

ALPHA TEAM SERIES

Embraced

DM Page

D.M. PAGE

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About the Author

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One

Anna



The ceiling is crumbling around me and my hands are covered in blood.

A stressful dinner became a death sentence when Joka went crazy and tried to kill me. With a poisoned dagger.

“We need to get out of here!” Griffyn shouts. It sounds like he’s speaking through water.

He’s right. The building has been falling around us since Blaze’s dragon decided to make an appearance. How in the world did he do that? One second he was locked up with magic-draining cuffs and the next he shifted.

One second Joka was alive and now he isn’t.

I killed him.

I. Killed. Him.

Someone’s arms wrap around me, pulling me back from the body I’m kneeling over. I glance back to see Aksel behind me. His lips are moving but I can’t make out the words.

Rion stands next to him staring down at me with crazed eyes.

He shakes my shoulders.

Aksel looks up just as a piece of drywall comes crashing down next to us.

His lips move again before he picks me up and starts running. His shoulder digs into my stomach with every step.

I try to breathe but it feels like my lungs have collapsed.

I killed someone.

His blood still covers my hands.

“Snap the fuck out of it, Willson! He deserved to die, it was him or you!” Aksel shouts.

“He really deserved to die,” Rion growls.

His words finally penetrate my brain, burrowing deep and taking root.

Joka was going to kill me. It was him or us. If his son says he should have died, then I need to accept it. At least right now while the world is falling apart.

“I’m back,” I groan, pushing off Aksel’s back.

He comes to a stop, putting me back down.

Both of his hands cup my face as he stares into my eyes.

“Thank fuck, because I need you with me.”

Aksel presses his lips to mine in a brief kiss that’s over much too soon.

“Anna! You’re okay. You’re okay right because I feel like I’m losing my mind here.” Felix grabs me from Aksel and wraps his arms around me tightly.

“Felix, tap into the bond. You can feel that I’m okay,” I only manage to squeak out the words since his hold is so tight.

He presses his nose to my neck and keeps taking deep breaths until they even out.

Griffyn finally shows up, wrapping his arms around Felix and me.

“Blaze has lost his mind, I can’t get through to him,” Griffyn growls.

“Anna will have the best chance of getting through to him and she needs

to do it fast. The stairs have collapsed and every time he moves, his tail takes out another wall,” Aksel says.

“How can I help?”

I know I’m his mate but his dragon seems feral right now.

Heat brushes my face as he breathes fire and half the space catches immediately. We don’t have long until we’re either burnt to a crisp or crushed.

“Blaze!” I shout. “It’s me, Anna!”

No response.

“I need your help. If you don’t calm down we might all die. I know you wouldn’t want that.”

He roars.

“Your mate is in danger!” Aksel shouts.

That makes him pause. The dragon’s head swivels around to face us. His nose flares and a puff of hot air hits us.

“That got your attention. You need to get us out of here before your mate dies.” Aksel’s voice is stern and all alpha.

Slowly Blaze lifts up, stretching his wings like he’s about to take off.

“Fuck.”

Blaze’s leg kicks out, wrapping me in the grip of his claws before pushing off.

“Grab on!” Aksel’s darkness wraps around me and instinctively, I know they’re with us. Aksel must be holding them all to Blaze’s leg.

That’s going to use a lot of energy.

I think about what happened with Joka. That I came way too close to permanent death. What I overheard, when I was waking up and planning my next move.

Aksel lied to me. Three out of the four of them lied to me about being my mate. Only Felix was truthful since I first met him. I'm so grateful I mated him. He deserves it more than the rest of them.

Especially Aksel.

A kinder thought about his father being evil and trying to protect me tries to push its way in but I shove it aside.

Aksel needs negative emotions to charge his magic. I can give him that.

The wind is so strong against my skin, it feels like I can't breathe.

Blaze's powerful wings beat above us as we race away from the wreckage.

I lose track of time as we soar through the sky until Blaze's dragon lands in an open field. I have no idea where we are but as soon as he touches down, I try to push free.

His claws tighten for a second before releasing me. He turns his big dragon head around to stare at me while wrapping his body around mine.

The unnatural darkness next to me moves away before revealing Aksel, Rion, Felix, and Griffyn.

Blaze does not shift back.

"Oh thank god, I'm so glad you guys made it out with us," I cry. Seeing them safe and unharmed after the way tonight went means everything to me.

I try to move closer to them but Blaze's dragon keeps me against him with his tail.

I don't know how to handle a feral shifter. Something about that situation triggered this in Blaze and I think it was more than just his mate being threatened.

"Blaze, I'm right here with you. We escaped and now we are safe," I try.

It doesn't make a dent in his fury and he won't move.

When Aksel tries to step forward, Blaze roars and starts pacing in front of me in agitation. The air crackles with tension as his enormous claws dig up the earth with each step.

“Anna, just stay back, he will calm down eventually,” Griffyn shouts.

“I’m not sure that’s true,” Rion rebuffs.

I know I can help so I take measured steps closer to him, careful not to get in his path. The dragon focuses on me when I extend a hand, palm up, and try to exude soothing energy.

With gentle words, I try again. “Blaze, come back to us. We’ve escaped but we need to get home and away from here. Let the man come back to me.”

He lets me run my hand over his scales in a soothing motion.

Slowly, I feel the tension leave his body as his eyes soften.

“Can you shift back?” I ask.

I sigh a breath of relief when the transformation starts and seconds later I have a naked, shaking Blaze standing in front of me.

I charge him, jump into his arms, and hug him tight. “I’m so glad you came back to me.”

His arms stop shaking once they’re wrapped around me.

A jolt runs through both of us when Griffyn smacks Blaze on the back. “Glad to have you back with us.”

Blaze stiffens instantly and a rumbling growl erupts from his chest and his eyes turn the gold of his dragon.

Griffyn backs up with his hands raised in a gesture of peace.

I wrap my arms around him tighter and press my nose into his neck. “It’s okay, Blaze.”

He is still feral, even in his human form.

“We need to make him feel safe,” I call to the others.

“Let’s get back to the house.” Aksel pulls out transport charms, tosses them out and we all go back.

When we arrive back at the house, Blaze is still holding me tight to his chest.

Felix comes closer, setting off another rumble from Blaze.

“Blaze, I need to check on my mate. I’m her mate too, man.” Felix’s tone is desperate and I can feel his anxiety through our bond.

Blaze doesn’t react, he just keeps up a low warning growl.

Felix starts pacing.

“I’m okay, Felix.”

“My snow leopard is losing his mind after everything that happened. I need to scent you again and feel that you’re okay.”

Griffyn turns to Aksel. “Fix this. We all need to know she’s okay.”

“Blaze, you need to calm down. We aren’t a danger to Anna,” Aksel says softly.

“I’m okay,” I say again louder.

“Hearing you say it is not the same as seeing it for ourselves. We almost lost you, Anna,” Griffyn says.

I can feel his anxiety too. It isn’t as frantic as Felix’s but still strong.

Blaze’s muscles are tense.

Rion’s voice is strained as he says, “I need to go before I do something I’ll regret. I’ll be back as soon as I can calm down.” He heads towards the door.

“Where the fuck are you going?” Aksel demands.

“Rion isn’t a prisoner here. If he wants to leave so he doesn’t attack Blaze then he can. He doesn’t have to explain,” I demand.

Rion dips his head before heading out the door.

I need to calm Blaze down and I'm the only one who can do it. I take his hand and press the palm against my chest.

"Feel my heartbeat. I know you can hear it with your super hearing so listen to each beat and know I'm alive."

Felix stops pacing and listens to me too.

Gradually, the tension leaves Blaze and he stops growling.

Blaze takes a deep breath. "Sorry."

"No sorry needed," I say.

As soon as it's clear Blaze isn't going to lose his mind, everyone crowds us and there are a million hands on my body, checking me over.

We all stay like that just taking a moment to appreciate the fact that we are all alive. If Rion was here, it would be beautiful.

It takes time but eventually, we all take some space and spread out around the room.

"So, a lot happened tonight," Griffyn says carefully.

It's time to address the elephant in the room, I can't wait a second longer. I turn to these idiots and yell.

"Yes, and the revelations were important. This is ridiculous. Seriously, did you all get together and decide to keep this life-changing truth from me?"

Felix clears his throat in a clear attempt at humor.

I roll my eyes. "Except Felix. Who clearly never lied to me about being my mate."

Felix was the perfect first mate.

I catch myself. First? I'm planning on mating the rest of them and making an order?

"Anna," Griffyn says softly.

I'm at least planning on mating with Griffyn.

“Fine. I’ve already been mad at Griffyn and he apologized. So right now we are focused on Blaze and Aksel. I haven’t even talked to you, Blaze, about dropping that bomb before your fight and thoroughly distracting me. And Aksel, your lie almost got us all killed.”

For the first time, Aksel drops all his walls and shows me what’s underneath. His eyes soften while his eyes stare into mine and beg me to forgive him. Every inch of him is remorse from his drooped shoulders to his wet eyes.

“Anna, I didn’t want that to happen. Everything I did was to prevent that. I wanted to keep you safe from my psychotic father and the only way to fight the attraction between us was to be horrible to you. Even I had no idea he would go that far, he’s worse than I ever knew.”

I just stare at him and try to process what he’s saying. It’s so easy to be quick to anger and want to hate him. Everything he’s shown me since I met him screams that he’s an asshole. There were very few moments where I felt like I was connecting with him. I can’t discount how he reacted when I woke up in Joka’s arms. I missed a lot of the action, but I know he was begging for my life. He was willing to give his life up for mine.

That deserves a second chance. I take a deep breath.

“Okay.”

“Okay?” He whispers.

“Okay, I’ll give you a second chance but I want the real you and there can’t be any lies between us. Any of us. If we are giving this a chance then we do it right. Otherwise, we give up now. That includes you Blaze, if the other two are getting a second chance then I’ll include you in that. Especially since you told me yourself even though it was too long after we met. I want

you to explain your reasoning to me when you're ready though. Sound good?"

I look around the room, making eye contact with each of them. Felix is grinning around at the others like they're already brothers. He hops up and shouts his excitement, pumping his fist in the air. I'm glad he's embracing my decision since he and I are already mated.

Blaze gives me a slow nod but everything else is locked down. He's such a closed book, I can't imagine he's looking forward to sharing his inner thoughts with me.

Aksel's lips tilt up into a real smile that could make anyone weak in the knees. Both of his eyes look like they're shining even with the different colors and his straight, white teeth could blind someone.

"You can still make it up to me though, Akshole."

Aksel nods with a serious expression.

In typical Griffyn fashion, he rolls his eyes. "Does that mean I'm stuck with Aksel for life?" When he looks at me, his eyes are dancing with mirth.

Aksel glares at the incubus.

"So, you were an asshole to keep Anna away? What's your excuse for the rest of us?" Griffyn asks.

I hid a smile behind my palm.

"I don't like you," Aksel says, deadpan.

"What about Rion?" Blaze asks. The tension in the room ramps up immediately.

I clear my throat. "I don't know yet. We've agreed to be honest so I think I should tell you I'm attracted to him and want to see where things go."

Rion is a mystery. One I'm excited to see unfold even if I could get hurt when it does.

“I don’t like him,” Aksel states unnecessarily.

“Tell us something we don’t know,” Felix retorts. “I think he’s a good guy and he bailed us out tonight. Without him, there’s no knowing what would have happened. We can’t hold his brother against him any more than we can hold Joka against Aksel.”

The dark fae glares at him.

“I hated him when we first found him. He hurt Anna and I wasn’t going to let that go easily, but he makes Anna happy and she deserves that, so I won’t stand in the way,” Griffyn says.

Blaze only grunts and I’m not sure if he agrees or not.

“Can you all please try to get to know him? Give him a chance and we can see where it goes. Please? For me?” I ask.

Their actions won’t affect how I behave with Rion but it would mean a lot to me if they’ll try. We need to somehow go from this group of individuals with so many attitudes to a cohesive unit if we want any chance of this working.

“Fine,” Aksel agrees.

Blaze nods.

I already know Felix and Griffyn agree.

“Then, let’s give this a shot,” I say, nodding my head once.

“I call taking you on a date first,” Griffyn shouts, lifting one hand into the air like he’s in school.

The other three glare at him.

“A date?” I ask.

He nods. “Of course. If we are giving this a shot then you need to be courted properly. I’ll be the first to do it and you’ll love me more for the rest of our lives because of it.”

I burst out laughing. I can never guess what is going to come out of his mouth next.

“I already took her to meet my mom,” Felix says proudly.

Blaze’s face is blank but his eyes are so lost as they dart between the two of them, trying to figure out what to do next.

“Technically, she met my dad,” Aksel says.

It takes me a second for the words to register before I’m bent at the waist laughing.

“Was that a joke?” Felix asks.

“It was a joke!” Griffyn shouts. “I didn’t know you could do that.”

Aksel rolls his eyes but he’s still smiling.

This is going to be interesting, to say the least.

Two

Anna



Rion comes back to the house and I have no idea where he went but I'm glad he's back with us. I squeeze his hand.

"We need to shower and burn these clothes. If anyone shows up here we can't be found covered in ash. There's more we need to talk about so meet back here after," Aksel directs. Everyone leaves to get cleaned up.

I scrub my skin raw in the shower, trying to remove the blood on my hands and fix how dirty I feel.

Joka had to die. He wanted to kill my mates and me. I don't need to feel guilty for defending the people I love.

I keep repeating it until it feels true and ignore the ache in my temples.

Felix slips into the shower with me.

"Can I join you?"

I fight back my smile. "Yes, but no funny business. We have a lot more to talk about tonight."

Felix rolls his eyes. "We always have a lot weighing on us. You need comfort and I need my mate. Let me wash your hair."

Felix pours shampoo into his hand and works it into a lather. I turn around and give him access to my hair.

I feel the tension leave my shoulders as Felix rubs my head in a soothing motion while getting me clean.

“I’m proud of you.”

I keep my eyes closed. I can feel that pride down the bond.

“Why?” I whisper back.

He tilts my head into the stream of water and helps wash the soap out.

“You did what you had to do to protect your mates. Our bond feels solid and secure knowing you can take care of yourself.”

I would think he was just trying to make me feel better except I can feel the truth of his words through the mate bond.

“I’m sorry you felt so out of control tonight. I know it was hard to sit there and watch him hurt me. We won’t let that happen again,” I promise him.

A tear slides down his cheek but he ignores it. “It was terrifying. The worst thing I’ve ever experienced, knowing I was letting you down. You’re here now and I’ll do everything in my power to keep you safe in the future.”

I hug him, pressing our bodies together and soaking up each other’s love through all the skin to skin. I take a moment to just feel our bond and Felix safe in my arms. To take comfort in him and reassure him in return.

We help each other get clean with soft touches and sure hands.

When we finally stop smelling like a campfire, we get out of the shower and dress in some comfortable clothes.

“I’m just going to take a moment,” Felix says when I go to the door.

I nod and leave him behind to head back downstairs.

Aksel is sitting there on the couch, waiting for everyone else and I need to use this moment to voice a question that’s sitting like a weight on my chest.

I get comfortable beside him on the couch.

“Aksel, what happens now that your dad is gone?” I ask, my voice cracking slightly.

He pulls me closer, wrapping his arm around my shoulder so the sides of our bodies are pressed tight. I like this new side of Aksel.

“Once they’ve waited the appropriate amount of time, his seat on the council will open. They can’t declare him dead since there’s no body from the fire, but it will be assumed. Traditionally, it goes to me as his son. It’s a classist tradition. I now need to decide if I accept or if it goes to my sister. I can’t imagine she’d want the burden, so I think I have to accept. Most importantly, Dorielle has her freedom now. I won’t hold her to my father’s expectations. She can do what she wants. I want her to have that.”

“You’re a good big brother. So, you’re going to be the dark fae elder? You’re so young, there’s no way you qualify as an elder.”

He laughs.

“I don’t and people will argue that. My father prepared me but the threat of a new heir was always there so I honestly thought I would escape the burden. It’s only happened a handful of times where someone is appointed before their time. That’s if we aren’t charged for his murder, of course.”

I stiffen in his arms. “Do you think that will happen?”

“No, I don’t. I will be keeping an eye on the investigation though. We will be safe. If not, I’ll protect you and the others. Even if we have to run.”

He says it so confidently, like there’s nothing that would stop him from being right. I think he lives life that way and so far it’s been a good strategy for him.

“I trust you,” I whisper, surprising even myself. When did that happen?

I do trust that he will physically take care of me and even the others. Aksel is a leader, he won’t leave anyone behind even if he wants to. My heart

and emotions are another thing.

“You do?” His voice cracks as he whispers.

“I guess I do. You’re a good leader Aksel. I see that,” I tell him honestly.

“Thank you.”

“What was your life like growing up?” I ask.

I’m not sure I’ll have another chance where he’s being so open and I want to know everything about him.

“He was a bastard then too. He’s never been a real father to me. All Joka wanted was a legacy and he took every opportunity to mold me into his prodigy. I wish I could scrub it all from my brain but it wasn’t all bad advice. I’ve used it in my own way to get where I am now.”

He says it all without emotion like he’s distanced himself from the reality of things.

“I’m sorry, Aksel. No one’s parents should treat them that way. I thought he was a bad father before tonight, now I’m sure we are lucky you came out the way you did.”

He studies me before confessing, “It wasn’t my first time being locked in that basement. He used to take me down there and cut me up where no one would see. It was part of his lessons.”

Tears form in my eyes and drip down my cheek. Aksel should never have had to go through that. That decides it. I won’t feel guilt for Joka’s death. He was a terrible person and we all needed him gone from our lives.

Aksel lifts his shirt to show the angry, red cross over his chest. “He never used poison on me before so this will be the first scar I carry as a memory of his abuse.”

I press my fingers next to the wound, careful not to touch it.

“We’ve all been marked by this journey.” I flip up my shirt so he can see

the pearly white scars from the bullets. “I still think you’re perfect. I will look at them as a mark of our potential love. You got that X in retaliation for defending me.”

His lips tilt up in the corners. “That’s how I’ll see it, then.”

I hear footsteps coming so I settle back into Aksel’s arms.

Three

Anna



Everyone joins us and Aksel starts.

“One more thing, I know we all feel wrecked after everything that happened but we need to follow the lead Rion gave us on finding Killian. The amulet is hurting Anna and it feels like we are running out of time,” Aksel says.

I clutch my head, hating that he’s right.

Felix is staring at me.

“It’s happening right now, isn’t it?” Rion asks.

Blaze growls. “Of course it is. Someone just tried to kill her.”

I put pressure on my temples. “I’m fine. I think Aksel is right but we should all take the night to rest and recuperate before we go in.”

“Anna is right. We need to be in top form to take on Killian,” Rion says.

“We need to end it this time. It’s taking too long. We are better than this,” Blaze growls.

I nod. He’s right. It feels like Killian is just toying with us as we follow his trail. It’s infuriating.

“It’s a plan. Everyone get some rest and charge up. Anna, you come with me.” Aksel grabs my arm gently and pulls me with him.

I glance back to see Griffyn raise his eyebrows so I give him a wink to let him know I'll come find him later. He needs to feed.

Aksel takes me up to his room.

"I'm overflowing with power from everyone's negative emotions from tonight. You can feed from me."

I stare at him. "You're going to let me feed from you?"

Something clicks and I realize why. I know he's my mate now. That's why he never fed me in the past.

"I want you to be strong for tomorrow," he says.

"And you can offer now that I know you're my mate, right?"

He grimaces. "I am sorry I didn't tell you, Anna. I wish it was simpler and you could have known from the start."

I nod. "I know, I know. It's just going to take a few more apologies before I'm completely over it but I said we could move forward so we are. If that means I get to drink from you then I'm excited about that."

Aksel sits down on his bed and pats the spot next to him. I join him. My mouth is salivating.

He tilts his neck and I move before he can change his mind. The angle is a little awkward but I make it work.

The taste of mate is strong in his blood and it overwhelms my senses. My focus is completely centered around Aksel.

Once I've had my fill, I pull away and lick the last drop of blood up.

"Thank you," I whisper.

He looks me dead in the eyes, palms his crotch, and whispers, "Thank you."

I'm not ready to take things further with Aksel right now after everything that was revealed tonight, no matter how badly I want to.

Every inch of him is pure temptation.

“Anytime.” I stand up and walk away despite my raging hormones.

I’ll save them for Griffyn.

My steps are intent as I go to Griffyn’s room. Before I can knock he shouts, “Come in, Vixen!”

Griffyn is sitting up on the bed with his shirt gone. The beautiful designs on his chest call out to me.

“Fuck you are drenched in hormones. What happened with Aksel?” Griffyn groans.

“He fed me.”

Griffyn’s eyebrows shoot up. “Damn, I didn’t expect that. I guess we should expect a different Aksel now. He already seems more free now that his dad is gone.”

“Yeah, he does.” And I like it.

“Enough talking about Aksel. I want you with me.”

I move forward and sit on his lap so I’m facing him.

I trace the lines along his chest. Noticing the spot below his ribs on the right side doesn’t have anything.

“Why is this spot empty?” I ask.

“As soon as I met you, I had some of my ink magically removed in the hope that one day you would take me as your mate and need the spot.”

Griffyn grabs my face between his hands and stares into my eyes. “Tonight was terrifying, Anna. I never want to feel the pure terror of losing you again. I regret the time I wasted by not telling you I love you. You mean everything to me.”

Tears stream down my face. Griffyn and I didn’t have a flawless journey to get here but I know one thing for sure.

“I love you too. I’m lucky to have you as my mate, Griffyn. I want to make it official.”

He freezes with wide eyes.

Slowly, he asks, “You want to complete the bond with me?”

I nod, absolutely sure of my choice. “I don’t want to spend any more time without you as my mate. Tonight reminded me how fleeting time can be. I don’t want to waste it.”

