slowly released his hold on her mouth. "Richard…" She muttered out, her voice shook.

"Open the door," his own tone was hard.

Imani could hear the anger in his words and she knew he had seen her. She located her keys and pushed through into the living space.

Richard didn't waste any time, his body moved on autopilot. Furious with her for letting some other fucker touch her. Kicking the door shut with his boot, he pressed her front against the wall. Coming up behind her, his hand spanned her neck, the other rested on her hip in a bruising manner. "What did I tell you." his hissed out.

Any rational thought she had, vaporised the instant he touched her. She couldn't form words, much less utter the sentence he asked for. She felt him hard against her back and bit her lower lip, he was so big. He repeated his words, but this time Imani felt him drop his neck to her shoulder. "Let me go," she whispered.

"Wrong answer, sweetheart." Richard bit down hard on her shoulder before he turned her and slammed his hands either side of her head. He loomed his head and caged her against the wall. "What the fuck did I tell you!" He demanded.

She shivered, his minted breath fanned her skin and goosebumps rose along her arms. "Boys. No boys," Imani managed to form the right words.

"Exactly. So what the hell was that outside!" He leaned in closer, his mouth almost touching hers.

Her eyes shi ed down to his lips and then back up to his glare, "he's a friend." She replied. "You can't control me, Richard." She fumed silently.

"The fuck I can't!" He bellowed, his large hands moved from the wall to her hips. With little ef , he hoisted her up and over his shoulder." Either you learn from this mistake and make me believe you won't pull shit like this again, or I spank that little arse of yours until you accept that no boys, means… no fucking boys!"

She ground her molars together, "he's a man, not a boy." She knew she was in deep shit, squeezing her eyes shut she bit her tongue. Was she fucking insane goading him on like that? Trepidation slide through her veins, along with something that resembled pleasure.

Without warning, Richard crossed the room and slammed her down on the bed. He bent down over her, his hands against each hip on the bed. "Don't test me, Imani. No boys, no men… No fucking one!" He wrapped his hand around her long hair and fisted it at the back of her neck, "so which is it, baby?"

Imani knew Richard was referring to the ultimate he'd laid out ever so generously moments ago, she pursed her lips and held in her annoyance. "You aren't the boss of me, Richard." She hissed back at him.

"You know damn well that I'm not going to hurt you, Imani." Richard glared her down.

She rolled her eyes, "spanking is hitting."

"No, spanking is spanking. Now answer the damn question!"

She narrowed her gaze, "I'll keep my legs closed, Richard." Imani felt the heat spread through her body as she spoke the words.

"I want more than that," he grumbled back.

She met his gaze, bemused. "More?"

"Yeah, more." He nodded. Richard used the hand at her neck to bring her forward. His mouth clamped over hers and she felt him bite her lower lip, demanding entrance, which she willingly gave him. "Three years," he promised, a re rowding her mouth with his tongue. "Just three fucking years and then you come home." He spoke more to himself than her.

His free hand gripped her thigh, moving up she felt him nudge her legs apart and through her jeans, he clamped her. "R-Richard," she stuttered.

"Don't say my name in that fucky whisper, unless you want me to really punish you." Richard tightened his hold on her crotch. "It's mine, Imani. I own you."

She wanted like hell to tell him that he didn't, that she was her own person. But she knew adding oil to the fire was not the answer. Besides, she didn't think she could form any words with his hand pressing against her most intimate part. Imani felt him rub her through her jeans, the friction was maddening. *She'd never* felt anything like this, her eyes closed on their own accord and she released a small groan.

"Fuck!" Richard released her all at once. The small moan that tumbled from her lips hardened his length further, he wondered what she'd sound like when she came; when he rammed it into her from behind; when she hung in his grasp and creamed his cock. Fuck.he needed to get out of there before he did something he couldn't take back. He ran a hand through his hair and move towards the door, "no one, Imani. Not one, I'll be blistering that sweet arse of yours!" He threatened.

His words remained in the air as Imani was once more le panting in the darkness.

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Westridge Valley, 2016

Months turned into years and before she knew it, Imani was submitting her final essay. Despite the time that had passed, she couldn't forget Richard's words, they were and would probably always be a constant reminder in the back of her mind. She knew she needed to protect herself from him; thus, when Ben asked her to be his girlfriend a few weeks a er the first gig, she said yes.

Although she felt like she was betraying Richard, she knew this was something she had to do. Her childish emotions needed to stop, she was a grown woman. Hell, her twenty-first birthday was just around the corner. Besides, Ben was everything she needed, never once was he impolite or not gentle. He opened doors, pulled out chairs and made her laugh when the going got tough. Yeah, he was everything she wanted. but not what she needed.Not a dark part of her knew that.

Ben was a good man and he treated her like she was the only woman in his world. That she respected, that she cared for. She may not love him, but she cared for him and that was enough to satisfy her.

By now Imani was extremely careful with what she said to her mother on the phone, she learned from her mistakes and ensured her private life with Ben was locked under key and chain.

During the years a er the incident, she hadn't seen or heard from Richard. She never went home for break and he never came up to demand she return, she was afraid she'd angered him, but her mother continued to reassure her. Regardless of her mother's calming words, she couldn't help but worry about the man that had saved them from poverty. Was he okay?

Imani stood up and looked around the apartment, her eyes flickered to the opening front door. "You ready, babe?" She smiled at Ben and nodded as he made his way to her.

He picked up her bag and placed it in the car before returning to her. "You don't need to drop me to the station," she muttered.

Ben took hold of her shoulders and turned her body to face his, reaching into his back pocket he fingered the small piece of gold. He released a breath and prayed he wouldn't stutter, "marry me, Imani…"

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