

Chapter 2

Danny

"Jesus, Wood! What the hell were you thinking?" Donnie dribbled the ball a couple of times before shooting it straight into the basket. I didn't even bother trying to block it.

I raked my hands through my hair. "I *wasn't* thinking. I don't know what came over me."

"You gotta stop thinking with your dick, yo." Donnie shook his head, as he retrieved the ball, and began dribbling again. "She's fifteen!"

"I know, man; she just doesn't seem that young." *She doesn't look it, either*, I thought, but kept that to myself. "She never has; she has always been really mature for her age. Even when she was a kid."

"She *is* a kid!" Donnie exclaimed, exasperated. I shot him a look, but he didn't even seem to notice.

"You haven't been around her, dude. She's... different."

"I have been around her. It doesn't matter how mature she is- it doesn't change the facts."

I stole the ball from Donnie, and dribbled away from him. He just stood there accusingly, his eyes following me, and waited until I took my shot. "Nothin' but net!" I gloated, trying to change the subject, but Donnie's eyes continued to bore into me as I walked the ball over to him. He wasn't gonna let it rest, the know-it-all bastard. I stood in front of him then, meeting his eyes with a hard gaze of my own.

We stared at one another a few moments before I broke the silence. Fucker wasn't budging. "Look, man, I know, okay? I know. It was a serious lack of judgement, and it won't happen again." I paused then gave him a dose of his own medicine with a shit-eating grin. I held two fingers up. "Scouts honor."

That got him. He grinned. "You were no more a boy scout than I was. That shit don't mean a damn thing with me." His mood lightened, but his eyes were still serious. "I mean it, Danny."

Always had to get the last word in. I knew better than to say anything more, so I simply met his eyes again, and nodded once. He grabbed the ball from me, his trade-mark smile back in place. "And no running to her to nurse your wounds when I finish whooping your ass!" he barked as he ran up the court and shot a perfect layup.

We continued the game- and the shit-talk- for about thirty minutes before we heard another voice. "Mind if I join you?" D and I turned at the same time, squinting as we faced the sun. There was a spring in her step as she approached,

and if the sun hadn't lit up the sky, her smile would have. Her ponytail, and her breasts, bounced innocently towards us, and I felt a slight stir in my stomach, compounded by the fact that she was completely unaware of the effect she was having. She was dressed to play in a fitted white tee and burgundy cheer shorts, her toned legs seeming to go on forever before they reached her low-top sneakers. Donnie's eyes widened slightly for a moment when he realized it was Raven that had made her way across the court. It had been awhile since he'd seen her, and she had filled out- quite nicely- since then. I ignored him and took a couple steps towards her, and I could feel a huge smile punctuate my features. "Hey," I found myself wanting to grab her in a playful hug, pleasantly surprised that she showed up. "What are you doing here?"

She stopped and stood a few feet in front of us, her hands supporting her lower back as she stretched, bending backwards slightly. Her chest bowed, and I couldn't help but to let my gaze fall to her perky breasts. I quickly averted my eyes by raising my shirt and wiping the sweat from my eyes and forehead. God, what the hell was the matter with me?!

"Well, your mom said you left early with D this morning, and I thought I might find you here." She stretched her neck as she spoke, then shrugged her shoulders. "So here I am."

My brows raised and before I could stop, I found myself saying, "You came here to see me?"

She chuckled- nervously?- and raised her arms in front of her. "I'm here to play ball. You just happen to be here."

"Uh-huh," I teased.

"Uh-huh," she mimicked. The ball bounced low to the ground, aiming for us, and I tucked my toe under it, kicking it up to me, and held it loosely under one arm. Donnie joined us then, a cautious smile playing up his features. "Hey, Donnie, good to see you." She turned her smile on him, and I could tell he was observing her.

"You, too." He reached over and kissed her on the cheek. "I would hug you, but..." he looked down at his clothes, soaked thru with sweat, and let his sentence evaporate.

Raven laughed easily. "No, that's okay."

He grinned, visibly more relaxed, and I could tell he was starting to let go of his judgement on both of us.

Getting back to the conversation at hand, I continued teasing her. "If you're here on your own to play, then where is your ball?"

"I was hoping I could play with yours."

Donnie immediately choked back a laugh, as did I. "You what?" I couldn't help it. I started laughing.

Raven's face turned a shade of red I had never seen on a human before; it almost matched her shorts. She obviously was not intending her words to be a double entendre, and I sort of felt bad for embarrassing her.

"I didn't mean it like that," she replied, her tone now somewhat cautious, even though she continued to smile. "Perverts."

Donnie and I swallowed the rest of our comments and tried to hide our snickering, albeit unsuccessfully. "So you *did* come here to see me, then." My heart felt lighter for some reason.

She rolled her eyes at me, and put one hand on her hip, popping it out impatiently. "Whatever, are we gonna play or what?"

"Or what," Donnie piped in. I turned to him in surprise. "We were just about to go- we have to be somewhere."

"Oh..." she looked at me for confirmation. When I said nothing, she continued. "Okay, then- well, I guess I'll just go for a run. See you later tonight?" She took a few steps backwards, eager to make her getaway.

"Yeah," I suddenly became monosyllabic, knowing there was nowhere we needed to be. Disappointment suddenly flooded me as I thought of not spending the day with her.

She glanced between Donnie and I. "K, bye," she turned with a quick wave, and jogged off the court to the running path.

I watched her go, not even giving us- me- a second glance. I knew our exchange shouldn't bother me, but it did. I didn't want her to think I didn't want to be around her- just the opposite was true. And that was a problem in itself. Donnie stepped in front of me then, blocking my view of her, and placed his hand on my shoulder. His features and tone were sympathetic. "Dude, she's fifteen."

"Right," was all I could manage.