He tugs my face closer and smashes his lips to mine. His tongue immediately tangles with mine making my fingers tingle where they’re clutching his shoulders.

His hips push up against me as I grind down on him and his cock twitches in response.

Griffyn’s hands tighten on my hips making my heart beat faster. I am so wet and ready for him.

I groan in pleasure as electricity shoots through my body.

My hands run down his chest feeling every hard, muscled inch of him. When I make it to his boxers, because of course he is sitting here waiting in only his boxers, I tug them down and release his cock.

Griffyn strips me of my clothes before running a finger through my slit and feeling me.

“You are soaked for me, Vixen. You want me now?”

“Yes, Griffyn, I am dying to have you inside me.”

“That’s my girl.”

Griffyn settles his tip against my opening and slowly pushes me down on top of him. I groan as each inch stretches me further until he is all the way inside me.

I grind down on the bump on his pelvis making my clit pulse as he nips

my bottom lip.

“You ready to be mine forever? There’s no going back, Anna.”

I stare into his smoky eyes and see pure love shining back at me.

“Absolutely.”

Griffyn lifts his chin to give me better access to his throat as I kiss, lick and softly bite him.

His thrusts aren’t rushed as he slowly builds me up rhythmically. When he runs his tongue over my nipple, bringing it to a stiff point, I clench around him.

His piercings press against my inner nerves making me groan.

I don’t want slow anymore. I want Griffyn to be my mate.

“Mate me Griffyn. Make me yours forever.”

He growls and flips me over so I’m on my back staring up at him. He stares right into my eyes intimately as he thrusts.

I’m clutching his shoulders to ground me in this moment as my body sits on the edge of intense pleasure.

Griffyn settles inside me before grinding his hips. My clit and inner walls are buzzing as he stimulates every inch of me.

“Give me your wrist,” Griffyn demands.

I have to pry my hand off him.

Griffyn nicks my wrist and his own. Right before he mixes our blood and bonds us for life he looks at me.

“Bite me.”

I comply, marking his neck with my fangs as I feel the moment our blood combines.

All I can do is hold on with my other hand as I shatter around him, screaming his name.

Griffyn roars, pressing deep inside me so I can feel his hot jets of come inside me.

I shudder as I come down and feel the bond form. A connection comes to life between Griffyn and me. I can feel his happiness, love, and devotion. His bond settles right next to Felix's and I feel a step closer to being complete.

Griffyn brushes my hair back from my face as awe comes down the bond.

"If I couldn't feel you as a piece of me in my soul, I wouldn't believe this is real." Griffyn grins.

"It feels like a piece of me that was missing has been found."

Hopefully one day all the pieces will be there.

"I never thought I would have this. I will treasure you and our bond always and I'll accept anyone else you want to bring in, just like Felix accepted me," Griffyn vows.

I press a chaste kiss to his lips. "Thank you. I will treasure you always as well, Griffyn. You're officially my mate and that means we have a lifetime ahead of us."

He lays me down on his chest so my head is resting over his heart. Each beat is a soothing melody that drags me to sleep.

When I'm on the edge of consciousness I feel the bed dip behind me and know Felix has joined us.

Four

Anna



The next morning, we transport to Ireland based on what Rion knows. Instead of a mansion, this is a castle. It's still extravagant and modern but it looks like a tourist destination here in Ireland.

"I've never been to Ireland," I say.

Rion steps closer to me. "You'll be back again for a better trip. Not one dictated by Killian."

His Irish accent is already stronger. Just being in his homeland brings it out.

"Do you know anything about this place beyond its location?" Felix asks as he examines our surroundings.

"This was my home but I have no way of knowing how much it has changed in the last three thousand years."

My heart breaks for him. I grab his hand and squeeze it.

We all move forward while under the cover of darkness before sunrise. I'm dressed in the same tactical gear Aksel gave me for our last mission even though we are considering this only a scouting mission. We need to gather information to help us plan our attack for the future.

Immediately, this house seems different. There's a sense of foreboding in the air as we move closer.

There's a sharp crack as Blaze's body jolts against nothing.

Blaze curses up a storm. His words are muffled around his broken nose that's crooked and dripping blood.

"What the fuck?" Griffyn presses a hand out into the air and presses against something we can't see.

"There's some kind of wall here." Aksel knocks against it.

I move forward carefully and feel it for myself. It truly is an invisible wall that feels impenetrable. A mime would have a field day with this.

"He has shields around this property. There haven't been shields anywhere else," Felix says.

Blaze swipes at the blood pouring from his nose.

"This is old magic, it is almost impossible to find someone strong enough to do this anymore," Aksel says.

"He could have had it done centuries ago. This was my home when I was young. He has had forever to fortify this place into a fortress," Rion reminds us.

Every step forward is two steps back.

"Why wouldn't he always stay here? It doesn't make sense that he imprisoned mages and took their homes when he already had the perfect place," I ask.

"You're right it doesn't make sense. There had to be a good reason beyond needing protection." Aksel feels along the wall but doesn't find a break. "Let's split up into two groups and follow the wall around until we meet up on the other side. Gather as much intel as you can even from this distance. Once we find a way to break this wall, we are going in."

Rion, Felix, and I go one way, breaking apart from the others. It's impossible to see more than the outside of the castle as we go. If there are more protections in place, we can't find them.

Everyone looks furious and frustrated when we meet back up.

"We just can't seem to gain any ground," I say softly.

Sighs chime around me.

"Let's get out of here. We can't get inside right now but we are going to find a way," Aksel declares.

"It won't be long now until we have Killian. I can feel it," Felix says.

We transport back to the house. Empty-handed.

When we get home, Blaze's nose is mostly healed but I still bring him to the kitchen and grab a towel to help clean up the blood.

He watches me the entire time.

"You're always staring at me when I help you after an injury," I say.

He looks away. "I'm not used to someone taking care of me. It shocks me."

Fuck, that's so upsetting.

I run my fingers through his hair and cup his cheek. "I'll take care of you as long as you'll let me."

Blaze clears his throat twice before he can speak. "Thank you, Spark. I'll take care of you too."

"I know you will. There's no doubt in my mind." No one else is with us so it's a good time to see if he wants to share more. "Do you want to tell me about your past? Maybe why you lost control when Joka had you locked up? You fought against the chains, you ended up escaping them in the end which is thought to be impossible. How did you do that?"

I shouldn't have asked so much at once.

All the emotion drains from his face until it's blank and he is frozen.

I grab his hand and squeeze it reassuringly. "You don't have to tell me anything. Just know I'm here if you want to talk."

I try to lean back and give him some space but he doesn't let me.

"I have a dark past." He takes a deep breath. "I have a resistance to wolfsbane and those chains from how often they were used on me. I lost control of myself and my dragon. I think it was that combined with my resistance to the chains that allowed me to escape."

"You have a resistance to wolfsbane and those chains?" I repeat dumbly.

What kind of past would give him that?

"An organization captured me when I was young. They used to chain me up in dark, concrete rooms. They would drug me or use the same chains Joka did. That's why I reacted so strongly to being chained again in Joka's basement. I wasn't in my right mind. I was trapped in memories and trauma."

"I'm so sorry, Blaze. Sorry isn't enough of a word. How could they do that to you?"

"They owned me, Spark. They could do whatever they wanted with me and there was nothing I could do about it."

"How long did they have you?"

"Ten years."

"How old were you?" My heart cracks at everything he's been through.

"Anna, knowing my story isn't going to help. You shouldn't be weighed down with it."

"Blaze, don't say that. It's not weighing me down, it's bringing me in for support. I want to know everything about you and I want to be there for you as a shoulder to lean on. I would say a shoulder to cry on but I can't picture

that with you.” I try for a small smile and a joke to lighten the weight he feels about sharing this with me.

Blaze nods. “I was seven when they took me.”

Tears spring to my eyes. “You were a child?”

He nods. “I was flying in my dragon form when they shot me down from the sky. I could barely control my shift, let alone fight back. I was trained to fight and make them money. Ferocious kids were money makers for them so they made sure we were ruthless.”

I crawl into his lap and wrap my limbs around him. I just hold him and try to bring comfort to the tiny child inside him who never had a chance for a normal life.

He stays silent but I feel the tension slowly leaving his body the longer we sit here.

“You still want me?” Blaze’s voice cracks as he asks.

I lean back so I can stare into his perfect amber eyes. “Absolutely, Blaze. Nothing you tell me about your past could make me want you less. You survived everything you’ve been through and come out the other side as an incredible man. I’m proud to know you’re my fated mate. You’re everything I could have hoped for.”

His eyes search mine before he leans forward and kisses me softly and slowly. It’s deep and intimate, like a merging of our souls while they’re so open right now.

Blaze pulls away reluctantly. “We have to get back to the others and talk about what we’ve learned at Killian’s home today.”

“You’re right.” Even if all I want to do is hold Blaze close.

Five

Anna



All of us gather in the living room to talk.

“Killian is up to something. Why was he at those houses if he had a fortress? Any guesses?” Aksel asks.

“Maybe he wanted to be closer for some reason,” Felix offers.

“With transport charms that seems unnecessary. He is certainly not hurting for money,” Griffyn says.

I nod in agreement. I doubt Killian is unwilling to spend his fortune.

“He needed something. We figured they were all mages for the protections on the houses, but what if there was another reason,” I add.

Everyone thinks about that.

“He may have wanted something from them specifically,” Rion suggests.

“The best way to find out is to talk to them. The little boy, Michael, won’t know anything but the older man, Eugene, might,” Aksel says.

“We got the notification when he was released from the hospital. My best guess is he’s back home. That’s where we should go.” Felix folds his arms.

“Are we just going to show up unannounced?” I ask.

“That’s like half our job. We show up out of nowhere, catch people unaware, and follow our lead,” Griffyn reveals.

“Being elite agents has less action than I would have guessed.”

Griffyn tackles me backward until he’s above me tickling my sides. “Are you insulting us?”

I can barely breathe. I’m laughing so hard. I spit out, “Never!”

Griffyn finally lets me up. He wraps his arms around me from behind and rests his head on my shoulder.

“Let’s go surprise the man. Rion you can’t come since you look like the man’s captor and the magical community’s most wanted.” Aksel grabs his wallet off the counter and heads to the garage.

Rion glares at Aksel but doesn’t fight him. I wait for the others to move out before approaching him.

I wrap him up in a hug, gather my courage, and press a soft kiss to his lips.

He freezes in shock and I pull back immediately. Have I been misreading the situation? I thought we were heading this way ever since he got back.

He searches my eyes before pulling me back and kissing me like his life depends on it. His tongue tangles with mine as he pulls me as close to him as possible.

Every caress of our lips sends electricity jolting through my body. I have to pull away, but it’s difficult. If everyone wasn’t waiting for me, I would spend longer in this moment with Rion.

I give him a tentative smile and one last kiss before slowly backing out the door.

Rion looks seconds away from grabbing me back.

The SUV is on and running with everyone waiting inside. My spot in the back between Griffyn and Felix is waiting for me. I climb over Griffyn, who grabs my ass, to get to it.

When we arrive at the man's house, a shiver runs down my spine. I wouldn't be back here if we had better options.

It's extremely awkward when the man opens the door to see us standing there. He just stares at us blankly.

"Hello, I'm not sure if you remember us but we are the team assigned by the council to capture the vampire who held you captive," Felix says politely.

He sounds friendly but we still make an intimidating sight. I remember how much better he reacted to me in the hospital than the guys so I step forward.

"I'm not sure if you remember me, we talked in the hospital. We just want to follow up and gain any information that will help us in the case."

He nods, "I know who you are. I'm just deciding if I want to deal with you or not."

Eugene steps back and allows us into the foyer. He doesn't welcome us any further though. I would be wary too after everything that happened.

"Are you close to finding him? That bastard ruined my home and stole from me. The council has been helping me but some things are priceless."

"I'm so sorry. If you don't mind me asking, what did he steal?" I ask.

"Money for starters, but most devastating were a few items from my elite magical collection. I used to have one of the most impressive collections in all of the Americas but the best items are gone." He sounds furious.

"What were they?" Blaze speaks up and asks.

He eyes us carefully before sighing. "The Confractus Vas, Factorem Larva, and Slabrira Nasc."

"Is there anything else you can tell us about why Killian might have chosen your home specifically?" I ask.

"I don't know why he chose me except maybe because I live alone."

“Thank you for your time. If you think of anything else that might be helpful, please give us a call.” Aksel hands over a business card with his number on it.

Of course, he has a business card.

“Once he’s captured, I assume my property will be returned to me. Right, councilman?”

Aksel raises an eyebrow but smiles diplomatically. “Anything we find will be returned to its rightful owner.”

“Excellent.”

We turn and leave the man in his home. I figured he would be happier about being alive but to each their own.

Rion is pacing in the living room when we get back. “I don’t like being left behind.”

“Sorry man, not much to do when you share a face with a psychopath,” Griffyn says.

“Once Killian is captured, we will clear your name and you’ll be free to roam the streets as much as you want,” Aksel says.

“With me by your side.” I wrap an arm around his waist and squeeze.

Rion smiles. “What did you learn?”

“Killian did steal things while he was there which isn’t a surprise, but according to Eugene, they were valuable magical artifacts,” I explain.

“I didn’t recognize any of them. Did anyone else?” Aksel asks.

They all shake their heads.

Aksel repeats the artifacts for Rion’s benefit.

“One of them sounds familiar but an image would be more helpful.” Rion’s forehead scrunches in thought.

“I’m going to tap into the council’s resources. Might as well take

advantage. I'll share once I have more information on them," Aksel says. "Speaking of the council, I have received official word that I am the interim councilman while the events at my father's home are investigated."

That's a big deal.

"How did Eugene already know that?" I ask.

"He's clearly been in touch with the council for his artifacts. He must have heard," Aksel says.

"Are we worried about the investigation leading them back to us?" I ask.

Blaze and Aksel share a look.

"The good news is, dragon's fire destroys everything in its path. So, there will be no evidence left behind," Aksel starts.

Blaze finishes, "The bad news is, there are only a few things that destroy like dragon's fire so that's a clue itself."

"But, without proof, they can't just point the finger at any dragons around," Felix points out.

"Right. We should be fine but everyone should be aware and make sure not to draw suspicion on us." Aksel makes eye contact with everyone before landing on Rion last. "How did you know we were in trouble and that you needed to come help?"

Rion doesn't look remorseful for one second. "I followed you and I'm glad I did. I was watching from outside the house in case I needed to act. I watched you all drop at the dining table."

"What took you so long to get to us?" Griffyn asks.

"I had to fight my way through his guards and get into the house without alerting anyone I was there. It was a slower process than I would have liked but I moved as fast as I could."

Aksel's lips are a thin line as he listens to Rion. "I hate to admit I was

wrong but I'm glad you were there. I won't let pride stop me from admitting you ignoring my orders kept Anna alive."

Rion nods and I see a sliver of respect in his eyes as he looks at Aksel.

"So, you're the dark fae elder now?" Griffyn asks, sounding unsure.

"What does that mean for us and the team?" Felix asks.

Aksel grimaces. "It means I'm going to be busier as I keep up with my duties. I won't be leaving the team. I'm staying right here with Anna."

It's strange to hear him be so open about him and me after everything we've been through. He meant it when he said he was done denying that we are fated mates.

I smile at him. I want him to know I appreciate his new attitude.

"Won't that be impossible? You'll have a million things to do?" Felix asks.

Again, Aksel grimaces. "While the position is only interim, it will be lighter. I have a plan to help me manage the load though."

Everyone keeps quiet, knowing we have to trust Aksel in this. He was trained for this his entire life. Aksel knows what he's doing.

Aksel turns to me. "Anna, I'm going to see Adelina. Would you like to join me? I know she would be excited to see you since she's been nonstop bothering me ."

He can't hide the affection he has for his cousin. It's kind of adorable. I never thought I would use that word regarding Aksel.

"Absolutely!" I say.

Seeing Adelina again will be great. After everything I've been through since last time, her presence will be like a balm to my soul.

There's something about her that feels like we are meant to be around each other. I can see us being close friends.

Aksel presents his arm to me. “Then let’s go.”

Six

Aksel



We show up at a midsize house in a picture-perfect neighborhood. It has shutters, a porch swing, and even a white picket fence.

“This is where Adelina lives?” Anna asks, shocked.

“I know, it’s hilarious. You pictured something wilder. Her mate, Jen, is very traditional so they live here but Adelina has her style on the inside.”

“That’s beautiful they compromised like that.” I can hear the part she doesn’t say, she’s not sure her mates could find a middle ground like that.

I walk out from the covering of some trees and towards the front door.

“Do they have those trees there so people can transport in without being seen?” Anna asks.

I nod. “It’s small details like this that let you know supernaturals live among normal humans. It looks like an average landscaping choice but it serves a supernatural purpose.”

“I wonder how many little details like this I haven’t noticed since I grew up an unsuspecting human. I didn’t even know to look for them.”

I knock on the front door.

We stand there with neighbors staring at us until the door swings open.

A gorgeous, tall woman with brown curly hair is standing there with a hesitant smile on her face. Adelina made an excellent choice in a mate.

“Aksel?” She asks, confused. She stares at me before realizing Anna is there. She sticks her hand out for her to shake. “I’m Jen.”

“Anna. It’s nice to meet you!”

Her face lights up. “You’re Anna? Oh, Adelina has been talking about you nonstop. I’m glad you’re here even though it’s unexpected.”

“Aksel didn’t tell you we were coming?” Anna asks while side-eyeing me.

Jen laughs. “No, but that’s not surprising. Come on in. I’ll grab Adelina.”

We follow her inside and get comfortable on the couch. Adelina comes in and joins us.

“Anna!” She pulls Anna in for a tight hug and Anna squeezes her back. I’m sure she’s being careful to rein in her vampire strength.

“What are you doing here?” She asks.

Anna sits down next to me and stays silent since I never mentioned why we are here.

Carefully and without emotion, I say, “Joka is missing. His house burned down and the current assumption is that he was inside. I am filling his position until he can be located.”

Adelina tries to blank her face but I can see her excitement. “What does that have to do with me?”

“You’ve always had the right ideas. I’ve been listening all these years when you whispered in my ear. I know you were hoping that one day I would be here. My main priority is Anna and ending any danger to her. I can’t devote myself to the role, to making the necessary steps to introduce change.

There's no one I can think of who would be better at identifying injustice and helping me end it.

Every single person on that council has assistants who handle the day-to-day. I want to be clear, I won't see you as an assistant even if they do. You're my trusted advisor. So, what do you think? Will you do it?"

Adelina stares at me with her eyes wide and mouth open. She's going to have to work harder to hide her reactions if she's going to spend her time around sharks.

"I think you would be perfect, Adelina. Think of all the good you could do with this much access to the people in power. Aksel will owe you forever so you will have one councilman in your pocket already," Anna says with a huge smile on her face.

I'm not sure I like her thought process but whatever it takes to get Adelina on board. Having someone I trust so completely is the only way my life won't be completely derailed by this new position.

I can't afford any distractions from the second chance Anna is giving me. It's too important.

And killing Killian. His days are numbered.

"Okay, I'll do it. But I am not hiding who I am to appease anyone. You have to be okay with that." I love her confidence.

"I would expect nothing less."

I go to shake her hand but she pushes my outstretched palm to the side and pulls me in for a hug. I dwarf her smaller frame and all my muscles freeze up.

She laughs before pulling Anna into a hug that looks a lot more natural than what I just did.

"I want to get started right away. You will hear from me soon so be

prepared.”

She pushes us out the door.

I use a transport charm to take us back to the house.

“For the record, I think you did the right thing,” Anna says once we are there.

“I know I did.”

There’s an awkward silence. One I don’t know how to fill.

I don’t want to admit it, but it was easier to be around Anna when I could make her hate me. Trying to get her to like me instead seems impossible.

But I have to try.

“I want to take you out.” My voice comes out rough and aggressive.

“Like kill me?” She asks.

Fuck me.

“No, I’m not going to kill you. If I wanted you dead then you would already be dead.”

She widens her eyes, taking a dramatic step back from me.

I roll my eyes. “Don’t be dramatic. Do you want to go out on a date with me or not?”

Her eyebrows shoot up as her eyes search both of mine.

“You want to... to take me on a date?” She asks, shocked.

“We are trying this right? This is me trying.”

Why does everything have to be so difficult?

“Don’t get snappy with me. You’re the one who messed up. You should be begging me for forgiveness, not getting irritated when I can’t understand you.”

I take a deep breath and try to relax. She’s right.

I hate it.

“I know. I’m not irritated with you, I’m annoyed I can’t get the right words and do this right. I’ve never had a problem articulating myself before and it’s frustrating.”

Her face softens instantly. Anna steps closer until we are almost touching.

“I would love to go on a date with you Aksel.”

I nod. “Great. I’ll tell you when, once I have something planned.”

I spin around and leave, heading up to my room to try and figure out where to take her.

It has to be perfect.

Seven

Anna



There's a knock on the door to the room I'm sharing with Felix.

"Come in!" I shout.

I'm relaxing in bed, reading a book on my e-reader. With this many people around, it's hard to find time to read so I've been taking the opportunity whenever it arises. Aksel has been focused on finding information about the items Killian stole from Eugene. Which has left the rest of us in limbo.

I guess this moment is over.

Blaze walks in, surprising me enough that I'm no longer disappointed.

"Hey Blaze, what's up?"

He looks around the room, probably wondering what I'm doing in here.

I hold up my e-reader so he can see. "Just reading while I had a chance."

He nods and just stares at the device.

"I don't mind you interrupting. Not at all," I reassure him.

He looks unsure like he's regretting coming in here.

"I'm going to let my dragon out. He's been tense since our escape. I want to give him time to stretch his wings where there is no stress. Do you want to come?"

I jump off the bed and throw my reader down.

“Of course I do!”

