

HAD TO MAKE YOU MINE
SOUTHERN CHARMS BOOK ONE

SIX YEARS AGO

Annaleigh

The blue lights of the bar washed over my body like warm waves at the beach on a summer day. Nothing in the world was better than the electric feeling moments before a show and taking in the scents of beer, sweat, and polished wood. Something was different tonight as the four of us prepared to take the small stage. The air crackled with the intensity of the crowd, and my pulse hammered in time with the steady beat.

I stretched my muscles and ran my fingers over the fretboard on my JIVA10 guitar, palms itching, ready to play. Alex anxiously tapped her drumsticks while Taylor paced and Bird finished a drink; all of us immersed in our own rituals to prepare. All the noise faded to the background as our eyes met, and we smiled, knowing this was going to be memorable.

“And here they are...Alice’s Monsters!”

The applause got louder and louder until we had to shout, and we put our hands together and yelled:

“Do it right!”

“Or not at all!”

“Own the stage!”

“And chicks dig scars!”

Alex ran out first, taking a seat and flipping her sticks in the air, while Bird and I followed with our guitars. Taylor strolled up to the mic last, his shirt reflecting the colors that bounced off the mirror ball above the stage. He turned and nodded as I started the opening riff to Alice Cooper's '*Spark in the Dark.*'

We played song after song, getting lost in the music and the crowd's magnetic energy. The drinks flowed, and we were sticky, sweaty, and in heaven under the sparkling lights.

Bird met my eyes, and I noticed how intensely bloodshot they were while taking center for a bass solo. Bird was sweating heavier than anyone else; foot-tapping offbeat to the music, drawing Taylor's attention as well.

I glanced at Alex as her drumsticks fell with a clatter that echoed across the stage, and I turned back just in time to see Bird collapse and hit the floor hard, the guitar splintering in a hundred directions. A roar filled my ears, drowning out everything but Taylor's scream and Bird's vacant, empty expression.