

July 10, 2004

Takes place at the start of the chapter Summer Loving; I Got Me a Tat

Joey

The epic rave Molloy was hellbent on us attending consisted of thousands scantily clad ravers piled into a harvested hay field, while several well-known club DJs played on top of an Arctic trailer.

Standing around in a field in the pissings of rain, squashed between thousands of sweaty, rain-soaked bodies would never be my first choice of a night out, but Molloy was enjoying herself.

A thunderstorm in July wasn't anything uncommon for Irish weather, but even I had to admit that the lightning forking the sky looked epic mixed in with the strobe lights flashing around us.

The rain was catapulting down on me, and I could hardly feel my face—courtesy of whatever I'd snorted up my nose earlier—but none of it mattered.

Because she was here, and I was free.

For one weekend, at least.

Added to the mix was an overflow of sex, alcohol, and drugs, which made for a very pliable Joey.

Standing out like a sexy little glowworm in the midnight downpour, I watched as my girlfriend thrashed around to the music.

Clad in denim hotpants, a frilly, white bikini top, and yellow wellies, and with neon body paint dripping from her rain-soaked skin, Molloy threw her hands in the air as she danced like no one was watching.

Jesus Christ, yellow wellies never looked so sexy.

Tipping the scales at the higher end of buzzed, I hovered close to my girl, giving her the space she needed to throw shapes and enjoy herself, but close enough to step in if any of the countless pervy bastards eyeing her got a little too handsy.

When Gigi D'Agostino's "L'Amour Toujours" blasted from the main stage, it sent everyone within a two-mile radius into a crazed frenzy.

Meanwhile, I swayed back and forth between the jostling bodies and took another hit off my joint, while dutifully ignoring the blonde who had been attempting to dance with me for the last four songs.

With my t-shirt tucked into the waistband of my shorts, caked in the neon paint my girlfriend had decorated me in earlier, the same shit that matched her, I tried to keep my wits about me.

“You’ve got a beautiful body.”

Aw, shit.

When unfamiliar hands came around my body, touching my bare stomach, I felt my good mood sour.

“I love your tattoos.”

Buzzed or not, I knew that this one was getting a little too handsy and was in danger of losing her hair if she didn’t back the fuck up—courtesy of my sexy glowworm in her yellow wellies.

“I fly with her,” I shouted over the music, referencing the song playing, as I slipped out of her hold before Molloy noticed and went full Sarah Connor mode on her ass. Turning to face the handsy blonde, I pointed to where my girlfriend was dancing and added, “Only her,” in as cold a tone as I could muster. “So back up.”

“Oh, come on, sexy. Why don’t you live a little? What your little girlfriend doesn’t know can’t hurt her.” she purred, unwilling to take the hint as she continued to push into my personal space, going as far as circling my neck with her arms. “You look like the best mistake I could make tonight.” She stepped closer. “I’ve got a tent at the other end of the—”

“Do you have a death wish, bitch?” a familiar voice cut in, causing me to groan internally. “Because putting your hands on my boyfriend is a solid way of signing your own death certificate.”

Oh, it was going down.

Fuck my life.

“Chill, sweetie, we were only talking,” the blonde replied in a snarky tone, but had the good sense to remove her hands from my neck and take a safe step back. “You don’t own him.”

“Oh, that’s where you’re wrong, *sweetie*,” Molloy shot back, taking a defensive step in front of me. “I absolutely do own him.”

Well, shit.

“Hey, stud?” Turning back to face me, Molloy eyeballed me with such a look that I

momentarily sobered and feared for my own safety. “Who owns you?”

My brows shot up in surprise. “Owns me?”

“Yes.” Another eyeballing glare that caused my balls to shrivel. “Owns you.”

“You, queen,” I had the good sense to say, even though it went against my very nature to heel to anyone. *Not anyone*, my heart reminded me. *Only her*.

“Wow,” the blonde drawled sarcastically. “You’ve got him on a tight leash, don’t you? What’s next? Branding the poor bastard with your name?”

“What a fantastic idea,” Molloy countered, taking a menacing step towards her.

“Now, off you fuck before I tear clumps out of those ugly-ass extensions.”

“Psycho bitch,” the blonde spat before disappearing into the crowd.

“Peroxide Barbie,” Molloy screamed back at her.

“Calm down, Molloy,” I growled, snaking a hand around her waist before she could chase after her retreating nemesis. “It’s not that deep.”

“Not that deep?” Spinning around to glare at me, Molloy jabbed my chest with her finger. “She was all over you, Joe.”

“She knew I wasn’t interested. I shut it down.”

“*Sure* you had.”

“Yeah, Molloy, I had it handled.”

“Really? Because it looked like she was handling *you*.”

“Nah, I’d say you did a pretty good job of that yourself,” I shot back. “You own me?” I glared down at her. “Nobody owns me, Molloy.”

“Oh, cop on. It works both ways.” She rolled her eyes at me. “You own me, too.”

“I *own* you?” I repeated, feeling a fucked-up concoction of possessiveness and lust. “That sounds toxic as fuck, baby.”

“Don’t you want to own me, Joe?” she purred, stepping closer until her chest was flush against mine. “Hm?” Snaking her arms around my neck, she swiped the baseball cap off my head and placed it on hers instead—backwards, just like I had been wearing it. “Because I want you to own me.”

Fuck.

My.

Life.

Divine Inspiration’s “The Way” began to play just as the heavens opened above us, drenching us in a torrential downpour.

I should have been cold, but my body was burning up, urged on by the rapid beat of

my heart as it thundered in my chest for the girl in my arms.

“You’re a little menace,” I finally conceded, leaning in to brush my lips against hers.

“A pain in my hole.”

“Maybe,” she teased. “But you love me.”

“Molloy.”

“You’re in love with me.”

“Stop it.”

“To the point of madness,” she continued to tease. “That’s what you said, wasn’t it, Joe? All those years ago? That’s how a person knows they’re in love.”

“Aoife.”

“And you love me to the point of madness.”

“You’re hard fucking work, do ya know that?”

“You love me so much it makes you crazy.”

“Jesus Christ.”

“You’re going to get a tattoo of my name someday, right?”

“Like fuck I am.”

“Across your heart,” she continued to goad, as she grinned up at me in victory. I was bowing down, and she knew it. This round was hers. “Because that’s where I stay.”

“Don’t push it,” I grumbled, tightening my hold on her waist, as I felt myself grow with the need to be inside her. To fall into her and never come up for air.

“You adore the ground I walk on.”

Yeah, I had a feeling she might be right, but I would never verbally admit it.

So, I told her what I couldn’t say with my actions.

Sighing heavily, I cupped her face between my hands and rested my brow against hers.

“It’s okay if you can’t say it yet, Joe,” she whispered, lips brushing against mine as she spoke. “I don’t have to hear it,” she added, resting her hand on my beating chest.

“Because I can already feel it.”