I look down at my outfit. I’m wearing sleep shorts and a tank top. Probably not warm enough for what I’m going to convince Blaze to let me do.

“Let me get changed. I’ll meet you downstairs,” I say.

He nods and leaves the room, shutting the door behind him so I can get dressed. I throw on long pants and a thin sweatshirt. I match it with my favorite pair of platform sneakers that aren’t as amazing as heels but still make me feel powerful.

I practically run down the stairs in my excitement to see Blaze’s dragon again.

He’s standing by the back door waiting for me. He looks adorably nervous which is silly considering I’ve already seen his dragon, but maybe he’s thinking the same thing I am.

I grab his hand as we go outside so we can transport out of here.

When we land in the same spot as last time, I take a moment to take in the beauty all around me. The air is fresh and crisp, there’s dew on the grass and I feel like an ant next to these massive trees.

I turn back to Blaze to find him staring at me with a small, barely there, smile on his face.

The more time I spend with him, the more I get to see these little tilts on his lips and I am obsessed with them. Getting a smile out of Blaze feels like winning the lottery.

And I get to do it over and over.

I take a deep breath and prepare myself to ask Blaze but he beats me to it.

“Do you want to fly with me? Not clutched in my claw this time.”

I launch myself into his arms and wrap myself around him like I'm a koala. Between each kiss I place all over his face I say, "I. Would. Love. To. Fly. With. You."

Blaze laughs. It's a low chuckle that comes from his stomach.

Every time Blaze opens himself up to me, I see a different side of him.

"So, how do we do this?" I ask.

I have no idea what I'm doing. I imagine most people don't.

"I'll shift and you climb up onto my back. Hold on tight but know I won't let you fall. Nothing will happen to you, my dragon loves you too much, so relax and have fun."

Giddy butterflies erupt in my stomach. I am so excited to do this.

Blaze steps back and quickly strips his clothes. I don't stare even though I want to.

He shifts and I get to see his breathtaking, enormous dragon again.

The last time I saw him, he was whisking me away from danger and I did not get to enjoy the flight. I was pumped with anxiety and adrenaline. This time is just for enjoyment, not survival.

The dragon nudges me with his broad nose before lying down and presenting his side to me. It's difficult to climb up his scales. He uses his wing to push me up until I'm straddling his back.

I feel his smooth scales that radiate heat under my hands.

As the dragon's powerful wings beat against the air, a rush of wind engulfs me, tugging at my clothes and whipping my hair behind me. I cling tightly to Blaze's scaled-back, my heart pounding with exhilaration.

Looking down, I see the landscape spreading out beneath me, shrinking in size as we ascend. Animals appear as mere specks among massive trees and rivers.

The dragon's powerful muscles ripple beneath me with each flap of his wings. I feel the heat coming from his warm scales. It keeps me from freezing as we soar higher and the air grows crisp.

A sense of freedom washes over me as we reach the clouds. I extend my hand, fingertips brushing against the moist mist. The sky stretches out endlessly, painted in hues of blue and gold.

I feel alive.

My mind has never felt more clear. I realize there's an important angle we haven't explored in dealing with our problems. When we get home, I have to talk to everyone.

With the dragon as my steed, we navigate through the sky with grace and agility. We dip and curve, performing moves that defy gravity. I lean into the turns, feeling the rush of wind against my face and the dragon's warm breath brushing against my skin.

Blaze angles towards the ground and lands, ending the most spectacular experience of my life.

My blood is pumping through every inch of my body and I feel like I could do anything. As soon as Blaze shifts back, I jump on him.

He doesn't have time to put his clothes back on before I'm gripping his face and kissing him. My tongue tangles with his as I try to get as close to him as possible.

I pull back long enough to whisper, "That was incredible Blaze! Incredible! I feel so alive!"

His hand presses into the middle of his back, crushing our bodies closer together.

"I've never taken anyone flying with me like that. It's something saved only for a mate. I feel honored that you are so happy."

He is ruining me right now.

I break away from his lips and kiss down his neck, trying to consume him.

Blaze lets me rub all over his body until I get annoyed by the clothes between us.

“My clothes need to go.”

He doesn't waste a second before setting me down. His claws shred my shirt until it falls to the ground with my bra, panties, and pants quickly following.

Blaze's growl, when he looks down at my naked body, makes liquid rush to my core.

His nostrils flare before he kneels in front of me and presses his mouth to me. The pattern his tongue makes as he licks my clit makes my legs tremble. Blaze grips my ass to help steady me as he pushes a relentless pace. I scream my pleasure to the wilderness as he softly bites down on my clit and sends me over the edge.

I'm panting while he kisses up my body. He doesn't miss an inch of me with his attention.

When he finally makes it back to my mouth I kiss him with the same passion. I can taste myself on his lips, reminding me of what he just did for me.

“Let me return the favor.” I drop to my knees in front of him.

I cut off any protests by wrapping my mouth around him without hesitation. I take him as deep as I can before swallowing around him.

I don't tease or try to draw it out. I devour him.

Blaze is so big it's impossible to take more than half of him so I use my fist on the rest. Felix wasn't kidding when he told me Blaze was huge.

I can't wait for the stretch of having him inside me. It's going to be fantastic.

Blaze doesn't grab my hair or guide me in any way. He stands there proudly and lets me do what I want. His moans and groans tell me he's enjoying my work.

When I feel him swell slightly, I palm his balls, and that sets him off.

"Anna- Spark- I"

I keep him in my mouth while I nod permission. It's a primal need to want his come down my throat. It feels like ownership.

He is my mate.

Blaze lifts me off my knees to lay me down on the soft grass.

The texture against my bare skin feels like a stimulant in itself.

Blaze's hard cock is pointing at me as he settles between my legs.

"Again?" I ask, shocked at his stamina.

"I may never be satisfied when it comes to you, Spark."

Fuck. I love that.

"There's something I should tell you. You said no more secrets and I'm trying my best to follow that."

"What is it, Blaze?"

"I haven't been with anyone before."

I try to keep the shock off my face as best as I can.

"Does that bother you?" He asks.

I shoot up so I'm closer to him and set a hand on his arm. "Of course not, Blaze. If anything, I'm ecstatic that I'll be the only one to have you this way. I'm just wondering why?"

"I-I didn't trust anyone enough to be physical with them and the physical aspect didn't even appeal to me until I met you."

My heart breaks for the past he's been through but I'm so grateful we found each other.

"Take me any way you want, Blaze. I am yours."

He hits me with one of his gorgeous, but rare, smiles and I know this moment is perfect.

Blaze flips me over so I'm on my hands and knees in the grass. He runs a reverent hand over my back until his hand grips my shoulder.

He uses his leverage to slide into me, slowly. He's aware of his size and gives my body time to adjust.

Once he's inside, he starts fucking me hard and with abandon. The sound of our bodies slapping together sends more wetness to my core, helping him move more easily.

"I love the way you feel," Blaze grits out.

"You're stretching me so much, Blaze, it feels incredible."

He keeps moving, hitting my G-spot with every thrust. His lack of experience is made up for by his sheer size. Every move he makes brings me closer and closer to coming around him.

Blaze grips my hips tight enough to leave marks as he pounds into me.

My legs are shaking as I try to push back into him causing a deeper angle.

"Fuck!" I shout into the open clearing, thankful no one can hear us.

When I come, my arms lose their strength so I'm resting on my elbows.

My walls milk Blaze until I feel him swell and know he's about to finish.

Blaze roars as he comes, flooding my body with his come. He holds himself deep inside me, savoring this moment before pulling out. I feel him dripping down my thighs as his come runs out of me.

I collapse onto the ground and roll on my side. Blaze joins me until he's staring into my eyes and taking in my details.

He pushes a lock of hair behind my ear and presses a soft kiss to my lips.

“Do you feel good?” Blaze asks.

I want to laugh at the absurd question when I’m laying here in pure bliss but I can tell he’s serious and feeling insecure after his first time.

“Blaze, that was incredible. I feel like I’m in heaven after what we did. I’m not just trying to make you feel good, you can see it in my eyes. You’re so big I almost couldn’t take it.”

“You’re made to take me and more since you’re my mate.”

My eyes widen. “What do you mean more?”

“Well, the knot only happens with my mate so I won’t have one until we form our bond but your body is made to take it.” He says it so matter of fact like he isn’t dropping new information on me right now.

“You have a knot?” I ask.

“Yes. Did you not know that?”

I laugh hysterically.

“I did not know that. I don’t know much about this world, you know that.”

“I didn’t think about it but I’m not sure most of the magical community knows about our knots. It’s said to be a natural evolution since having dragon children is so difficult.”

“Let’s address this later when it’s time to mate,” I say but I know I’ll be thinking about this a lot until then.

The crazy thing is, the idea of Blaze having a knot doesn’t scare me, it turns me on.

Blaze runs his nose along my throat and smells me.

“You’re my fated mate, Spark. You were made for me which means you were made to take my knot. I can smell your lust. The idea of it turns you on,

trust that.”

I’m like putty as I lie here listening to him. With a few simple words, he has me willing to try this with him.

When the time is right. We have to mate first.

Until then, I’ll enjoy his perfect cock the way it is.

* * *

I get home from flying with Blaze to find everyone but Aksel gathered in the kitchen eating.

I call for Aksel to join us. When he does, there are bags under his eyes. I know he wants to find this information and he’s the only one who can but he needs rest.

“I realized something when I was with Blaze. We need to deal with the concoction that was used on us,” I say.

While I don’t regret killing Joka, I still avoid his name like he might come back and haunt me.

“What was it?” Rion asks.

Everyone catches on right away.

“He said it was a sedative mixed with wolfsbane, wev, coldiron, and absque. Which means he had been working with those illegal substances long enough to create it,” Felix explains.

“We can’t forget the Garmentas were growing wev in their cellar. More than just Joka is involved in this.” Griffyn wraps his arm around my shoulders.

“And the bullets that were used by my stalker. They had a mixture of at least wev and wolfsbane. Felix smelled it and it affected me.”

“I think there is something bigger going on here. I don’t believe in coincidences.” Aksel crosses his arms.

“It was pure luck we discovered the Garmentas growing wev in our search for a weaver,” Felix says.

“We need to determine what other families are involved in this and shut it down,” Blaze growls.

“There is a chance they might trust me as the replacement for my father in the plan but there is an equal chance he has been talking down about me and they will never trust me. I’m sure bringing the Garmentas in won’t have earned me any trust.”

“What if we can use this to also find a link to my stalker? If their bullet had this poison then there is a chance one could lead us to the other,” I say.

“Genius!” Griffyn shouts.

“You’re right Anna. This investigation could help us with two of our problems which makes it a second priority *after* finding Killian and releasing you from your sire bond. We are getting that fucking necklace off you,” Aksel says.

I nod in agreement.

“So, where do we start?”

“The Garmentas are still locked up. Should Aksel try talking to them?” Felix asks.

“I’ll try,” Aksel offers. “I will have to go alone and separate myself from the rest of you in their eyes.”

“We would also have a lead if we can identify Anna’s stalker,” Blaze points out.

“While Aksel works to identify those items and talk to the Garmentas, the rest of us should work on finding the stalker,” I say.

I don't have any leads to go on but I want to make sure we are all given direction.

"Agreed," Blaze grunts.

"And Aksel, you need to take breaks. I know this is urgent but you are no help if you don't take care of yourself."

He doesn't even look at me. I think I need to find a way to force him into it.

"Where were you two?" Felix asks Blaze and I.

"Blaze let me ride his dragon," I say excitedly.

"No fair! I called the first date," Griffyn says grumpily.

"You can take me out tomorrow," I promise him.

Griffyn shoots up out of his chair with a smile on his face.

"Deal."

Eight

Anna



“Vixen! I am stealing you away,” Griffyn’s voice is loud and playful.

“Are you?” I ask around laughing.

He picks me up spinning me around until my feet knock a picture off the wall.

“Oops, a sacrifice that will not be in vain.”

“Where are we going?” I ask when he puts me down.

“It’s a surprise.”

“I’m not sure I should trust a surprise from you,” I whisper.

His resulting grin is enough of an answer.

I take a step towards the garage but he pulls me to the back sliding door instead.

“The backyard doesn’t seem nearly mischievous enough for you.”

Griffyn throws his head back and laughs. His pure joy in this moment makes butterflies erupt in my stomach.

Once we are outside his shoulders tighten and he looks down at me, shy for the first time.

“The backyard is not our final destination. I was thinking we could... fly there. If you trust me enough.”

He looks vulnerable. This large, hulking male is looking down at me like my answer holds his fate.

“Griffyn, I’ve already forgiven you. I hated your reasons but I did- do understand them. I trust you and would love to fly with you. Take me to the sky!”

I jump into his arms, wrapping my legs around his waist, and capture his lips in a kiss.

Something brushes against my hands behind his neck.

Wings.

Big, beautiful, black wings are spread behind his back.

Tentatively, I reach out and brush my finger across the top of his left wing.

His resulting shiver has heat rushing to my core.

“Is it sensitive?” I whisper, brushing my lips against his ear.

“Tremendously.”

I do it again, this time running my hand down his wing. It feels like a thin membrane and is almost see-through.

Griffyn groans. His hands tighten on my thighs, pulling me closer.

“A demon only lets his mate touch his wings and live. It is a unique pleasure to have your hands on me.” His voice is hoarse. Like it’s hard to speak.

“I can’t explain why they turn me on but I am very impressed by their size and feel,” I confess.

“You’re my mate, they’re meant to impress you. To show you I can protect you and hold you close.”

To emphasize his point, he wraps his wings around me until I’m cocooned within them.

I've never felt safer.

Griffyn leans forward and presses the soft pillow of his lips to mine. I open for him immediately, wanting to get closer.

“Are you two going to leave? Aksel will be back soon and he will probably ruin your fun.” Felix’s voice from the back door breaks the moment and the two of us pull apart.

“Let’s fly,” Griffyn whispers.

His wings stretch out behind him before one flap shoots us into the air.

Then, we’re flying. The world around me is zooming by and I can’t make out any details until we reach the right height and start soaring.

It’s beautiful. We are up so high that everyone looks like ants and the buildings seem like toys.

Griffyn keeps me tucked tightly against him. If I was human, I would freeze up here.

Wind rushes my face as he banks down towards the ground, spinning us in the air until I’m screaming in joy. He does another loop before dropping down to the ground.

He lands softly, his wings catching the wind. Griffyn drops a soft kiss on my lips before setting me down on the ground.

I drag my eyes away from his beautiful face and take in our surroundings.

“A movie theater?”

“Yes, you and I are going on a traditional date.”

Griffyn tugs on my hand and pulls me behind him as we go into the theater.

Griffyn buys tickets to a romantic comedy, two buckets of popcorn, three types of candy, and two slushies.

“You think we are going to be able to eat all of this?” I ask, laughing at

our full hands.

“Absolutely. This is a date. I can’t skimp on a date, Vixen.”

My smile is huge as we find our seats in the back row. This feels amazing. I need this moment with my new mate.

“I can feel your love down the bond,” Griffyn whispers in my ear.

“Well, this is perfect so thank you for making this happen.”

His resulting smile is magnetic, drawing me into him until our lips press together.

It’s a quick peck before we start shoveling all this food into our mouths and enjoying the unique taste that comes from being movie theater food.

“Let’s count shoulders.” Griffyn starts with his own, counting one and two before using three and four to put his arm around my shoulders.

It’s the cheesiest thing I can imagine on a date and it makes me laugh so hard I snort.

His eyes are shining as he pulls me tight to his body and presses a kiss to my temple.

The movie finally starts and I snuggle into him.

It doesn’t take long for Griffyn’s hands to start wandering. It’s innocent at first with soft fingers trailing down my arm and little kisses along my cheek and neck.

When he palms his mark on my ribs, lust shoots through me like an arrow.

Whoever decided mate marks should be sensitive was both evil and genius.

I can’t let him continue this little game without playing myself.

Leaning further into his side, I tap my mark on him with two fingers. I circle it until I see a tent in his pants.

“You’re playing a dangerous game, Vixen,” Griffyn warns in a low whisper.

“It’s only dangerous if I lose,” I respond while I cup his boner.

“I think we can both win.”

Griffyn’s hand rests on my thigh and slowly inches up until he sneaks under my skirt. He uses the lightest pressure to skim against my panties.

“You’re soaked through your panties. Is that all for me?”

I lean my head on his shoulder and press my lips to his neck. I lick the two small marks my fangs left on his skin when we mated.

His cock jumps under my hand.

“Is this for me?” I say, squeezing him.

“Absolutely.”

I smile into his neck.

Griffyn slips his fingers under my panties and swipes through my wetness before landing on my clit. He circles me with the perfect pressure in the dark corner of this movie theater until I’m bucking my hips for more.

I unbutton the top button of his jeans and slip my hand inside to grip his cock. There’s not enough space to pump him like I want to but I have a tight grip on him as I make little strokes.

I glance up to see him biting on his lip hard as he keeps his gaze locked on the movie we both know neither of us is watching.

Griffyn slips two of his fingers inside me and my hips jump. He doesn’t waste time before he’s stroking that little spot inside of me that brings me to the edge faster than I planned.

I slip my hand deeper into Griffyn’s pants to cup his balls and roll them in my hand.

I can’t hold on any longer when his thumb presses against my clit.

My fangs dig into Griffyn's throat as I drink his blood muffling my moan and come around his fingers.

I grip his shaft as I feel his cock swell. My venom pushes him over that edge and he comes in his pants with a soft moan.

Someone glances back at the noise and Griffyn just stares at him with a huge grin on his face and a little wave.

He fixes my panties before removing his fingers and licking my wetness from them. I follow him by licking his come off my fingers.

His sweet and salty taste erupts on my tongue making me ready for him once again.

A loud song starts playing and I see the credits roll as the movie ends. I laugh at how close we were to being caught as the lights come on and people start getting up to leave.

"I guess it was a dangerous game," I say.

"One we both won."

Griffyn looks happy with bright cheeks as he leans forward and presses his lips to mine.

"I told you it would be a traditional date," Griffyn says as he holds my hand and we walk out.

"I've never done that before," I say honestly.

"Me either."

"We had a first together then."

My smile is huge as we make our way out of the theater and behind some trees. It was dark when we arrived but now it's pitch black.

Griffyn could probably pull his wings out in the open and people wouldn't see but it's better to be safe. Humans can't know we exist.

He slips his shirt off and brings his wings out into existence.

“Ready to go back?” He asks.

I wrap my arms around him and jump into his arms before he shoots into the air.

The flight home is just as great as I enjoy seeing our world from this perspective.

I don't want to let go of Griffyn when we land back at the house.

“Thank you for such a perfect date. I had so much fun,” I tell him.

His smile is blinding. “I'm so glad, Vixen. You deserve the world and I'm going to try and give it to you the best ways I know how.”

“I know you will because you already do. I love you.”

“I love you too, Vixen.”

Nine

Rion



I take a deep breath, push my shoulders back and knock on Aksel's door.

When he answers, his eyebrows raise when he sees me and his lips set into a firm line. "Is there something I can help you with?"

He didn't slam the door in my face so this is going better than I expected. Aksel is the last person I want to deal with after everything we've been through but he's the person I need for this. He's the leader of their team and has connections I could only dream of.

"I wanted to talk to you about something."

Aksel stands there staring at me and blocking the door.

"Might be better in private," I say.

Aksel rolls his eyes but steps aside and lets me into his room.

"You're lucky I promised Anna that I would try and get along with you."

Did he promise Anna that? She wants her fated mates to get to know me? My hope grows exponentially.

"Speaking of Anna, I have an idea that I need your help with."

"Do you now?"

He's hard to talk to but I keep trying anyway.

“Yes. Anna had dreams and goals before Killian changed her. She was ambitious as hell, Aksel, and he changed that. She gave up but I know Anna and she will never forgive herself. She’s embarrassed and looking down on herself.”

He stares at me, contemplating my words. “What do you know?”

“I know she didn’t finish getting her degree which is why she was bartending before you came along. Her dream was to be an editor and work in publishing.”

He just keeps staring at me and it’s unnerving.

“Why would you come to me?”

I swallow the insults that immediately come to mind and instead tell him the truth. “You’re the leader of this team and if she goes back to school she’s going to need your help. I know you have resources that I don’t have, that the others don’t have. It’s become clear that you care about her, so help me make her dreams come true.”

Aksel nods and starts to close his door. “I’ll handle it.”

My hand shoots out to stop the door before I even think about it. My vampire strength stops any movement immediately.

“You’re not doing it without me.”

He lets go of the door and glares at my hand. Since he’s not trying to shut me out anymore I remove it.

“Why would I need you? You’ve told me the problem, I will solve it.” He sounds arrogant but I don’t think he even realizes how much.

This is just the way he is.

“You’re as difficult to deal with as the others say.”

Aksel rolls his eyes.

“I know what her dream was before this all started. You need my insight

and I want to do this for her. Let's work together."

It burns my tongue to propose working together after the way he's treated me but I owe Anna the world and for some unknown reason, she likes him.

We stand there in silence and stare at each other.

"Come to the kitchen!" Anna's voice shouts from downstairs.

Aksel tenses but I'm gone before I see his full reaction. I use my speed to rush down the stairs and make sure Anna is okay.

She's standing in the kitchen with her arms crossed as she watches me enter.

"Is everything okay?" I ask as I look around the room for any issues.

She smiles at me and then the others behind me as they join us. "Yes, sorry if I scared you but I had a great idea. We are going to have a group dinner tonight and spend some time together."

There's awkward tension before Griffyn rubs his hands together and grins. "Sounds great, Vixen. Let's just send Aksel out to get something."

I crack a smile and fight laughing. Felix doesn't stop himself from snickering.

"Hilarious." Aksel shakes his head. "I need to keep working."

"No, you need a break. I was thinking I would cook but we all hang out while I do," Anna suggests.

