

RIDE DIRTY EXCERPT

“What do I do?” Emma asked.

“*We*,” Caine said as an urgent, demanding possessiveness dug its claws into his soul. Dug them in, *deep*.

And it was, without question, something he’d never felt before in his whole life. When you felt as unworthy as he did, you rarely believed that you deserved to possess anything at all. But now, in the face of her vulnerability, Caine dared to hope that he might deserve...what? Not *her*, exactly, because after being viewed as no more than a possession by the couple that ran his group home, the idea of possessing another person made his stomach roll. But maybe the chance to get to know her, at the very least. And maybe even the chance to give her the things he’d always wanted but never been able to have.

Jesus, even daring to hope for such things made him feel like the bottom might fall right out from underneath of him. And when that happened, he’d just fall and fall and fall...

But if she was going to be brave, he sure the fuck would, too. “We’ll figure this out, Emma. Do you hear me? You’re not in this alone.” His voice sounded like it’d been scoured with sandpaper.

She peered up at him, and her bottom lip trembled a little more. “Promise?”

“Jesus, come here,” he rasped, hauling her in against his chest. He held her tight with one arm and stroked her hair back with the other. And Christ, she felt so good there. So warm and soft against all his cold hardness. So right. These thoughts were so foreign to him he hardly knew what to do with them, but that didn’t make them any less true. He had to swallow around a knot of emotion before he could go on, but when he finally did, his voice was rock solid again. “I give you my word, Emma.”

He made one more promise, too, but this one he kept to himself. Once, he’d failed to protect someone he should’ve. Worse than that, her death had been his fault.

Caine vowed to himself—he wouldn’t make the same mistake twice.

This time, he’d rather die first.