"I'll help you," I offer immediately.

I will absolutely take this opportunity to spend time with her, even if the rest of them are here.

"I can help too," Felix offers.

Anna grins and claps her hands. "Great! Everyone settle in. I'm not much of a cook so it'll be an easy meal of tacos."

Anna starts pulling ingredients out of the fridge assuming everyone is

going to listen to her. She's right. Blaze, Aksel, and Griffyn settle in at the island while Felix and I stand by Anna. Felix grabs the pack of meat and moves to the stove.

Maybe I should have kept my mouth shut and not offered to help. I don't know how to cook anything and now I'm standing here like an idiot.

Of course, Anna notices and takes pity on me.

"Help me chop up these vegetables?"

I nod. My eyes are glued to what she's doing with her knife.

"I'm not sure what to do," I admit quietly.

I know everyone else can hear me.

Anna's eyes soften and she gives me a small smile. It's not a look of pity but understanding.

"I'll teach you, although it's not like I'm a master."

Anna walks me through the steps and I follow them as best as I can. My smile is huge and my spine is straight when I finish chopping my peppers. I feel accomplished as hell.

The meat starts to smell delicious as Felix cooks it and I want to learn that next.

Anna sees the direction of my stare and nudges me before tilting her head in that direction.

I slowly move over to Felix's spot at the stove. I feel most comfortable with Felix. He was kind to me even before the spell on me was removed.

Plus, he's already mated to Anna and knows how to make her happy most of all. Right now, that seems to be working with me.

He moves over immediately and hands me the spatula. "It's not hard, you just want to keep the meat moving so it doesn't burn. Wait until it's a brown color. I was just about to do spices."

I watch as he picks up a few different ones and lets me smell them before adding them in. Spices are nothing like they were when I was young but these still smell delicious.

“How do you know what to add?” I ask.

Felix smiles. “I only know because my mom is a superb cook and I copy what she taught me.”

Anna sighs dreamily. “Lottie’s food was delicious.”

Felix’s smile grows.

Jealousy builds in my stomach. Felix has a wonderful family that he gets to share with Anna and my brother is trying to kill her.

“You’ll have to bring the rest of us to meet her and be fed,” Griffyn says.

His voice brings me out of my pity party.

“Yeah, my mom would love that.”

Griffyn and Blaze grab plates and carry them to the table. Anna’s smile is huge as we all sit down and fill our plates, making the awkwardness worth it.

I don’t feel like I belong at this table with a group of guys who have known each other for so long but as long as Anna wants me here, I’ll be here.

I dig into my food. It’s delicious and even better since I had a hand in making it.

“Did you guys do this on missions?” Anna asks.

The other guys share a glance.

“Nah, the most we did was play poker to pass the time,” Griffyn says.

I don’t know how to play poker but I’m going to look it up in case it comes up in the future. I spend half my time researching and learning things to catch up to modern times anyway so what’s one more thing?

“We’ve spent more quality time together since meeting you than we ever did before,” Felix admits.

They have?

“Why?” I ask before I can think better of it.

Aksel surprises me by being the one to answer. “We were a team who worked well together but we weren’t all really friends. Griffyn and Felix got along and Blaze and I were close but I’m pretty sure Griffyn hated me. I’ve been told I’m difficult to be around.” He gives Anna a pointed look.

She throws a hand up to cover her laugh.

“You’re just so fun to annoy,” Griffyn says.

“We are all better off with you around, Spark,” Blaze adds.

I can practically see her joy radiating from here.

The rest of dinner passes with a light conversation that helps me feel like I know them all better. Little antidotes from their past missions or childhoods. Blaze and Aksel avoid talking about their childhoods but join in where they can.

I don’t pry into why. After everything that happened with Joka, it’s clear why Aksel would keep quiet. I don’t know about Blaze’s past but it’s obvious he’s steeped in pain.

“We should do this again,” Anna says as we all stand up from the table.

“I agree,” I say.

Aksel’s eyes are locked on me.

Griffyn and Blaze volunteer to clean up and Anna sticks around to be with them. I’m about to go to my room and give them some time with her since I got to cook with her earlier. I just want to say one thing first.

“This was a great idea, Anna. I think it did help everyone grow closer,” I tell her. I want her to know her idea paid off.

“Thanks, Rion. I appreciate you participating.”

“Maybe you can teach me how to cook something else next time?” I ask

hopefully.

I'll be reading up on cooking between now and then but could always use the practical instruction.

"I would love to."

I go up the stairs to find Aksel waiting outside his room, leaning against the wall.

When I get close enough, he says, "I'll work with you. You clearly care about Anna and she deserves that in her life." Then he just walks away, leaving me standing in the hallway by myself.

I'll take the win. It feels like progress.

Ten

Anna



“I finally found the items in the archives.” Aksel drops a pile of images down on the kitchen table in front of us all.

We were all eating breakfast together.

“I guess taking some time off was helpful,” I say playfully.

Aksel glares at me but it doesn’t have any heat.

When he so easily agreed to spend time together and have dinner last night, I was surprised. I guess he knew we needed that too, especially him.

I glance at the items but don’t recognize anything. I know nothing beyond what these guys have told me so I’m not surprised.

Everyone shakes their heads as they look and my last hope rests with Rion. Everyone stares at him as he examines them.

“These are old, older than me but I recognize them. There isn’t much information here but the photo is all I needed. These items were powerful in my time. I can’t imagine what kind of damage they could do now. I never saw them in person,” Rion reveals.

“Do you have any idea what they’re used for?” I ask.

Rion looks grim. “I know them from a spell book but I can’t remember the specific spell that used them. I think our answer will be there.”

“Do you remember the book?” Aksel asks, excited.

“The title was in Latin. Magus Liber Carminum. I know there was a copy in the house Killian is using but I don’t know where else to find it.” Rion closes his eyes in thought.

“I’ll look into the magical library and see if there is a chance it’s there,” Felix says.

“Knowing our luck, it won’t be,” I say.

Felix wraps his arms around me and pulls me tight to his body, providing comfort.

“Let’s have hope,” Griffyn suggests.

“Great. Felix you work on that and I have an appointment tomorrow to see the Garmentas. Now that I finally found this information, I can take tonight off. Anna, I have our date planned for tonight. Does that work for you?” Aksel asks.

That changed direction quickly. I stand up and move closer to him with butterflies in my stomach.

“Of course, what do you have in mind?” I ask.

“It’s a surprise. I left something in your room, go get dressed and we will leave when you’re ready.”

“Can we come?” Griffyn asks.

Aksel glares at him. “No.”

I step around him and go upstairs to get ready. Hanging on my closet door is a beautiful purple dress with intricate, swirling beading. That’s what Aksel left in my room, an outfit for tonight.

On the floor is a pair of nude heels that look perfect for me.

It looks like we are doing something fancy.

I quickly get dressed and then do my hair and makeup. I spend extra time

making it elegant and classy.

Aksel is waiting for me when I get downstairs in a modern suit with no tie. His top two buttons are undone and he looks like he could be a model.

We take his car and the drive there is spent in comfortable silence until I break it.

“How do you balance the mission and needing time to yourself?” I ask.

He explained his thinking when it came to taking tonight off but I’m still interested to hear more.

“There are always going to be times where there’s nothing you can do. Whether you don’t have a lead, there’s some time delay or someone else is handling it, you have to take advantage of those times.”

We pull up to an art gallery and he surprises me by skipping the valet.

I must make a face because he teases me. “You can’t think I would let someone else drive my car, do you, beautiful?”

I laugh. “You’re right. I should have known better.”

He parks in one of the valet spots right by the door and tosses some cash to the worker when he comes to say something. Now that seems like Aksel.

He guides me inside with a hand on my lower back. I like having contact with him so I lean into him further.

We wander around the gallery taking in all the different pieces.

“This art is gorgeous,” I say.

Aksel smiles. “I’m glad you think so.”

“How did you discover it?”

He turns to face me and brushes his hand against my cheek.

“I don’t have a beautiful family to take you to meet. You met my father and we know how that ended. My family is what actively kept me away from

you in the first place. Even with all that, I wanted to show you a piece of my family.”

I nod, not sure where he’s going with this but grateful either way that he’s trying to open up to me.

He gestures to the art. “My sister made this. She’s in boarding school right now. Thankfully she was away from my father for most of the year so she could be creative and do what made her happy.”

I look around at every piece with new eyes. The darker pieces hold different meanings and I love the ones that make me feel hope even more.

“It’s incredible. I’m so impressed her art is being shown in a gallery,” I say.

Aksel chuckles. “I may have played a part in securing her a spot in the gallery.”

“You’re a good big brother,” I say, remembering everything Adelina said about him too.

His expression darkens. “Not good enough but that changes now that Joka is gone. Thank you for giving that to our family.”

Any lingering guilt I’ve felt in my gut over Joka’s death seems to melt away. Taking a life is never easy but this man deserved to die. Something objectively evil did good for the world in this case.

“Thanks for bringing me here Aksel. I hope I get to meet Dorielle in person someday.”

One side of his lips lifts to the side. “You will. She’s already asking me a million questions about you since Adelina told her she met you.”

“Do you think she’ll like me?” I ask, my nerves making my voice soft.

“Yes. She’s going to rake me over the coals when she hears how I treated you.”

I laugh. "I like her already."

We keep moving around and I point out every piece or detail I like. Aksel seems pulled to the darker pieces.

"They speak to me the most and I hate that I can see myself in them. I wish my sister was different from me, far away from who I am."

"When I met you, I would think it's crazy I'm saying this now but I don't think it's a bad thing you see yourself in her. You're a strong leader, protective, and generous. I-" I take a deep breath and shake off my nerves before continuing, "I'm glad you're my mate Aksel. I'm proud to have you."

Aksel pulls me tight to his body and crushes his lips to mine. He devours me right there in public, surrounded by strangers, like we are the only people in the room.

He pulls away long enough to say, "Willson, I don't deserve to hear that but I'm so grateful you feel that way."

I push my tongue against him. We do a dance with our mouths that makes me weak in the knees.

When I finally pull away from him, his eyes are heated and it's like electricity is zinging between us.

A glance shows me that strangers in the gallery are staring at us. Some women have hearts in their eyes and others look scandalized.

"Have you seen enough art?" Aksel whispers in my ear.

I nod, feeling his scruff against my neck. "Let's go."

Aksel tugs me out the door of the gallery and over to his car. He lifts me off my feet and into the passenger seat, kissing me deeply again before shutting the door.

We hit the road and I can't keep my hands to myself. I nibble on his ear, kiss his neck, and run my fingers up his leg.

I'm surprised he doesn't turn me down.

"You wouldn't risk distraction while driving your precious baby, would you?" I tease.

"I would be insane to tell you no. I'm skilled. I can multitask." He sounds cocky.

I want to change that.

"Let's see how good."

I reach both hands across the center console and unbutton his pants. It's not hard to release his cock and stroke it slowly. He's hard as a rock under my hands and his dick is big enough to justify his cocky attitude.

"Anna," Aksel warns but it comes out as more of a groan.

I don't respond. Instead, I lean over and give his tip a cat-like lick. It's just a tease. I glance over to see his hands are white knuckling the steering wheel.

"Anna, don't tease. Be a good girl and take me all the way into your mouth."

I ignore him.

"Don't make me punish you."

Fuck. That threat has wetness flooding my center.

I lick him again. "How can you punish me? You're driving."

Aksel growls. "I will take care of it when we get home or you can take care of me now. Take me deep into your throat and show me how much you want my cock."

I decide to listen. For now.

I wrap my lips around him and slowly take him until my nose is brushing against his pelvis. He's down my throat, so I swallow around him once before pulling back. I wait until he's about to fall out and suck him back in again.

“There you go. I knew you could be a good girl and take my directions. Now, keep going until I come deep in your throat and mark you as mine.”

Fucking hell, this has me so wet and eager to please him. I’m going to have to get that punishment another time because I am going to finish him now.

I lick, swirl and keep going. The vibrations from the car only make it better if the groans coming from him are any indication.

“I’m about to come, Willson, swallow every fucking drop.”

I do exactly as told as he floods my mouth with his come. The sounds coming from him are the most open I’ve ever seen him.

I’ve only heard them once and I’m already addicted to getting them from him.

I pull back, tuck him into his pants and button them back up. It’s like he was never less than put together.

I sit back in my seat and sneak my hand under my dress. I can’t deny myself for the rest of this drive, I need relief.

“Keep your hands to yourself.”

I laugh but the sound is breathless. “Don’t worry, my hands are completely to myself.”

I circle my clit and it’s already slippery as hell down there. My finger barely dips inside when his hand grips my wrist and forces me to stop.

“That cream belongs to me. Save it.”

“I can’t wait, Aksel. Please.”

Aksel groans and triggers his blinker. “I like hearing you beg me for pleasure. Do it again.”

“Please Aksel, let me take care of myself. I’ll come here in your car and you can eat me out when we get home.”

The car makes a sharp left as Aksel pulls off the road and into the dirt on the side.

“You coming in my car sounds glorious. Get in the back.”

I scramble to unbuckle, jump over the console, and follow his order. When I make it to the backseat, I slip my panties off.

Aksel uses the door to come back to me, having the nerve to straighten his freaking cuffs as he does.

His eyes zero in on my panties as he gets inside and makes me settle with my back against the door.

Aksel runs his nose up my slit, breathing deep and groaning. “You smell delicious and you’re all mine.”

“Please, I need you,” I beg.

“I’ll take my time and you’ll be patient.”

And he does take his time. Aksel’s warm hands trace my hips, his touch sending shivers up and down my spine. He moves up my body pressing gentle kisses along my collarbone. His lips are soft, warm, and tender, and I find myself melting into him.

He uses his hands and lips to tease every inch of me and ignores where I really want him. It feels like he’s memorizing every inch. His fingers dance across my skin, trailing goosebumps in their wake. He brushes against the sensitive flesh of my inner thighs.

My breath catches as Aksel’s mouth descends to the exposed skin of my stomach, his lips leaving a trail of hot, wet kisses in their path. I squirm beneath him, craving more – but he holds me still, his strong hands keeping my hips firmly in place.

“Patience, Anna,” he says, his voice a low growl that sends a shiver down my spine. “I want to savor every inch of you. I never thought I would have

the chance.”

I bite my lip, trying to suppress the whimper that threatens to escape. It’s a challenge to remain still under Aksel’s expert touch - every fiber of my being wants to reach out, to pull him closer, to beg for more.

With a devilish grin, he lowers his head between my thighs, and I feel the warmth of his breath just inches from where I ache for him most. The sensation sends a shiver down my spine, making my entire body tingle with anticipation.

“God, you taste amazing,” he murmurs, and then I feel his tongue finally make contact. It’s like being struck by lightning – an explosion of pleasure that leaves me gasping for air. Aksel doesn’t let up, lapping at me with an intensity that has me gripping the edges of the seat to keep from bucking against him.

“You’re dripping wet.”

He must like that because he jabs his tongue deep inside me to lick up as much of it as he can.

That’s when he gets going. Aksel devours me, never neglecting an area for long. He uses his teeth, tongue, and lips to reach every inch of me.

He slides two fingers into me, filling me in a way that has me biting back another cry of pleasure. Almost immediately, he seeks out that magical spot within me

I gasp, clutching at his arm as he continues to stroke my G-spot with expert precision. My thoughts become a jumbled mess – all I can focus on is the flood of sensation that threatens to consume me.

The world melts away, leaving only the sensation of Aksel’s fingers inside me and his warm breath against my skin. My heart races, pounding

like a drum in my chest. I can feel every nerve ending in my body singing with anticipation.

His fingers continue their relentless assault on my G-spot, driving me closer and closer to the brink.

My breaths come in short, shallow gasps, interspersed with moans and whimpers that betray just how close I am. And then, without warning, it hits me – a tidal wave of pleasure that crashes through my body, leaving me momentarily weightless and gasping for air.

“Ah, Aksel!” I cry out, clutching at his hair as I ride the crest of my orgasm. It feels like an eternity, waves of ecstasy rolling through me one after another until I’m sure I can’t take anymore.

He licks up every drop I give him.

When my aftershocks subside, Aksel leans back and smirks at me. His eyes are heated as we stare at each other.

Headlights shine through the back window as a car drives by, reminding me where we are.

“I can’t believe we just did that!” I say.

Aksel leans forward and kisses me so I can taste myself on him. I’m sure he can still taste himself too.

He straightens my dress, opens the door, and picks me up before carrying me around to the passenger side and putting me in.

“I will make up how I’ve treated you on my knees for the rest of our life if I have to. You deserve nothing less.”

I smile, appreciating this apology. I wouldn’t mind a few more.

I spend the entire drive back with his hand drawing circles on my leg and when we get home, Blaze and Felix’s eyes flash when they smell what we’ve been up to.

It's perfect.

Eleven

Anna



Aksel walks in and crosses his arms.

“I went to see the Garmentas,” Aksel says.

“How did it go?” Griffyn asks.

“They were suspicious and kept quiet until I mentioned my father sending me to connect with them. After that, they told me someone will be in touch.”

“I guess we will see then,” I say.

“I have news. The book isn’t in public access but it is in the underground library used to protect and preserve books,” Felix folds his arms.

“Isn’t it impossible to get in there?” Griffyn asks.

“That’s why it wasn’t good news,” Felix says.

“There might be a chance I can get in as a councilman,” Aksel offers.

“Call and find out right now,” Blaze demands.

Aksel stiffens at the urgency in Blaze’s voice but pulls out his phone and moves away from us.

The rest of us just wait for him. Griffyn wraps me up in his arms and peppers kisses along my neck. Felix is leaning against the wall but Rion and Blaze are watching the way Griffyn is touching me.

I offer a hand to each of them and wait to see what happens. Rion takes my hand immediately. It feels like going back in time to before Killian came into my life.

Blaze is slower but when he finally takes my hand, his grip is strong.

Felix is grinning like crazy from his spot at the wall.

When Aksel comes back he notices the position but doesn't comment. "I can go today but I can only bring two people with me."

"It would be smartest to take Rion, but he can't be seen in public," I say.

"You'll have to find the spell that includes those ingredients without me."

Rion is frowning.

I know he'll be so grateful when he can exist without Killian bringing him down.

"I'll take Anna and Blaze with me. We can do it."

* * *

The stairs down to this secret basement are made of white marble. It looks elegant and expensive but the opulence doesn't take away from the sensation of going so far underground.

Miles of dirt and stone separates us from fresh air. It doesn't matter that I know I can get upstairs faster than anyone else here, I don't like it.

The protector of books wears a hood that conceals their face. It's way too cloak and dagger for modern times.

I wonder who else can get in here besides an elder on the council.

The keeper gestures forward when we reach the bottom and takes up watch by the wall.

There are books as far as the eye can see displayed on bookcases as tall as the ceiling. There have to be close to a million books down here. It would take forever to find a specific one.

“How are we going to find the spell book?” I ask.

Aksel turns to the keeper. “Is there a directory down here?”

They don’t acknowledge his words.

“Okay, thanks.”

Aksel takes off towards the bookcases with Blaze and I following him.

“I guess letting you down here was all the help they’re willing to provide,” I say.

Blaze grunts.

“It’s ridiculous. I know they keep these books safe from the outside world and hate that we are down here now but what is the point of protecting this information if it can’t be used by the outside world,” Aksel says.

He’s right. This is their chance to use this information for the good of the world and they’re resistant.

“Let’s try to determine how these books are sorted. If we can figure out the system maybe we can find the book before we grow gray hair,” I suggest.

We each take a different shelf and try to make sense of it. I see different languages, some symbols, and even books with just numbers on them. Everything looks thousands of years old but is preserved flawlessly.

Rion is the person we need to understand what we’re looking at.

I grab my phone to try and call him for help but there is no service down here. That makes sense that nothing could get down this deep.

I try again, using my vampire speed to examine the spines at a quicker rate but nothing stands out to me.

There has to be a sorting system that the keepers know.

I abandon my shelf, knowing I'm not going to figure this out, and walk back over to the keeper still stationed in the corner.

I want to try and plead our case.

"Hello, I'm Anna."

I Pause. They don't respond.

"I'm not sure what the system down here is but you do. We need a specific book from down here. Someone is collecting ingredients for a spell in that book and we need to stop them. It's called the Magus Liber Carminum."

Their head moves and it feels like they're looking at me when I say the name of the book.

"I know for certain that this person is evil," I add.

It feels like I have their attention. There's something about this book that has them paying attention to me.

My heart feels like it's going to beat out of my chest when they start walking to the back of the library. They pass Blaze and Aksel, then another one hundred shelves, at least, before stopping. There are no identifying markers on it but the keeper knows where they're going.

They pull a book off the shelf and hand it to me before walking away.

I'm afraid to look down and see if this is the book we need. It seems impossible that the keeper helped me.

I brace myself to look down and see that the title says Magus Liber Carminum.

Elation fills me.

We are finally going to get ahead of Killian. I can feel it.

Blaze and Aksel followed the Keeper and I. Aksel looks shocked at what just happened.

“Is that the book?” Blaze asks.

“Yes! The Keeper showed it to me.”

“How did you convince them to help? It felt impossible.” I guarantee Aksel is annoyed that the Keeper ignored him but helped me.

“I told them why we needed it,” I confess. “They seemed concerned when I said the name, which makes me worried about what’s inside here.”

We walk to a table and carefully open the book. The book has to stay here so we need to find what we’re looking for before we are kicked out.

The pages feel fragile but I know they’re protected by magic.

We look for the names of the artifacts on each page of the spell. The entire thing is in Latin which complicates things.

When we talked about the book being in Latin and how we would read it, the guys were all thinking of magical solutions like a spell to translate it.

I used my previous human life to solve the problem simply with a translator app.

“There!” Blaze points to the *Confractus Vas* listed on this page.

Further down the page the *Factorem Larva* and *Slabrirra Nasc* are listed as well.

“This is it,” I say.

I pull out my phone and use a translator app to read the page.

I might throw up at what I see.

“Is Killian... Is he trying to destroy mate bonds?” My voice shakes as I ask.

I grab Aksel and Blaze’s hands to squeeze them tight.

“It appears that way,” Aksel says, voice hard. “Take a picture and let’s see if these items are in any other spells. Maybe it isn’t this.”

I snap a few pictures just to be sure we can read every word.

The artifacts aren't mentioned anywhere else and my dread only grows.

"Let's get back to the others," I say.

I want to get back to my mates and hold them close while this fear smothers me.

Aksel nods.

The stairs take forever and I have to remind myself to stay calm when it takes so long to get out.

As soon as we're outside any transportation blockers we go back to the house.

Everyone is gathered waiting for us in the living room. I hop into Felix's arms and pull Griffyn into the embrace as well.

"I can feel your anxiety. What's wrong, Kitten?" Felix asks.

Having their touch helps me push the worry away. We need to focus and deal with this, not freak out.

"We figured out what Killian's plan is," Aksel informs them.

"What is it?" Rion asks.

I untangle myself from Griffyn and Felix before moving to Rion. I hug him as well and the last of my worry is gone.

"The spell is to destroy mate bonds at a large scale." Blaze crosses his arms and widens his stance like he's ready to fight Killian right now.

"What the hell?"

"Fuck!"

"That's possible?"

Everyone is understandably upset.

"Yes, it's possible. The spell was sitting in that book. When we finish Killian, we need to make sure his copy of the book is destroyed so no one can attempt to do this again," Aksel says.

I completely agree. We need to stop this from happening now and forever.

“Mate bonds are sacred and should be protected at all costs.” Felix keeps his eyes glued to mine while he says it.

“We need to know what ingredients he already has. If we can determine what he needs then we can stop him,” Rion says.

“And potentially find him,” Griffyn says.

“We know what he has from Eugene. Should we show the items to Michael and see if any are familiar? I doubt he knew much about what heirlooms his family had,” I say.

Everyone thinks about it. Michael really won't be that helpful. He's just too young.

“Maybe they had their items listed online for collectors. A lot of elite supernaturals boast about what they have even if they never plan to sell it.”

“Where would we find that? It can't just be online normally, right?”

“Right. But, if you know where to look then you can find all sorts of supernatural stuff online. Aksel, can you get into this sort of thing?”

“Yes.” Aksel grabs his computer and starts typing something in that looks nothing like a normal website.

It doesn't start with WWW or HTTP and it doesn't end with .com or any other common domain. It's a random series of letters, numbers, and symbols.

I'm shocked when a website pops up showing listings for different websites. Titles like mages for hire and job listings display.

Aksel goes past them all and clicks on a symbol of a vase near the bottom.

A blank page pops up and Aksel types in another series of characters before he's admitted to a page all about artifacts and collections. I'm

impressed that Aksel knows how to get here.

“Does anyone have access to this?” I ask.

“No, it’s password-protected and a secret. It’s designed so that only those they deem worthy can get in. I only have access because of my family name.”

He scrolls through the page until he finds what he’s looking for. The Shoft family’s collection.

“Is that whose house it was?” I ask.

“Yes,” Griffyn answers.

Their collection isn’t massive so it’s easy to see the blue gem that we saw on the page of the spell book.

“That one.” I point out.

Aksel stops and clicks on it. It gives a name and brief description, confirming it’s what we need.

“So he has four out of six ingredients for this spell that can destroy all mate bonds. Who even invented that in the first place?” Griffyn whines.

“Someone as unhappy and bitter as Killian is,” Blaze answers.

“We have to stop him.” Felix clutches his chest like he can physically hold onto the bond between us.

I feel similar. Losing my bond with Griffyn and Felix would be like losing a limb. Now that I have it, I can’t live without it.

“Could this kill people? Can’t the breaking of a mate bond be deadly?” I ask.

Rion nods. “Some can survive the pain of their bond breaking but, commonly, people choose not to go on without their mates. I’m not sure how someone would react if they knew their bonded was right there and alive. Everyone wouldn’t be lucky enough to be together, though.”

“What were the last two items? We should search for them and see if we

can find them on this website,” Felix suggests.

Aksel tries the Patera Mixtionis object but there are no results. The second, Sfear Gloine, does show up as within a collection here in the United States.

“We need to get that before Killian,” Blaze says.

I agree.

“We should stake it out and catch him. Stopping him isn’t enough, we need him dead. Anna’s life and freedom rely on Killian dying.” Rion smashes his fist down on the counter.

“He’s right. This is our best chance to find Killian. We know where something he needs is,” Aksel agrees. “We need to start immediately. Blaze and I will go now, Felix and Griffyn will switch with us in five hours. I’ll make a complete schedule after that.”

Blaze and Aksel don’t waste any time leaving until it’s only Rion, Griffyn, Felix, and I.

“I feel hope,” I confess.

“We should all have hope. Catching Killian has been difficult, this is a real lead for us.”

Felix wraps me up in his arms and Griffyn quickly joins. I’m sandwiched between the two of them but something is missing.

Rion is standing awkwardly to the side, unsure of his place in this moment.

I know I want him with me so I need to make that clear.

I reach out a hand to him and when he takes it I pull him close. The three of them surround me and I know I want this for the rest of my life.

Twelve

Anna



Griffyn and Felix share a look.

“What?” I ask.

“I know this is personal and between the two of you but we’re your mates and I think it’s important. I don’t want to rip Rion’s throat out for touching my mate which makes me think he is most likely also your fated mate but I think you should find out now. You guys don’t have to mix blood and mate but you should know the truth,” Felix says.

My eyes swing to Rion who looks nervous as hell.

I grab his clenched fist. “Rion, even if we aren’t fated mates, I still really care about you. It wouldn’t be over between us. I think they’re right, we need to know the truth.”

He squeezes my hand in his. “We can find out as long as it’s clear that I’ll be here as long as you want me, no matter what happens.”

The hole in my heart left behind when Killian changed me and I believed it was Rion finally heals completely. It’s been slowly closing as we grow closer but hearing that he’s here for me no matter what seals the deal.

Despite having confidence that it wouldn’t change anything, I do hope Rion is my fated mate. I know he struggles with feeling like an outcast

among the other guys and if he's not my mate, that would only add to things.

"Can I?" I ask, gesturing to his neck.

His pupils dilate as he sucks in a breath. "I've been dying to feel your fangs in my neck, Acushla. Please do."

I move forward and press my body against his entirely. He's too tall for me to reach his neck. Rion must realize my predicament because he grabs me by my thighs and lifts me so we are nose to nose.

"You're such a small little thing," Rion teases.

"Maybe you're too big," I whisper back.

Of course, the two goons in the room can't stop themselves from speaking up.

"Wish she would say that to me," Griffyn says with an exaggerated whisper.

"She's pumping his ego," Felix replies snickering.

I keep my eyes on Rion as I say, "If you two can't behave then you'll be kicked out."

They stay silent.

I kiss down Rion's jaw until I reach his vein and hesitate.

This is the moment of truth. When I bite down I'll know instantly if Rion was destined to be mine or not. We can't go back once we know but we can't move forward until we do.

"It won't change a thing, Acushla," Rion whispers reassuringly.

"What does that mean?"

"Darling."

It comes down to the fact that I trust Rion. This won't change anything between us so there is no reason to wait.

My fangs sink into his skin and his warm blood floods my mouth. The

distinct flavor of apples mixes with an unmistakable tang that I know means he's my mate.

"You're my mate," I pull back long enough to whisper before I move back and drink more.

I swallow his blood and grind my body against his.

Rion's grip tightens on me.

I need to be closer to him. He should be a part of me.

I feel a pull to connect us.

Rion's hard cock presses against me and I can feel how much he wants me in return.

"Guys?" Felix's voice is distant.

The pull gets stronger like the vampire in me knows he needs my blood.

"Fuck I want to taste you," Rion growls.

"Then do it." I tilt my neck and present it to him.

Before he can make contact, hands are ripping me away from my mate.

Rion roars in fury.

"Woah there. I don't think you know what you're doing," Felix says from behind me.

Griffyn is holding Rion back but it looks like a struggle.

"Get it together Rion! I can't hold you and your vampire strength!"

Rion breaks away and pulls me from Felix and into his arms. Once I'm tucked safely with him, he starts to calm down.

"Fuck, it's like instinct completely took over as soon as I knew you were my mate," I say.

Rion's arms are wrapped tightly around me. "I know what you mean. I didn't have to taste your blood to feel the pull. It took over completely."

"You both looked like animals," Griffyn says as he rolls his shoulders.

“Sorry.” Rion grimaces.

“Don’t worry about it, Rion.”

I wiggle to get down but Rion doesn’t budge. “No. You can’t go yet. I’m still getting control of myself.”

Of course, Blaze and Aksel pick that moment to come back. The door swings open and Blaze and Aksel march inside the house with deep frowns. I can’t tell if it’s their normal expressions or if something is wrong.

“What’s going on here?” Aksel’s eyes take in every detail.

“Well…” Griffyn starts dramatically.

“Anna and I are mates.” Rion is staring at Aksel as he says it.

Aksel’s expression doesn’t change.

Blaze steps forward and puts a hand out for Rion to shake. “Glad to hear it.”

That breaks the last of Rion’s tension and he slowly sets me down before taking Blaze’s hand.

“Thanks.”

“Should we throw a mate party?” Griffyn asks.

“You’re a pain,” Aksel says to Griffyn before focusing back on Rion. “When we first found you, I would have considered killing you if you told me you were Anna’s mate. Now, I’m glad she has someone else who would do anything for her.”

My eyes start to freaking water, which is embarrassing as hell, but how could I not when none other than Akshole is being sweet right now.

In his own, twisted way.

“I can see that you treated me the way you did in defense of Anna,” Rion concedes.

Aksel looks around at everyone before stopping on me. He stares into my

eyes. I don't know what he's looking for but he must find it because he nods and steps towards Rion.

"I guess we can start over then." Aksel holds his palm out to Rion.

I hold my breath and pray Rion is going to accept Aksel and move forward.

Something that felt impossible is happening before my very eyes as Rion takes his hand and shakes it.

Felix cheers. "I feel like a proud father."

I slap his chest. "That's weird."

"Oh, Daddy," Griffyn sings.

I laugh and go to Rion and Aksel.

"Thank you," I say softly before hugging Rion.

When I go to Aksel and hug him, it feels less awkward than usual. He wraps me up and holds me close. "Anything for you, Willson."

"What are you guys doing back here? Did you forget something?" I ask.

Blaze and Aksel frown.

"Bad news. The artifact is already gone from this collection. We weren't there long when a team from the council showed up to investigate the disappearance. We pulled rank and took the investigation over since we know where it's gone but this isn't the lead we thought it would be," Aksel says.

"Fuck!" Griffyn shouts.

"We still have the last ingredient. Now, we have to find it and do a better job of beating Killian to it," I say.

"I can reach out to collectors and say I'm interested in it. Word will get around but someone still needs to search through the list online in case the name is different. We know what it looks like and we need to use that to our advantage." Aksel uncrosses his arms.

“I’ll start right away,” Felix says.

“We should all take a piece of the load and split the website up,” Blaze adds.

“Let’s do that then.” After being underground, I’m not ready to hole up in my room to do this research so I settle on the deck in the backyard.

The summer sun blazes down on my skin and it smells like fresh grass as I examine the website.

The bench shifts as Rion settles next to me. “I don’t think I will be of much use on my own when it comes to technology but maybe I can help you.”

Sometimes it’s weird to remember he’s so old and was raised in a time without technology. He’s learned the basics like using the internet and making calls since he woke up from his sleep, but this requires a better understanding of how to use a website to your advantage.

He doesn’t act differently most of the time, he has adapted so well.

“Of course, you can help me. It’ll be nice to have two sets of eyes while we work.”

We go through collection after collection to try and find the remaining item.

There are a couple of times an artifact looks similar but when we examine them further, they aren’t the same. It’s frustrating.

“Anna!” Felix shouts pulling me out of the mindless scrolling I’ve been doing.

Rion and I share a look before rushing inside. I can feel Felix’s anger and frustration through our bond.

“What’s wrong?” I ask.

“Did you find it?” Rion asks.

“No, I found something else.” Felix sounds furious.

He’s standing by the front door staring down at the floor. All of us gather around him to see what it is.

A. Red. Freaking. Envelope.

My head starts to fucking ache. I am so sick of these headaches.

“This is the very last thing we need to be dealing with. Killian is out there planning to destroy mate bonds, we need to keep our focus on that and ignore this attention-seeking idiot,” I say.

The guys are all glaring at the envelope that was slid under the door.

“We can’t let it go,” Aksel grits out.

“He’s right. This person shot you, they’re a threat whether we want to deal with them or not.” Griffyn’s voice is tight as he talks about that incident.

“We all need to find a way to get a lead on this stalker,” Felix says.

“I just don’t want this to become our focus,” I try again, ignoring the sharp pain shooting through my skull.

Based on the tension and fury radiating off all of them, there’s no point trying to be reasonable.

“We are your mates, Spark. We can’t ignore this threat to you,” Blaze says while he stares into my eyes intently.

“Fine, but Killian is priority one.” This time I’m not trying to convince them, I’m telling them.

“Yes, he’s priority one but if we have an opening to deal with the stalker then we take it,” Aksel agrees.

I nod.

“At the risk of your fury turning on me, I can feel your pain, Anna,” Felix says gently.

“I hate it,” Griffyn adds.

I huff.

A sharp knife digs into my skull and I work hard not to bend over in pain.

“That’s it.” Felix picks me up and pulls me tight to his body. He starts moving towards the stairs to take me up.

“No, the artifact. I-”

Aksel cuts me off. “We will finish looking. You go get some blood and sleep. That’s an order.”

Thirteen

Felix



After Anna drinks from me and falls asleep, I sneak back downstairs to help the others.

“Felix, I think we found it,” Griffyn tells me as soon as I come into the kitchen.

“The artifact?” I ask.

“Yes,” Rion answers.

I lean on Aksel’s chair where he’s looking at a familiar object. A bowl with runes carved into the red clay. It’s listed as an unidentified object which explains why we couldn’t find it.

“Where is it?”

“The Reme’s have it,” Aksel says darkly.

“This artifact is sitting in the demon elder’s home?” I ask in disbelief.

Why is everything so complicated?

“That explains why Killian doesn’t have it yet. The only place more heavily guarded than their home is Killian’s fortress.”

“They are prideful and won’t want to work with us. They’re going to assume the artifact is safer with them than with us,” Aksel says.

From what I know of the demon elders, I think he’s right.

“So what do we do? The best-case scenario was we have the artifact and use it to draw Killian out. That’s not going to happen now,” I say.

Aksel’s face is lost in thought. Blaze is staring at the computer screen. Griffyn and Rion are looking at me.

“Can we steal it?” Rion asks.

“It’s not a bad idea if it seemed even remotely possible but we can’t get in there.” I lean back against the counter.

“Damn it!” Aksel slams his fist down on the counter. “Every step forward is a puzzle for us to solve. We need a fucking win.”

He’s right, we do. We aren’t used to having a foe like Killian. He’s so damn powerful.

We need to be smart.

“Let’s trick him,” I say slowly.

“How?” Blaze asks.

Everyone is staring at me intently. It’s unnerving.

“We don’t have the artifact but we know its name and what it looks like. Let’s pretend we have it.”

“Pretend we have it,” Griffyn repeats.

“That’s genius, Felix! We advertise it’s going to be displayed somewhere and plan our attack around it. We will have the upper hand and we can end Killian once and for all.”

“It’s smart.” Anna shocks us all.

I turn to find her standing in the doorway.

“You didn’t rest long enough,” Aksel reprimands.

Anna rolls her eyes. “I only needed the blood to feel better but I rested as instructed.”

I feel like a king when she walks over to me and tucks herself under my

arm. She leans into me and I kiss the top of her head.

“We need the right place to make this work,” Blaze says.

“It can’t be obvious it’s coming from us,” Anna adds.

“I have an idea. There’s a museum I’m connected to that we could work with. We will have to guarantee the safety of the actual works there but with preparation, we can do that.” Of course, Aksel has connections with museums. “We need some other items to display as well. Think about that and I’ll reach out to the museum.”

I don’t know anything about artifacts. My family is not part of the elite who use these as status declarations. The only thing I would be able to get for this is-

“We do have a second option. I can’t believe I didn’t think of it until now! An absque stone would counter the wards around Killian’s home and allow us entry,” I say.

I’m almost shaking with the adrenaline of realizing this.

“You’re right, Felix, I didn’t keep the piece we used to release Rion, though,” Aksel admits.

“It’s illegal and almost impossible to find under normal circumstances but there’s a mine of it by my village,” I confess.

The guys all look at me with wide eyes in shock.

It’s a well-kept secret since the material is so dangerous but it occurs naturally so it has to exist somewhere.

“This is great. I can feel Killian in our grasp but I think this should be our backup plan. That will be on Killian’s territory and who knows what else he has for security. The Patera Mixtionis would be on our terms,” Anna says, squeezing me.

“She’s right,” I agree.

“It feels like we have the upper hand. We are on top now,” Rion declares. It feels like he spoke that into the universe and it’s true. We can do this.

“So, I’ll handle the next steps and reach out to the museum. Everyone remains alert in the meantime,” Aksel directs.

It’s moments like this when I’m grateful Aksel is the leader and has the connections so I’m free to do something I’ve been thinking about. Now seems like a good enough time.

I throw Anna over my shoulder so her ass is up in the air and turn to Blaze.

“Anna needs more rest and blood. You want to come, Blaze?”

He narrows his eyes at me and looks over at Griffyn who shoots him a thumbs up and smiles.

That’s exactly what I was worried about. He sees Griffyn and I as the two to take care of her, but he’s her mate too. I’m happy to help bring him further into this with all of us.

Anything to make Anna happy.

“Uh, can I get down?” Anna asks, wiggling in my arms.

I tap her ass. “No.”

I head out of the kitchen and make my way upstairs. Blaze doesn’t follow right away but when I hear footsteps behind me, I take a deep breath and smell that it is Blaze behind me.

“What are you planning, Felix?” Anna asks.

“Shh, shifter hearing.”

I know Blaze is already suspicious, no reason to add more to that.

Instead of going to the room I’m sharing with Anna, I take us to Blaze’s turf and stand at the door to his room.

Blaze stops at the end of the hall and I can smell surprise in the air, but

his face never changes.

“Come on, Blaze, Anna’s got to be getting uncomfortable!” I taunt.

Anna huffs but stays silent as Blaze makes his choice.

It’s up to him now.

Fourteen

Blaze



Felix is standing in front of my door with Anna dangling over his shoulder.

I'm not sure what's happening right now.

Felix wants me here but I can't figure out what for.

I assumed he was going to have Anna feed from me and I would leave them alone after that but Felix brought her to my room. Felix wants me to stay.

I think I want to try this with him.

When I mate with Anna, Felix will be a part of my life forever as her mate. We should get comfortable with each other.

Decision made, I move forward and open the door to my room. Felix strides forward and throws Anna down on my bed playfully.

"You hungry, Kitten?" Felix asks.

I should be annoyed he's offering my blood up but Anna should know I would never deny her.

Anna looks at me with a shy smile.

I don't wait for her to answer and stride forward to stand at the edge of the bed.

Anna pounces using her vampire strength to throw me down on the bed faster than I can react.

“Sometimes I forget a tiny thing like you has the power to do that,” Felix says.

“You should never forget how strong I am,” Anna says playfully. Her eyes never leave mine even though she’s responding to Felix.

“Do you mind?” Anna asks.

The corner of my lips tilts up. Something that keeps happening more often with Anna around.

“Do I mind? No Spark, I never mind.”

I tilt my head and present my neck to her. Something I would never do for anyone else but since Anna isn’t a shifter, I’m not sure she realizes the gravity of the situation.

Anna pounces on me. There’s a slight pinch as her fangs pierce my skin before euphoria floods me.

Her venom floods my system, relaxing my muscles and making my cock rock hard.

As she drinks, her hips start grinding down on me and I can’t contain a moan from escaping. My eyes flicker to Felix to see his reaction. He’s just standing there with a giant grin on his face.

Anna pulls back and licks the wounds on my neck before pressing a soft kiss there.

“Thank you, Blaze.”

The bed bounces as Felix hops on with us. He grabs Anna’s little dress and pulls it over her head.

“No bra, Kitten?”

Her giggle sends more blood rushing to my cock. It’s pushing up into her

from her spot on my lap.

“You can’t wear a bra with that dress, Felix!”

“Obviously,” I add with a little nod before I even think about the joke.

Anna laughs again, this time her flawless tits bounce in front of my face as she does. It’s hypnotizing. I should make her laugh more often.

“I knew you had a sense of humor in there somewhere,” Felix teases.

They’re all slowly teaching me that opening up doesn’t have to be a bad thing. It makes them happy, not angry.

Felix tugs on Anna until she falls off my lap. Both of them fall to the bed facing each other and I roll over so I’m spooning Anna.

She is pinned between Felix and me. I like having Anna as a buffer between us.

She grinds her heavenly ass against my cock, which is already straining to get to her, and I know I’m done for.

She has unleashed a beast in me that can only be fed by her and it’s starving, whether Felix is here or not.

The air is saturated with the smell of lust so I know Felix can scent it too. That must be why he leans forward and captures Anna’s lips in a passionate kiss.

Fuck. What should I do? Should I stay or go? Is that Felix’s hint for me to back off? He did invite me in here.

Anna quiets my mind when she grinds back into me again.

She wants me here so I’m staying.

I may not know how to handle casual affection and touch but my instincts scream at me when it comes to sex with Anna. I’m not holding back.

I press kisses along her neck, paying special attention to the spot behind her ear that I discovered she loves in the clearing. She starts wiggling

between us like crazy, her body won't stay still.

I grab her hips to slow her down and pull her tight against me. I growl in her ear, "Stop moving or you'll ruin us both."

Felix breaks apart from Anna's lips long enough to shoot me a surprised glance before he moves down and his lips wrap around one of her nipples. Of course, that makes Anna squirm again so I tighten my grip on her.

"Be good and I'll play with the other one," I whisper.

Anna nods so I follow through and tweak her other nipple that's being left out.

On her other side, Felix is gently sucking on her nipples, eliciting soft moans from her.

"Blaze, I need you, please?" Anna begs.

Who am I to deny my mate?

I run my fingers down her body and across her stomach until I get to her wet pussy. I don't waste time once I'm there and swipe my fingers through her slit.

Her surprised moan is worth it.

My fingers swirl in her wetness and I touch all the areas that made her moan the first time.

"Anna, you are irresistible," Felix murmurs against her skin, his words making her shiver.

Feeling the slick wetness coating my fingers, I know Anna is more than ready for what's coming. With a devilish grin on my face, I pull my hand away from her center and swiftly remove my shorts, freeing my throbbing cock.

"You're dripping," I whisper.

I position myself behind her, guiding my swollen tip to her slick entrance.

The warmth of her body against mine sends shivers down my spine, and I can't help but let out a low growl as I push forward.

I let her adjust to my size before I push in further filling her completely and my pelvis connects with her ass. Her walls grip me so tight it's almost painful, in the best way.

I thrust in and out, building up tension with every movement and Anna's hands grip the sheets beneath her.

"God, Blaze, you feel so good," she cries out, her head falling back in ecstasy.

Felix reclaims Anna's lips with his own. I would expect my possessive dragon to hate sharing Anna with someone else but he's content with Felix's role.

Anna grips me tight as I smoothly move in and out of her. I can feel her walls start to shake as she starts moaning louder. My pace quickens as the familiar pressure builds within me.

"Harder, Blaze."

If she says so.

I pound into her until I'm right on the brink of coming myself. Anna screams as she comes around me and it feels like she's pulling me back inside her every time I pull out.

I can't hold back my release and fill her while she shatters around me.

As soon as I pull out of Anna and watch my come running down her leg, Felix has her flipped on her back with him between her thighs.

Felix wastes no time in sliding his cock into Anna, her body eagerly accepting him. Anna's moan echoes around the room and Felix uses a brutal pace to push her over the edge again.

She wraps her legs around his back and meets him thrust for thrust. Her

moans and gasps punctuate the room, and I find myself getting hard again just from watching them.

I want to join them so I move closer and pinch Anna's nipples. Her back arches off the bed making me feel like a king knowing I can bring her that pleasure.

It doesn't take long for her to tip over the edge and come screaming around Felix. He throws his head back and groans as he empties himself inside her.

Knowing she's filled with a mixture of our come is hot as fuck. I want her like this all the time.

I think that can be arranged.

Anna

Fifteen

Anna



I wake up and it's dark outside. I'm not sure what disturbed me but something is missing. I feel cold and lonely.

Blaze is gone.

It's the middle of the night, where is he?

I sneak out of Felix's grasp which of course wakes him up. One eye opens to look at me with a sleepy gaze.

"What's wrong?" His voice is low and gritty.

"Nothing is wrong. Go back to sleep, baby. I'll be right back."

He wraps his arms around my pillow and brings it to his nose with a sigh. Felix snuggles the pillow like it's me. It's so freaking adorable.

I throw on Felix's shirt and use light steps as I sneak downstairs, hoping to surprise Blaze and maybe get a repeat of last night.

The front door creaks and I hurry my pace.

"Blaze?"

His hulking body stops short without turning around.

"Are you leaving?" I ask.

I mean it seems obvious with one foot literally out the door but I'm still surprised. I didn't know we had any plans in action or any reason for him to

leave. He crept out of bed with me to leave.

He finally turns around to face me with a blank expression. “Just getting some fresh air, Spark. Nothing to worry about.”

You would think a member of the Alpha team would be a better liar.

“Blaze, you can tell me where you’re going,” I say softly.

I take a step towards him but his body stiffens and I freeze.

“What’s going on?”

“I just need air, Anna. Leave it alone. Goodbye.”

He leaves, shutting the door behind him and cutting me off in the process.

This is not what I expected when I went to bed wrapped in his arms last night.

Is he regretting what we did? A sense of abandonment fills me and no matter how much I want to stay calm, anxiety floods me.

I slide to the floor and wrap my arms around my knees.

Blaze has been quiet, grumpy and I don’t always know what’s going on in his head, but he’s never been rough or mean with me.

I would expect this from the old Aksel but not my Blaze.

I sense his concern before I see him.

Griffyn sits down on the ground next to me and pulls me under his arm.

“What’s wrong, Vixen?”

I rest my head on his shoulder and ignore the tear that slips out.

“I’m fine.”

“I can feel that you are very much not fine. You can’t lie to me, we’re bonded mates.” He waits a moment before adding, “Tell me and I’ll fix it.”

“I’m just overreacting to something Blaze said.”

I swallow around the lump in my throat and push back tears.

“Blaze?” Griffyn asks. He leans back and looks me in the eye.

I nod. "Why am I reacting like this?"

"Mates can trigger intense emotions, Vixen. Nothing is wrong with you, it's the uncemented bond."

I take a deep breath and try to listen to him. My brain knows I'm being silly but emotions are still flooding me.

"I never felt like this when Aksel was mean to me."

Griffyn kisses the top of my head. "You didn't trust Aksel or have a relationship with him when he was mean to you. Blaze means something to you now."

"You're right."

He's being wise right now. Of course, he wants to make me smile and tells a joke.

"I'll find a way to beat Blaze up for you in revenge. Maybe when he's asleep."

I laugh and snuggle deeper into his warmth.

"I don't need revenge. I just need to talk to him when he gets home."

"He left?" I can hear the surprise in Griffyn's voice.

"Yes, and he wouldn't tell me why." My voice catches on the last word.

I hate that my emotions are so out of control right now.

"You sure this is the bond affecting me? I feel ridiculous."

"I promise it is. Come on, let's go back to bed. Blaze can take care of himself and he probably had something silly to do and didn't want to embarrass himself."

Griffyn picks me up by the waist and pulls me into his arms.

I lean forward and press a kiss to Griffyn's lips.

"Thank you for being here for me," I whisper against his plump lips.

"I'm always here for you, Vixen. I'm your mate, where else would I be?"

His words settle something in me and I feel like I can take a deep breath again.

“Are you going to steal me to your bed now?” I ask.

Griffyn grins. “Absolutely. If you snooze, you lose. Literally for Felix.”

I wrap my legs around his waist and put my head on his shoulder.

“Take me away, Griffyn.”

His laugh lights a fire under me and as soon as we get into his room I start kissing down his neck. I feel insatiable when it comes to my mates. I haven’t had this much sex in my life, ever.

The amazing sex Rion and I had when we were together flashes in my head, making my panties wet.

“Damn your lust just made me dizzy, it was so strong. What’s got you feeling that?” Griffyn whispers directly in my ear.

I wiggle from the sensations. It feels so sensitive. Blood rushes to my cheeks and I bite my tongue.

“You were thinking of someone else! Oh Vixen, now you have to tell me.”

Of course, he’s excited about this. Felix and Griffyn are little matchmakers when it comes to my mates.

I secretly love it.

Griffyn pins me against the wall and bites my nipple through Felix’s shirt. When he presses his cock against my core and I can feel his piercings through his boxers, I know I’m done for.

I’m addicted to these guy’s cocks and Griffyn’s piercings can make me dick-drunk.

He keeps grinding at a steady pace that builds me up slowly.

When he leans down and bites my nipple again, I moan.

“Are you going to tell me now?”

“Will you make me come?” I counter.

“Absolutely. I promise you three orgasms before I’m done with you, Vixen.”

His tip brushes against my clit at just the right angle that it makes me jump.

Griffyn holds me with one hand and frees his cock from his boxers with the other. He lines his tip up perfectly with my entrance.

“Tell me so I can slide inside this magic pussy and make you scream until everyone in this house is awake.”

Those filthy words do it.

“I was thinking about Rion.”

Griffyn slides in completely in one move. His piercings enter me one by one and the bump on his pelvis lines up ideally with my clit.

He holds me like that as I adjust to having him inside me while pinning me against the wall.

When he finally starts moving, he uses a circular motion to make me whimper.

Griffyn is a talented lover. There’s no denying it. Every move he makes is designed to make me scream until I lose my voice.

I want to be an equal partner that makes him scream too.

I tighten my legs until my heels are digging into his ass and run my nails down his back.

“Fuck Vixen, are you marking your territory?” He sounds breathless.

“I’ve already done that.” I lick my puncture wound marks on his neck that act like a second mate mark.

“You’re going to make me come before I’ve taken care of you if you’re

not careful.”

I like the sound of that but maybe I’ll let him give me one first. I won’t be waiting for the three he promised though.

I push my bottom lip out and pout. “Fine.”

“That’s my good girl.”

His grip on my thighs tightens.

“You know who I share this wall with? Rion. There’s no way he isn’t listening on the other side of this wall.”

That visual does it for me and I’m screaming as I come around Griffyn’s glorious cock. He keeps going, grinding against my clit and working me through this orgasm.

I know I’m squeezing the hell out of him so I’m not surprised when Griffyn groans and I can feel his cock jerk inside me.

He pulls out and pumps himself through his orgasm while coming all over my stomach.

A smile of pure male satisfaction stretches across his face as he stares down at his come on me and rubs it into my skin with one hand.

“Are you happy with yourself?” I ask playfully.

“It’s with my mate mark on your ribs. Fucking perfect.”

He moves and puts me down right on the edge of the bed before kneeling before me.

“I promised you three. One down, two to go.”

Griffyn attacks my pussy with vigor, eating me like I’m his last meal.

“You’re so delicious, it’s addictive.”

That’s so hot.

Once again, I’m reminded of Griffyn’s skill as he pushes me to the edge faster than I thought possible. His tongue never stops moving around my clit.

One second he's flicking, the next he's sucking until I come again and flood his face with my wetness.

His smirk is deadly.

This time he stabs his tongue deep inside me over and over before replacing it with his fingers. He finds that magic spot inside me so quickly it's like a magnet.

The way he moves his fingers has my legs kicking one second and pulling his head closer the next.

I'm done for when he nibbles on my clit so softly while rubbing that spot inside me.

I come a third time, completing Griffyn's promise to me.

Griffyn stands up and leans over me to kiss. I can taste myself on his lips.

When he sucks his fingers clean I feel my pussy clench.

I'm so tired I can barely keep my eyes open as Griffyn picks me up and carries me out of the room.

"He's going to want to wake up with you there," Griffyn whispers before slipping into Blaze's room with Felix still sleeping in his bed.

Griffyn positions me perfectly between them and I'm asleep in seconds.

Sixteen

Anna



I wake up snuggled between Felix and Griffyn who are both wrapped around me as tight as they can.

Blaze is still missing and I hope by the time I get downstairs, he's here and I can talk to him.

Both of them wake up when I try to get out of bed and the idiots play rock paper scissors over who gets to shower with me.

Since neither of them asked me, I lock the door instead and have a peaceful shower to myself. I can hear their muttered curses through the door which makes me laugh.

Both of them are sitting in the kitchen when I make it down there. Felix slides a delicious coffee across the counter to me with puppy eyes so I drop a kiss on his head so he knows he's not in trouble.

Griffyn pulls the same move which doesn't work on his face so I pinch his nipple instead with a laugh.

I freeze when I realize Blaze is standing in front of the pantry picking something out.

Griffyn nods in Blaze's direction and starts talking with Felix to distract him so I can talk to Blaze.

I pull Blaze into the walk-in pantry with me and he follows without resistance.

“What happened, Blaze?” I ask, staring into his umber eyes.

He takes a deep breath and sighs. “Nothing, Anna. Please let this go. I don’t want to lie to you but I’m not ready to talk about this.”

Damn it.

I want to respect his wishes so I swallow my concerns and try to smile.

“Okay Blaze, I’ll let this go but please tell me when you’re ready.”

I don’t add that I’m worried about him. He doesn’t need to hear it no matter how much I want to say it.

When he turns I see something purple peek out from under his shirt.

I grab his arm and lift his shirt to see a massive bruise that’s turning purple. His shifter healing is working but this must have been bad originally.

“What is this?” I ask.

“It’s from training.”

I know they all find time throughout the day to train. I’ve joined each of them at some point and seen them spar but they shouldn’t be going that hard at training.

“Well be more careful, I don’t like seeing you hurt,” I say with a soft smile.

Blaze’s entire demeanor shifts and he softens.

“I will, Spark.”

I reach out and grab his hand to give it a little squeeze. Blaze returns it immediately and I feel better.

“I have good news,” Aksel calls.

He’s standing by the island when we exit the pantry. Rion slides past him and pulls out a pan. I’m surprised when he starts cooking some eggs, enough

for all of us.

He does something fancy with his wrist when he cracks them open. It takes a few tries but after two eggs he has it down. He's cracking eggs better than I can.

Everyone is staring at him but no one comments on this new behavior.

"What's the good news?" Felix asks.

Griffyn raises his eyebrows at me before flicking his eyes to Blaze. I smile and nod, letting him know it's worked out.

Griffyn really took care of me last night when I felt out of control. I really love that side of him and his ability to take my mind off the world.

"The museum is opening a new exhibit for supernaturals. It's owned by mages who spell a section of the building to deter any humans. They agreed to work with us for a large donation," Aksel reveals.

"A large donation?" I ask.

Will that be covered by the council?

"It won't make a dent, Willson. Don't worry about that."

"Where are you guys at with your job?" I check.

Everyone looks at Aksel.

I hear the pan sizzle as Rion adds the mixture and the smell of eggs floods the room.

Aksel sighs. "I wish we could trust our employers with the truth but if we tell them Killian is planning to destroy mate bonds they may take the mission out of our hands. We can't explain how we are going to draw him out without revealing that information."

"We haven't been called in for a status report so we have time to close this case before we have to answer to anyone," Felix adds.

I nod, trusting them to understand that world when I don't.

“So, when is the new exhibit?” I ask.

“Three days. I’ll send them the information to post about the artifact as a new addition and we start planning our trap.” Aksel sits down at the island.

“This is really happening,” I say, shocked.

The level of shock I feel is surprising. I think I never really believed Killian would be dealt with after what he did to me.

“It’s happening.” Rion presses a kiss to the top of my head before handing me a plate of fluffy scrambled eggs.

“It smells delicious.” I grab a seat at the counter and try my first bite. “It tastes delicious!”

The flavors explode on my tongue as I eat the best plate of eggs I’ve ever had.

Rion grins like I just handed him a precious gem. “Thank you.”

“Do we all get some?” Felix asks, taking a big whiff of the smells.

Rion laughs. “Yes.”

He plates the rest of the eggs and everyone digs in. I can feel Griffyn and Felix’s enjoyment through our bond.

Aksel and Blaze are quiet. Rion is standing there watching us all eat.

“So, what’s the plan for capturing Killian?” I ask once I’ve finished my plate and coffee.

“I have some thoughts so far. After closing hours we will be in position waiting for Killian to arrive. He might not come that first night but it would make sense to come before the exhibit even opens so we need to be prepared,” Aksel says.

“We need a plan on how to handle Killian once he’s there. Our normal fighting style isn’t going to cut it,” Blaze points out.

“And Rion and I will be there. Right?”

“I’m planning on it,” Aksel responds with a smirk.

Aksel outlines his plan and the rest of us add to it or tweak details until we all think it’s flawless.

“One last thing, how are we going to make the replica?” Griffyn asks.

“It would be easy with a mage,” Felix points out.

“I’m surprised they formed your team without a mage. If anything, they’re healers,” Rion says.

“The four of us clicked without one, and we did fine using the council’s mage,” Griffyn answers.

“Let’s ask Nic to make one for us. While we are at it, we should ask Aly and her mates if they know why Killian would want to destroy mate bonds. It rings a bell and I think it’s something they’ve mentioned to me before. We should utilize our resources in case it matters somehow,” I say.

“I don’t want to bring them into this,” Aksel responds immediately.

“I know you don’t, Aksel, but Aly is my best friend and I have complete faith that they will take our side when it comes down to it. They would protect even you once I tell them you’re all my mates.”

Aksel stares at me long and hard before giving a stiff nod.

“I trust you, Anna. If you trust them, then I’ll give them a chance. But I still hate Ashford.”

“You’re both leader types, you should get along.”

Griffyn rolls his eyes. “Aksel can’t get along with anyone.”

“He’s an acquired taste,” Rion adds with a grin.

“I think it would be better to talk in person. What if I invite them over? Maybe you would be more comfortable in our own space this time,” I suggest.

“I can cook dinner!” Rion offers.

I grin. "Sounds great!"

When I focus on Aksel he's grimacing but tilts his chin very slightly and I'll take that as an excited yes.

"I'll call Aly after I do the dishes."

I grab the plates from Rion and start washing them before he can. Of course, Felix swoops in and takes them from me, and pushes me away until he's commandeered the sink and won't listen to my protests.

"Go invite Aly over," Felix says without turning around.

Rion and I walk upstairs together. I want to check in with him.

"Are you sure you're okay with this plan, Rion? It can't be easy to think of killing your brother."

"Every day I was trapped in that state when I had awareness of my circumstances, I thought about this moment. He stole my life from me, Acushla. More importantly, he stole your life from you and he used me to do it. I want him gone from our lives so we can finally move forward, together."

I wrap my arms tight around him and I'm not surprised when I feel a wet spot grow on his shirt under my cheek.

"Okay, let's move forward together."

We go our separate ways and I dial Aly's number.

"Anna, hi!" Aly's excited voice says down the line.

"How are you?"

"Enjoying summer, you?"

Her joy is clear down the line. I hope one day I have what she has with her mates so I can be as happy as her.

They're the blueprint for happy mates. They had to fight for that happy ending, though, and now I am fighting for mine.

"It's good. Listen, I have some updates on the mission and could use

Nic's help with something. Would you and the guys want to come here for dinner?"

"The house you're staying at with Aksel and crew?" Aly asks skeptically. This is going to blow her mind.

"Yes. Turns out they're all my fated mates. We are trying to figure it out and that includes them getting along with you and your mates."

Aly's screech hurts my ear even through the phone.

"They're your mates? They're all your mates! That's incredible, Anna! Of course we will come. Is there anything else you're holding out on me?"

This next part is going to be hard and I'm not sure how she's going to react. I would wait to tell her in person but they'll notice Rion right away.

"The Ryan I was dating isn't the same person who changed me into a vampire and sired me to kill you. I know it sounds crazy but they're twins. My Ryan was a victim too. We found him locked in a cage, Aly."

I use my most solemn tone so she understands how serious this is.

"That's a lot to take in," Aly responds simply.

"I know, it was a lot for me too. I didn't want to spring it on you when you get here. Take some time to process but you should know he's my mate too and I plan on pursuing the bond."

"You trust him?"

I don't hesitate.

"Completely, Aly. His twin, Killian, is the villain here. I don't want to punish anyone but him."

"Then I trust your judgment. See you at dinner. I will prepare the guys."

"Thanks, Aly. Love you."

"Love you."

I hang up feeling so lucky that my best friend is so supportive.

I need to plan a time for Aly to meet Adelina, they're going to love each other. I just know it.

Seventeen

Rion



I stare at the recipe on my phone, the one Anna got me the day we went shopping. Apparently, Aksel is paying for it.

I've been watching videos for this particular dish all week and I think I'm finally ready to try it out. No better time than when I have to make a good impression on Anna's best friend. I know she's going to hate me on principal and I need to change that.

We didn't spend that much time together when I dated Anna in college. I was avoiding them so they wouldn't figure out I was a vampire.

I gather all the necessary ingredients, arranging them on the countertop in the order I'll need them. The meat, vegetables, and herbs are just sitting there waiting to see what I turn them into.

I grab the chopping knife and use what Anna taught me, mixed with some techniques I've learned online. A sense of purpose fills my soul as the knife makes a rhythmic sound each time it hits the cutting board.

Next, I dial the stove to the temperature I need. I wish it was an actual flame but electric will do for now.

I get into a groove as I work with purpose and confidence, despite never having done this before. Everything comes together before my eyes and I feel

incredibly accomplished with my work.

It's almost enough to make me forget how uncomfortable this dinner is going to be.

Near the end, I taste a spoonful of my sauce. The spices and herbs burst on my tongue. After I add a pinch of salt, it tastes perfect.

I can't believe I made this.

I plate the pork and pour my sauce over the top of it. It smells delicious, I'm surprised no one has come down yet to try and steal some.

The doorbell rings and I stay in the kitchen plating my meal, letting Anna get it.

I hear voices coming down the hall and know I only have another few seconds alone before I need to turn on the charm.

Maybe they'll be more focused on hating Aksel than me. Should I call him Akshole in front of them as a reminder?

"Rion, you remember Aly and her mates Nicoli, Jeremy, Jay, Kiran, and Ajax. Right?"

Her smile is forced and I know she's nervous about how this is going to go.

"Rion?" Aly asks.

"That's my true name and since my brother has tainted the name Ryan with his sins, I wanted to return to my roots," I explain.

Aly nods and reaches a hand out to me. "Let's start over."

I breathe a sigh of relief, wipe my hands off on a towel and shake her hand before she can rescind her generous offer.

Her mates all tense and stare at the place our skin touches until I move away.

Which is silly since I'm faster than all of them and Aly is probably the

one most likely to catch me if I did act since she's a hunter but I'm not going to remind them of that.

Everyone is stiff but the attention comes off me as the rest of Anna's mates trickle in.

Nicoli and Aksel are staring at each other with frowns. While most everyone else forces smiles, except Jeremy and Blaze. Those two look like they could get into a grumpy contest. I would put my money on Blaze.

"Ashford," Aksel says.

Nic dips his head only slightly and says, "Lenoir. I hear your father is missing. Are you taking over his seat?"

"Yes, I am but I'll have help."

It's so fucking awkward.

"Can't say I'm sorry to see him go," Jeremy taunts.

I can see the shock on their faces when Aksel replies, "I'm not either."

"It smells like respect in here," Felix stage whispers to me, which makes Anna and Aly laugh.

All their mates relax at the sound.

"Should we eat? Rion cooked," Anna says.

Jay takes a big sniff and grins.

Everyone slowly moves over and sits at the table.

Anna is staring at the dish in awe and butterflies erupt in my stomach.

"It smells delicious. It was a tease when I was upstairs," Felix says, taking a seat one away from Anna.

Aly takes the seat next to her and her mates swarm to that side of the table.

I'm shocked when Anna's mates leave the seat next to her open for me.

"This looks impressive, Rion. I thought you said you couldn't cook. Were

you hustling me?” Anna asks.

“Hustling?” I ask.

I’m not sure what that word means.

Griffyn laughs. “You pretend you don’t know how to do something when you really can, to trick someone.”

My eyes widen. “Oh. No, I didn’t do that.”

Anna laughs while she grabs my arm and pulls me to the seat next to her. “I know. I meant that this was impressive.”

My shoulders straighten. “Then, go ahead and eat.”

As everyone digs in, I sit on the edge of my seat with nerves. I’m eager to hear what they think, especially Anna.

Maybe cooking for basically strangers was too much this early.

Anna’s eyes widen and sparkle before she turns to me. “It’s the best pork I’ve ever tasted Rion!”

Fuck this feels extraordinary. The other guys and Aly all complement the food as well.

When I take my first bite, I know I did a good job.

I’m already planning the next dish in my head.

“So you’re learning to cook? I enjoy it myself, maybe we can share notes sometime,” Jay offers.

My shoulders relax. It feels like a sign of acceptance that I’m not my brother.

“Both of you are excellent cooks. I wonder what you could make together!” Aly says.

“So, you’re all Anna’s mates? Why did it take so long for you to tell her?” Nicoli asks with a raised eyebrow.

“Don’t answer that. Nic don’t pry into their business in front of them. I’ll

get the information from Anna later in secret.”

Anna laughs and bumps her shoulder into Aly’s.

Aksel looks worried as Anna says, “Of course I’ll tell you.”

“Fine, if I can’t ask that then maybe you could tell us what’s going on with... Killian.” Nic grimaces as he says it and his eyes flick to me.

“We need a mage,” Aksel says but doesn’t explain anything else.

“We have a plan to capture him and we need your help with one part of it. We don’t want anyone outside this room to know since we aren’t sure who we can trust,” Anna explains further and I feel her foot brush my leg as she kicks Aksel under the table.

He grunts but adds, “Killian is after an artifact. We need you to make a copy of it to lure him with.”

“Ask nicely,” Nic’s grin is so big, it’s creepy.

“Told you we shouldn’t have asked him,” Aksel retorts.

I think Aly kicks Nic under the table based on his grunt which was very similar to Aksel’s. “Don’t be like that.” Aly turns to Anna. “Of course he will help.”

Kiran says, “Whipped,” around a cough.

His twin, Ajax, fights a smile.

“We’re all whipped.” Jay doesn’t look bothered by that at all.

“Like good mates,” Nic retorts, staring at Aksel.

“Can you like us and not Aksel? Don’t group us in with him just because we work together. We know he’s a pain,” Griffyn says with a smile.

“Anna calls him Akshole,” Felix adds.

Everyone bursts out laughing. Even Blaze cracks a smile.

“That’s genius!” Aly says.

Aksel rolls his eyes. “Ha. Ha. Very funny.”

How many times a day does he roll his eyes?

It's been a while since I've added to the conversation but I'm just glad the heat is on Aksel and not me.

"So you'll help us?" Aksel asks, cutting through everyone's laughter.

"Of course we will help Anna. Include us in your plan to catch Killian too. It's always good to have backup. Why does Killian want this artifact?" Nic says.

"No, we are fine," Aksel responds immediately.

Now I'm rolling my eyes. He's so predictable.

"Of course we will take the help. Killian has to die and we can't waste any more time with failed missions," I say with a pointed glance at Anna.

She glares at me but thankfully Aly doesn't comment or notice.

"Fine." Aksel leans back in his chair.

"Killian needs the artifact for a spell. It's bad so we need to stop him. He wants to destroy mate bonds. I feel like I remember something about that from his time tormenting you all. Was there?" Anna asks.

They share a glance. "He hated us for exposing mate bonds between species and for reversing the spell blocking them. He hates other people having happiness with their mates."

"Then the threat needs to end," Blaze says.

We discuss how they can back us up and help ensure Killian doesn't get away.

By the end of the meal we are all more comfortable and jokes are flowing, especially between Kiran, Jay, Felix, and Griffyn.

They didn't ignore me or exclude me from the conversation. Aly did offer a fresh start.

Before they leave Aly pulls Anna to the side.

“Do you need any blood?” Aly whispers but it’s not quiet enough.

Growls erupt from Felix and Blaze while Aksel and I stiffen. Griffyn tries to smile but it’s not his normal easygoing grin.

Aly’s mates watch us with amusement but edge closer to their mate.

“Relax, I won’t take her blood. These five feed me plenty but thank you.”

The tension bleeds out of the room with Anna’s words and Jay and Kiran burst out laughing.

The smile on Anna’s face is huge and I know our future holds a lot more dinners like this.

Eighteen

Anna



Aksel was given specific instructions for which room to transport into the museum. The wards they use can be turned on and off when visiting hours are over.

Another way the human world is modified to accommodate supernaturals.

We exit into a long white hallway with marble walls and floors. It feels immaculate and I can't believe they're letting us run a mission here.

"Aren't they worried about their art?" I ask.

"They didn't have much of a choice considering I'm the top donor. It gets you some perks," Aksel says cockily.

"Of course that's how you got them to agree to this," Griffyn scoffs.

"You're welcome."

Aksel leads the way to a room off the main strip that has podiums set for display. They're all empty.

Last night when Nic made the duplicate Patera Mixtionis, Blaze had the genius idea to make a few other objects displayed by the museum to minimize the damage while being as authentic as possible.

We spread out, arranging the art with the Patera Mixtionis right in the middle.

Spotlights are shining on the podiums which leaves shadows in the corners for Aksel to hide us in. It's going to take a lot of his concentration to keep Rion and me hidden but once we reveal ourselves he will be free to help. If the plan goes off correctly then Aksel won't be needed at that point.

Felix shifts into his snow leopard and prowls out of the room to be our lookout while we all take up positions around the room.

With Rion and I together and Griffyn with Blaze and Aksel, we can use the mate bond to communicate without leaving a detectable trace.

Felix is going to feel fury and I'll push that to Griffyn to let us know Killian is here.

I clutch the amulet that has become a staple in my life since becoming a vampire. As much as I want it gone, it's going to feel empty without it. It's been a safety blanket and it's time to lose it.

The guys have had to almost constantly feed me blood at this point to keep me healthy. If this doesn't work, I'm not sure how long I have until even that isn't enough.

"You're going to be free." Rion squeezes my shoulder and glares down at the amulet.

"We will both be free."

We lean against the wall in silence for hours and I barely refrain from talking or singing a song just to stay awake.

It's not worth the risk when Killian could be here at any moment and hear me, blowing the entire operation.

Rion rubs soothing circles on my shoulder. I can see Griffyn poking Blaze and Aksel until he gets a reaction. He has to be hating this waiting even more than me.

Griffyn can never just sit in silence. He has to be dying to break the quiet.

Just as I'm beginning to lose hope, I feel Felix's fury which causes nerves to erupt in my stomach.

"He's here."

I focus on the pain Killian has cost me and turn those nerves into anger.

Aksel's darkness erupts in front of us and I know we're covered from sight, smell, and sounds but we can see through it. His ability to render senses useless is impressive.

My heart races when Killian strolls into the room like he doesn't have a care in the world. His demeanor is completely different than my Rion and I wouldn't be able to confuse them now.

He heads straight for the vase but slows down as he approaches. His steps get more cautious and he looks around the room.

Killian's eyes skip right over us and the others. Aksel's darkness does its job and keeps us hidden.

I'm taking slow, deep breaths to stay calm. He's right there and I want to zoom in and rip his head off for everything he's put me through.

Killian is looking in corners and glancing back at the door. Something has triggered his suspicions but he hasn't left yet. He wants this artifact enough to ignore whatever is bothering him.

We have to wait until he touches the Patera Mixtionis and triggers the binding spell but he never does.

That means it's time for plan B.

Killian shoots away from the Patera Mixtionis and towards the door but we were prepared for him to run. This room in the museum has wards to prevent him from transporting out, a theft measure we are using to our advantage.

Felix drops down from his perch outside the door of the room and snarls

at Killian.

He halts to a stop and takes off in the opposite direction at top speed. He's stopped in his tracks again when Aksel reveals that Blaze and himself are blocking that exit as well.

Even if he got past them, Aly and her mates are prepared for him.

"So, it's a fight you want? Then let's fight," Killian says. The elite tone of his voice is the complete opposite of how Rion talks.

I stand here with my muscles tight and ready to spring when my moment arrives.

Today is the end of Killian.

Nineteen

Felix



The guys and I all circle around Killian, poised to attack.

“It’s laughable that you think you can take me on and win. I’ve always been a step ahead and last time we came face to face there was no fight,” Killian taunts us.

He’s right, we have failed but this time we have come more prepared.

“You’re right, *we* aren’t enough,” Aksel responds.

Just like we planned, a blur shoots into the room. I know it’s Anna, making my heart pound in my throat and every muscle in my body locks up.

I wish she didn’t have to play this role for our plan to work.

Killian snatches her out of the air by her neck. When he lifts her off the ground I pray with every ounce of my soul we have enough time before he snaps her neck. He wasn’t supposed to catch her like this. I can’t let her get hurt.

Every inch of me screams out to go closer.

“What’s this around your neck? It just won’t do,” Killian says.

That’s when the plan goes to shit.

Rion dashes into the room at top speed to kill his brother while he’s distracted by Anna but Killian moves faster.

In less than a second he rips Anna's amulet off her neck and says, "Protect me and kill them all."

She reacts instantly by cutting Rion off and tackling him to the ground.

We've lost the element of surprise and we have to fight our mate if we want to free her from her sire bond.

Anna snarls and goes for Rion's throat. He throws up his arm, blocking her attack without hurting her.

"Anna, you can fight this," Rion begs as he flips her onto her back and pins her down.

While Rion contains Anna, Killian goes for Aksel.

Darkness erupts around us, making me momentarily blind until Aksel gives me back my sight.

It's moments like this when I'm grateful he's on my side.

Killian is fighting Aksel's powers, leaving an opening for me.

I shift into my snow leopard form and pounce, tearing through his back with my claws.

His roar of pain is music to my ears.

With Anna and Rion occupied, we have to fight harder to win this.

When we kill Killian, Anna will be released.

Blaze moves next, cocking his fist back to punch Killian but he pulls up short when Anna appears right in his fist's path.

Somehow she escaped Rion and came to protect him.

"Blind her!" Blaze shouts to Aksel.

Griffyn moves, sneaking closer to Anna without drawing her attention. He releases his hormones in full force on Anna.

I feel the effects from here but focus on pouncing again while Anna is distracted.

Griffyn's wings burst free and wrap around Anna while he tries to contain her with his powers. When she doesn't immediately reappear, I assume it's working.

Blaze shifts his hand into massive claws before stabbing Killian in his gut and pulling upwards to maximize the damage.

Aksel still has his darkness swirling to contain and disorient Killian.

For a moment, it feels like we are winning.

Killian roars, throwing Blaze and me off of him. I have no idea how he knows where Aksel is but Killian charges him, disturbing the magic so we can all see again.

Aksel and Killian engage in hand-to-hand combat, moving too quickly for any of us to intervene without possibly hurting Aksel.

I look around for Rion and find him slowly standing up and cupping his head.

I shift back. "Rion, what the hell happened?"

He shakes his head and looks around the room. Rion's shoulders drop when he spots Anna with Griffyn.

"She knocked me out. I wasn't going to fight her which gave her an advantage when she smacked my head on the ground."

She's going to feel guilty when this is over but none of this is her fault. It's Killian's and we need to end this.

I hear a defining snap and Aksel's roar of pain. His arm is dangling at his side, but he doesn't stop fighting for a second. He needs help, but the way Killian moves is too fast.

"Rion, you need to separate them. Aksel needs help and Killian is the fastest vampire I've ever seen," I say quietly to only Rion.

He nods, takes a deep breath, and uses his own speed to push Killian

away from Aksel.

I rush to his side.

“The fucker broke my fucking arm!” Aksel shouts.

He looks murderous.

“We know we can’t do this one-on-one which is why Killian keeps trying to engage us solo,” I say.

Aksel nods. “And we are letting him.”

“Plan A failed so where do we go from here?”

“Griffyn is our best chance at keeping Anna contained which means the three of us need to help Rion get the advantage. Even without the element of surprise, he is still our best chance at ending this,” Aksel says.

“The more we bleed him out, the weaker he will be. Blaze and I will focus on that. You need to take Killian’s senses away again.”

“Done.”

Aksel releases his powers again but they’re weaker with his injury.

Blaze does a partial shift and catches Killian with his claws whenever there’s an opportunity. Rion is fighting hard but Killian has the upper hand.

I’m about to join them when someone snarls behind me.

Anna has thrown Griffyn off her and is watching the scene with manic eyes.

She moves, aiming for Blaze but I can’t let that happen.

I tackle her to the ground, cupping her head to avoid it banging against the floor.

It would probably be the best idea to just knock her out but I can’t get myself to do it. My soul refuses to hurt my mate in any way.

Our bond is a mess of anger and crazed emotions that shred me.

I can feel Anna fighting against her commands but Killian is so fucking

strong it's impossible. I know that, but I try anyway.

“Anna, it's Felix. You can fight this Kitten, I know you can. You don't even need to come back to normal, just don't fight as hard. I'll hold you here.”

Her eyes bounce back and forth between mine. Even with my shifter strength pinning her to the ground, she could throw me off of her.

Her hesitation gives me hope.

Griffyn comes back to us, slowly leaking his pheromones.

I watch her pupils dilate as she slowly relaxes under me.

I can feel her fighting against the instinct to make Griffyn stop. She's trying to get pulled under by the pheromones.

“Keep going,” I whisper.

Griffyn's powers increase until I feel like I'm going to burst right now in the worst moment imaginable.

I keep my weight on top of Anna so she can't escape.

Once again, Griffyn uses his wings to cut off the outside world.

Now Blaze, Aksel, and Rion just need to end this.

Twenty

Rion



My body is just as strong as his and I can match his speed. We are two sides of one coin.

Twins fighting to the death.

The difference is, he's had centuries to perfect his form, moves, and powers. He stole that from me.

I'm going to steal his life from him.

Any sympathy I had about his death went out the door when he used Anna's sire bond against her.

I had to fight her and that can never happen again. She will be free of him.

Aksel's powers falter, allowing sound in and Killian seizes the moment.

"Brother, why fight with them? You and I could destroy them in seconds," Killian announces before landing a blow against my stomach.

"You know why I fight with them. You ruin lives Killian, including mine. Why would I side with you?"

"I'm your brother."

"That means nothing to me."

I see an opportunity. I fake right and expose my back before spinning out of the way so that when Killian follows, Blaze can gut him.

Finally, Killian starts to slow down. All the blood loss will do that to a vampire.

I take the upper hand, using the moves Blaze taught me to strike a blow to his temple. He stumbles back, falling to the ground and groaning.

“You won’t kill me,” Killian says, staring me in the eyes.

“I won’t,” I confirm.

Blaze moves swiftly, using his dagger-like claws to cut open Killian’s throat from behind. Blood gurgles and flows from the wound.

It’s not enough to kill him but he won’t be getting up again.

“Are you ready?” Aksel asks me.

I nod. “Do it.”

Blaze opens his mouth and shoots fire from his lungs that engulf Killian’s body. He burns down to ash and we watch the entire time to be sure it happens.

There will be no mistakes.

I hear a soft whimper that can only belong to Anna.

The three of us leave the pile of ash to go to her.

She’s pinned under Griffyn and Felix with wide eyes.

“He used the sire bond,” Aksel explains.

“She knows everything that happened, she’s just processing,” Felix says, petting her hair back from her face.

“I just can’t fucking believe it’s over. I can feel the complete control I have over my body. I never knew he was sitting inside me, but he was. It was a poison in my soul waiting to be unleashed.”

“And now it’s gone?” I ask softly.

We've come so far, but even now when she talks about the pain my brother has caused her, I fear she's going to look into my eyes and hate me. Hate my face.

I should trust her more.

She smiles when she looks at me. It's like I'm the reason for her joy, not her pain.

It's addictive. I would do anything to keep that smile on her face, always.

"It's gone. I feel completely, one hundred percent myself and it's glorious!"

"What about the sickness from the amulet? Is that gone?" Felix asks.

Anna nods. "I was so weak and I had no idea. I've never felt this powerful."

"Fuck yeah, you're strong Vixen. Let's get you home so you can keep enjoying this." Griffyn picks her up and keeps her in his arms.

"I can walk!" Anna laughs. The sound is so free, it's exactly how I feel right now.

A weight has been lifted off my shoulders. From the entire group. Killian sat like an axe above our heads that we couldn't find but knew was there.

"This is the start of our future. Our forever," Felix says, voicing my exact feelings.

"Our future is bright as long as it's all of us together," Anna says while Griffyn nuzzles into her shoulder.

Blaze stays quiet but that's nothing new.

"What now?" I ask.

"Now, we go find Aly and her mates and we tell them about our win," Anna says.

"I need to collect the evidence before we go," Aksel adds, heading in the

opposite direction of Anna.

I follow Aksel as he collects footage, Killian's ashes, and all the artifacts Nicoli made for us. There are burn marks on the ground, blood, and evidence of our fighting.

"How do we clean this up?" I ask.

Before Aksel can answer, Nicoli walks into the room with his hands in his pockets.

"I can help with that." Nic snaps his fingers and the room returns to its original state.

"Mages, they do seem useful," I say, looking around the room in awe.

"Oh absolutely, why don't you have one on your team again?" Nic asks Aksel.

"We are strong enough without one. You just did the job of a clean-up team, not that impressive."

Aksel just can't be nice.

Nic rolls his eyes. "Aly talked Anna into going to get late night waffles so let's go before they leave us behind. I was sent to get you."

Aksel crosses his arms but we follow him out and don't have to use our transport charms to leave since transportation is one of Aly's powers.

We need a huge booth at the diner to fit all of us. Of course, we all fight for positions next to the girls and it ends up with one group on either side of the table. I snagged a spot next to Anna with Aksel on her other side.

"So, we are finally free of Killian? It's incredible," Aly says.

Anna grins. "There's no more chance of me killing you! Unless, of course, you bother me."

Aly's mates growl at Anna playfully and I don't feel the need to snap back at them. I'm happy to see Anna's friendship with Aly has survived

everything it's been through.

“What is next for all of you? Your mission is over, right?” Jay asks.

“Are you leaving?” Nic says excitedly.

Felix narrows his eyes. “We’re Anna’s mates so we will be with her. We have more to deal with here before we leave.”

“More?” Aly asks.

“Nothing to worry about,” Anna cuts in. “Killian is gone. Let’s focus on that and enjoy this moment all together.”

And we do. We order waffles and laugh when Aksel looks awkward as fuck eating them. It’s glorious.

Twenty One

Griffyn



We wake up the next morning and I feel unbelievable. I'm high on life and our success and by the time we finish dinner I'm dying to celebrate again. The waffles were fun but we need something just the six of us.

"Let's do something fun!" I say, bouncing on my toes.

"What do you mean?" Anna asks.

"I mean it's been all doom and gloom around here all the time. We just killed Killian and freed Anna. We need to celebrate."

"There's a million things on our plate right now!" Aksel reminds us.

"We can't only focus on the negative. We need to celebrate our wins and this was a huge win for us!" Felix counters.

"Exactly. Maybe we need a break to refresh our minds and open the door for new ideas," I say.

"What did you have in mind?" Anna wraps her arms around my stomach.

"A drinking game!" I know my grin is too big.

"Can't we play poker instead? We haven't played since before we met Anna," Blaze asks.

"Sure as long as it's strip poker!" I say.

Aksel groans.

“Anna?” Felix asks her.

“You know what? Sure. I could use some more fun.”

“I mean I could take you upstairs and provide stress relief right now if you want,” I offer.

Maybe that’s a better idea. I take a step toward the exit to do just that.

“Nope! It’s game time,” Felix says, grabbing my arm and pulling me to the table.

Anna follows us and sits next to Felix. Blaze grabs the seat on her other side before anyone else can. Aksel sits right across from her with Rion and I on either side.

Felix grabs a deck of cards and starts dealing them out.

“So, how do you play poker?” Anna asks.

Felix groans and looks at her in pity. The rest of us have predatory faces as we stare at her.

“Well, first lesson, you probably don’t want to let a table of predators know you can’t play but it isn’t too hard to learn.” I give her a reassuring smile. “Do you know how to play, Rion?”

“Yes.”

I almost roll my eyes. How does he learn this stuff? I think he secretly has a super brain that just absorbs information. How else could you explain him being so well-adjusted in life?

Felix explains the normal rules of poker and the different hands. As soon as he finishes, I explain the stripping part of it.

“Most importantly the loser of each hand removes a piece of clothing! You can fold from the beginning and keep your clothing for that round.”

“Okay, easy enough.” Anna grabs her cards and examines them. She creases her face into a worried frown but I can feel her joy down the bond. A

poker face won't help her when I have a direct line to her feelings. They don't all have that advantage, though.

It's a struggle to keep the smile off my face.

Felix cheats the game with his bond and folds early but I decide to stay in it.

The other three watch Anna carefully as we all lay down our cards.

Anna raises her eyebrows and shoots for innocence as she lays down her cards. "Did I lose?"

Felix rolls his eyes. "Nope, you won Kitten. Must be beginner's luck! Aksel lost."

The dark fae in question scowls down at his cards before removing his shirt.

I catch Anna staring at the ridges of Aksel's abs longingly.

"Whatcha looking at?" I tease.

She blushes. "They look carved from stone. This may be just the distraction I needed. To be surrounded by five sexy men in partial undress."

Felix clears his throat and deals again.

"I'll try the folding thing this time," Anna says innocently but I can feel her mischievousness through the bond.

Felix loses.

I fold the next hand, knowing I won't win when Anna gets excited.

It takes three more hands for the rest of them to finally catch on. All of them have lost at least one article of clothing, including me.

"You hustled us!" Blaze says.

"Do you know how to play poker, Vixen?" I ask with a playful scowl.

Anna throws her head back laughing. "Yes. It was too easy to mess with you all!"

Felix bursts out laughing.

“I assume you knew?” Aksel drawls.

“Well, I felt her giddiness through our bond so I suspected,” Felix answers and I nod in agreement.

Aksel stares at Felix wistfully before forcing a smile and saying, “Well the game is on now! We won’t underestimate you again.”

The game gets ruthless after that and Anna quickly loses her shirt and shorts leaving her only in a bra and underwear. It’s sexy as hell and I feel lucky they’re black and lacy.

Lace is all I ever see her in and it’s incredible.

Blaze loses our next hand and scowls down at his cards like they betrayed him. When he stands up and starts to push his briefs down Anna says, “I can’t decide whether to stare and enjoy the show or look away.”

Blaze stares at her as he releases his massive cock. It only makes sense that it’s so big considering his size.

I’m glad I have my piercings and my body was made for pleasure so I can compete.

Anna can’t look away and her teeth dig into her lower lip as she watches the show. I won’t mind losing so I have to strip for her.

When she finally drags her eyes away and up his body, they stare at each other with heat in their eyes.

“Is it just me or did it get really hot in here?” I ask, shattering the moment.

Anna leans back in her seat and pretends she’s not burning up but the room is flooded with pheromones. “I don’t know what you mean.”

“I think I want to lose next,” Rion says.

Blaze sits back in his seat completely naked and Anna is so happy.

“The only thing that will make this better is when the rest of you are naked,” Anna says.

Before long Felix, Rion, and I are completely naked too and I’m dying to see if Aksel will strip.

It is Aksel versus Anna in the end. She still has her bra and panties on while he only has his briefs left.

She only has to win one more hand.

“Now that it’s down to two there is no folding,” I say gleefully.

We have to do this a million more times in the future we all have together. I’ll make sure of it.

Twenty Two

Anna



Aksel deals the cards and I keep my face neutral as I see the cards have betrayed me.

There is nothing I can do with the rules about folding, but at least I have two items of clothing left.

“I feel pretty good about my chances, Willson.” Aksel is smirking.

“I guess it’s going to come down to one final round.” I lay down my cards.

Aksel’s full house beats my two-of-a-kind. He looks down at my bra and raises his eyebrows in challenge.

I smile and reach behind me to unclip my bra. It slowly slides down my arms before falling to the floor revealing my rosy nipples.

Groans sound around the table but I keep my eyes trained on Aksel. This is a showdown between the two of us.

“Your deal,” he says while sliding the deck to me.

I deal the cards and keep a straight face when I see the straight flush looking back at me.

Then I remember there is no need to keep a poker face any longer and a huge grin spreads across my face.

“You look happy. Should we up the odds?” Aksel asks while raising one eyebrow in challenge.

“What do you have in mind?” I ask.

“If I win, you save that ass for me.”

There are groans around the table.

I look down at my cards and know there’s only one combination of cards that can beat what I have. I wouldn’t mind having Aksel take that first from me either. So the bet is a win-win for me.

I still want to defeat Aksel and wipe that smirk from his face.

“Deal. If I win, you take me shoe shopping and I get to spend more than last time.”

“Deal.”

We both lay down our cards and my eyes widen in disbelief. He has a royal flush which means I had no chance of winning.

“I guess that ass is mine,” he says cockily.

When he licks the front of his teeth like he’s imagining it, my pussy clenches.

Everyone looks at me expectantly as I stand up and strip.

I bend over and slide my panties down my legs. Felix moves immediately, picking me up and setting me on the table before kissing me.

“I won,” Aksel reminds him, leaning over the table to steal my lips from Felix.

His tongue immediately takes ownership of my mouth as he devours me.

I hear chairs moving. I break away from Aksel to see Rion and Blaze stand up and move toward the door.

“Wait.”

They both look at me.

“Stay?”

Both of them move back into the room.

“Let’s take this somewhere more comfortable,” Felix says, picking me up from the table and moving us into the living room.

Griffyn and Felix pin me between them. Their lips rain down kisses on my neck and lips and they nibble on my sensitive skin.

Aksel sits back in a chair with his legs spread, briefs still on and an arrogant look on his face as he watches us all.

Rion sets up leaning against the wall and Blaze moves to the couch.

I love all these eyes on me while I have two of them touching me. I guess I was made for five mates.

Blaze pumps his huge cock with his eyes locked on me and only me. His attention is completely mine and I relish the feeling.

I want his hands on me too but he looks content to watch.

Griffyn doesn’t waste any time as he hits my knees apart and presses into me so all of his piercings drag against me.

I moan as he slides deep inside me while the rest of my mates watch.

Felix slides his cock between my ass cheeks up and down before Aksel interrupts.

“Don’t forget that ass is mine. Take her mouth instead,” Aksel demands.

His tone leaves no room for disagreement and Felix must agree because he groans but moves back.

“Are you taking your prize now?” Felix asks.

Aksel shakes his head no and I feel disappointed.

Felix helps Griffyn reposition me until I’m on all fours between them.

Aksel stands up, grabs his pants and reaches into the pocket.

“What are you getting?” Griffyn asks curiously.

“A gift for my girl. I’ve had it on me for a while now, just waiting for the right moment. She needs to get ready for me.”

He’s clutching something in his hand but I can’t see what it is.

Felix steals my attention by gripping my chin and making me face him. My mate slides into my mouth slowly until he reaches the back of my throat before pulling out and starting again. He sets a rhythm that Griffyn easily matches.

The two of them take control of my body while the others watch.

I strain my eyes to the side to look at Rion and make sure he’s okay but the heat in his eyes is all the reassuring I need.

I hear a lid crack and my curiosity is peaked again.

Griffyn groans while stopping his thrusts. “Whatever you want, it better be worth it.”

What is happening?

Felix doesn’t release my mouth so I’m unable to ask. He does slow his motion and I can see his eyes are locked on something behind me.

“Fuck that is so hot. You’ve been planning this?” Felix asks.

“Well, she may have mentioned that her ass is virgin so I wanted to make sure we prepared her accordingly. I know we are all dying to have her body like this,” Aksel says.

Is my ass finally going to get some attention? I would do almost anything to have one of them slide into me and take all of me. I want to take as many of my mates as I can at one time.

When whatever they’re doing takes too long, I whine. I can’t contain it.

“Shh, Kitten, it’s okay we will take care of you,” Felix whispers, petting my hair.

Something presses against my tight bud and I freeze. Griffyn is still

firmly inside me, his piercings pressing against me.

“Relax Willson, it’s just a little something to help train your body,” Aksel says.

It must be a plug. He presses it against me again and this time I push out as he does so he can slide it inside me.

My vampire body quickly heals any burn. Realistically, I don’t need to go slow. My body could handle everything at once but I’m not one to deny the experience Aksel is giving me.

Griffyn groans, slowly pumping his hips like he can’t wait for another second.

“Fuck Vixen, you feel incredible. It’s so tight I can’t breathe but nothing is going to stop me from being inside you right now.”

I moan around Felix in response to Griffyn’s words.

“Now fuck off Akshole and give me space to fuck my girl,” Griffyn says.

“Our girl,” Aksel corrects but doesn’t fight him.

My incubus picks up his pace immediately and fucks me relentlessly. I feel so fucking full with his huge cock and the plug in me.

I’m not sure I’ll ever be able to do this with Blaze.

My eyes flick up to the dragon as he strokes his large cock with his eyes locked on mine. They’re staring into mine like they can feel my pleasure just by watching these two use my body.

It’s addicting.

I wish Aksel and Rion would move into view so I can enjoy them both.

Felix must feel my want through the bond and guess my desire because he says, “Aksel and Rion move to this side so my Kitten can see you.”

“But my view is so perfect from back here.” A hand runs up my spine from behind and I just know it’s Aksel and not Griffyn.

Rion moves into my line of sight and leans against the wall. His cock is hard and pointing at me but he doesn't touch it or give it any attention.

Griffyn pounds into me while Felix takes my mouth. Their noises of pleasure are like music to my ears and I am addicted to them.

The plug is hitting nerves I've never played with before. I'm dying to feel more of a stretch there that's moving but I'll enjoy this for now.

"Stand up," Griffyn tells Felix.

I whine at the loss of his cock but Griffyn moves quickly and pulls me up so my back is against his chest. The angle shifts so Griffyn is nudging the plug with every move he makes. I shudder around his cock as this position brings me closer to orgasm.

Felix steps back in, bringing his cock to my lips and slipping back inside. He grips the back of my head for leverage and fucks my mouth.

"Damn, you look so sexy taking all that cock. One day you'll take more at once, won't you sexy? You want to take care of all your mates," Aksel says.

The mouth on him.

I whimper around Felix's cock which is currently choking me.

Griffyn groans. "I can't wait until that day but right now I'm going to enjoy the way you are strangling my cock."

"And she's taking me so well. That mouth of hers was made to please." Felix looks down at me while he says it, meeting my eyes.

"Fuck," Blaze groans.

I can just see Blaze to the side of Felix. When I look at him, he shudders and comes, covering his stomach.

Rion has given in and starts stroking his cock and the visual is enough to send me over the edge.

I scream around Felix's cock as I shatter and squeeze the fuck out of Griffyn's dick.

Felix groans as he comes down my throat.

"Fuck yes. Take it all, Kitten."

Once Felix pulls back, Griffyn wraps his arm around my stomach and helps me bounce on top of his cock.

"You want one more don't you, Vixen?" Griffyn whispers in my ear.

Felix kneels on the floor and sucks on my clit until it feels like electricity is shooting through my veins.

He's so close to Griffyn's cock which is plowing into me from below.

It's too much.

I come again. My screams echo around the room without Felix's cock to muffle them.

Griffyn joins me and I feel him come deep inside me while he grips me tighter against his body.

When I can open my eyes again, I see them all spent around the room except Aksel who kept his boxers on.

"You didn't join us?" I ask him.

Aksel smirks. "Oh, I was here. I watched the show and used my words to make you even hotter but no, I didn't come. I'm saving that for you, Willson."

"Fuck," I whisper under my breath.

Of course, they all hear me and start laughing. Except Aksel who maintains heated eye contact with me and I know it won't be long until he's owning my body completely.

I can't fight it any longer and I don't want to.

Twenty Three

Felix



Celebrating our win against Killian was amazing and completely necessary. You have to celebrate your wins otherwise you'll get lost in the missions.

And I am absolutely considering the drugs and stalker missions.

But it's time to get back to work and solve these issues.

"The director has called us in to report on the case. I submitted our written report but he's requiring a verbal one as well," Aksel tells us over breakfast the morning after we played poker.

"Is that going to be a problem?" Anna asks.

"No, but we need to recover the stolen items to close out the case completely. We should use the absque stone to get into Killian's house and locate the items."

"You can return the artifacts but that spell book needs to be destroyed," Anna says, her voice serious.

"Agreed," I say. "We can get the stone from close to my home."

"Let's go do it then. We have to report tonight so we need to get going if we want to get everything done in time."

We all finish eating and dress in warm clothes. We have all sorts of gear when on missions and I already got Anna the right clothes when we went to

meet my mom. We transport to the mountains by my home. My mom is going to kill me if she finds out I came back with my mate-in-laws and Anna without telling her.

She's going to love all of them and try to smother them with love. I should probably bring them here soon considering how many of them could use that.

I lead them through the snowy terrain until we reach the spot I used to sneak out to see when I was a kid. We slip inside the cave entrance.

The absque stone glows from where it is growing on the walls of the cave.

"It's gorgeous," Anna says in awe.

"It doesn't look real." Griffyn spins so he can see every angle.

It looks like the moon is glowing from within every area of the cave. The angles on the stone reflect that light into little kaleidoscopes of colors. It's incredible.

"We are some of the few people who will ever see this. Not even everyone from my village risks coming here to see it," I tell them.

"I hate to cut this short but we still have to go to Killian's house," Aksel says.

"We can come back one day," I promise.

I reach up and use my shifter strength to break a piece of the absque stone off. The glow fades the longer it's sitting in my hand.

We leave the cave and transport again to what was Killian's house. As soon as we get to the warmer weather everyone strips their jackets off.

"Are you going to take it now?" I ask Rion and gesture to the castle.

He shivers. "I don't want anything to do with him but maybe I'll sell it and buy a different spot in Ireland that we can visit. If Anna is interested of

course.”

Rion wraps his arm around her shoulder and she smiles up at him.

“I would love to have a place in your home country to visit.”

When we are done dealing with her stalker, we’re going to need a place to live. To plan our future in. I’m going to have to talk to Aksel about it because knowing him, he already has plans drawn up.

Blaze holds the stone and walks through the barrier. It disintegrates for him and the rest of us follow through the hole.

“That emphasizes why this stone is illegal,” I say, looking back at that ward that broke down like it was nothing.

“We can’t let anyone know we had this,” Aksel points out.

“Obviously.” Griffyn rolls his eyes.

We don’t cross any other traps as we make it inside and start looking through the house.

There is what looks like an altar set up in the formal living room. Bowls, a fire pit, and the missing artifacts sit there.

“He was so close to completing this spell,” I observe.

“Scary close,” Anna agrees.

The book is sitting open on the top of the altar with the mate bond spell open.

Aksel gathers up the six artifacts and I help him carry them all.

“Burn it, Blaze,” Anna says.

Blaze tosses the book into the fireplace and shoots fire at it. The book burns in seconds until there is nothing left and no one can use it in the future.

A weight is lifted off my shoulders as I feel certain my mate bond with Anna is secure. My animal is less agitated with that knowledge. He hasn’t been calm since we learned about this threat.

The mate bond is everything to him.

“Let’s get out of here,” I say, grabbing Anna’s hand and pulling her towards the door.

This space is tainted and I want nothing to do with it.

Everyone follows me out and to the other side of the wards. We grab our clothes and go back to the house.

“It’s time we go, so drop off the winter clothes, and let’s go. Anna and Rion, we won’t be long. If for some reason, it takes longer than two hours, come looking,” Aksel says.

I don’t think there’s anything waiting for us but it’s always best to be prepared.

Just like the day we got assigned the case that brought us to Anna, we get to the supernatural council’s headquarters.

It’s in an isolated part of Oregon, away from humans, with nothing on the outside to identify it as a magical building. Its inconspicuousness ends with its size, ten stories tall, and takes up fifteen acres.

A man that smells like magic leads us back to a room with the director standing in it.

“Boys, glad to have you back here with us. Report.”

He has our written report in his hand with all the details.

Aksel takes the lead. “We located the vampire and had to track his whereabouts. As you know, there were hostages found along the way that have now been freed. We discovered one more hostage that was unexpected. The vampire had a twin whose name is Rion and we discovered the assigned vampire was Killian. He has now been killed by Blaze’s dragon fire and will no longer be an issue for our community.”

We need to clear Rion’s name so he can have complete freedom. He

deserves it after everything he's been through.

"That's a lot. You have proof of the death I assume?"

Aksel presents the picture we pulled from security footage of only Aksel and Blaze standing over the body as Blaze shoots fire. We couldn't present the video since it had Anna and Rion on it as well.

"What about this twin? You're certain he won't be a problem?" Director asks.

"Yes, we have spent time questioning him and working to understand the situation. He was a victim of his brother for a long time," Aksel explains.

We need Rion to be cleared of any suspicion so he can live a normal life with us.

"None of this was reported at the time?"

We broke protocol by keeping this information to ourselves and that could become a problem here. It would be the director's right to discipline us but I would do it again for Anna.

"The situation escalated quickly." Aksel keeps it short.

"Do the rest of you have anything to add?" He asks.

We all stay silent as our answer.

"Well, this case needed to be closed so I don't need any more information. I would keep the details to yourself and move past this."

That's strange. The director never has this few questions and telling us to move past this doesn't make sense.

"Why is that?" Aksel asks with authority.

The director looks Aksel up and down. "Is that question coming from my subordinate or the dark fae elder on the council?"

Aksel doesn't hesitate. "Whichever one will get me an answer."

"I can't tell someone under me but council members are privy to any

information no matter how confidential. So, councilman, the previous dark fae elder was very invested in this case and interfered many times.”

I can tell the director is sizing Aksel up to see if he’s going to take his father’s side. He’s known us a long time but family allegiance could be in play.

“That seems unprofessional and inconvenient.” The director has a slight smile when Aksel says that. “Was he the reason for the redactions on the case?”

“Yes.”

That explains a lot.

“It’s time for your next case. I have it right here. The question is, Aksel are you remaining on as team lead or leaving to perform your duties as councilman?”

My muscles tighten. We can’t start a new case yet and I think that’ll be a problem. Anna needs us, we still have a million problems to deal with including Anna’s stalker.

“I will remain as team lead but we cannot start a new case. We have some personal matters to attend to.”

“You’re the one with the power to make that decision as a councilman so I’ll leave it to you. But, all of you need time off?” He asks in confusion.

“Correct.”

“Well, unfortunately, we need you on this next case so your leave will have to wait.”

“No,” Blaze answers.

“No?” The director asks with an undertone of anger.

“Sorry sir, we have to take our leave now. It is time sensitive.”

“You want me to let an entire team of agents off at one time?”

“That’s going to be the norm for our team going forward. We stick together from now on,” Aksel says.

There’s no hesitance in his voice and the director’s eyes narrow.

“You don’t want to ask me for permission? I thought I was the boss here.”

“You are the boss but we cannot negotiate on this issue. We are prepared to quit if it comes down to that.”

I’m glad Aksel is the one having a stare off with the director and not me.

He turns to Griffyn. “Even you?”

“Even me.”

“It seems I don’t have a choice then. I grant your leave but I expect you to come at one hundred percent when it’s over.”

We all nod. “Yes, sir.”

I back out the door and get away from him before he changes his mind and fires us. I need a way to support my mate and I love this job.

We just have to convince Anna that traveling for missions sounds fun and not exhausting. That’s a problem for the future.

Twenty Four

Rion



Anna and I transport back to the house alone while the others deal with their jobs.

“What should we do?” I ask.

“I feel nervous with them gone. Let’s sit on the couch and watch a movie or something to distract us.”

I follow her into the living room and watch as she sets up a streaming service on the TV.

“What do you want to watch?” She asks.

I don’t know anything about television shows or movies but I don’t want to embarrass myself and say that.

“Anything you want, Acushla.”

She flicks through the options while scooting closer to me until I finally get the hint.

I wrap my arms around Anna and hold her tight to me, taking advantage of this alone time with her.

Rebuilding our relationship since being reunited has been slow but every minute is worth it. We are growing together and it makes sense now that I know she’s my mate.

I was drawn to her since the first time I saw her on campus. Looking back at everything, I have so many regrets. We could have had so much more time together if I hadn't allowed Killian to fuck it all up.

"It's weird. We have been a part of this mission and are one big team. I almost forget they're agents assigned to this case and not just helping me," Anna says, bringing me out of my thoughts.

"By the end, they were in it for you. It just brought them to you so they could help."

She scoots back getting as close to me as she can.

Having her in my arms feels perfect.

Anna tilts her head back on my shoulder and looks up at me from this weird angle. Her moss-colored eyes sparkle from here like an emerald.

I can't resist her gorgeous pink lips.

She meets me in the middle, pressing into me.

I kiss her plump lips. They're like plush pillows that call my name at all times of the day.

Her tongue twists around mine and blood is rushing to my cock. Thankfully she can't feel it.

I'm pretty sure if she rubbed against it, I would come in seconds.

Anna doesn't know this, but she was my first after those three thousand years of captivity and I'll wait forever for her again.

Her hand comes up and cups my cheek, pulling me closer to her.

If it's even possible, more blood rushes to my cock when she takes my bottom lip between her teeth and sucks on it.

I follow her lead.

Despite the risk of my cock exploding, I tug Anna onto my lap and I can feel the heat of her pussy through her shorts against me.

With my hands on her hips, I help her grind against me. I set a slow rhythm to help her feel good without rushing things.

Anna starts kissing down my neck, nipping at my pulse as she goes.

“Drink from me again,” I rasp out.incredible

Anna freezes before leaning back and looking at me.

“You want me to drink from you?”

Did I make things weird?

“You’ve already tasted my blood. We aren’t at risk of forming the bond unless I drink yours. I want to feed you and share my life force with you.”

I hope she can sense how honest I’m being.

Anna’s smile is bright as she leans back down and starts kissing my neck again. Her tongue licks up from my collarbone.

“If you insist,” she whispers against my flesh.

I groan when her fangs dig into my skin. Pure ecstasy floods my system from her venom.

My body relaxes back against the couch as she continues to suck from me. My fucking cock is straining for her to pay attention to him next.

It’s like her venom went straight to my dick.

She licks her wounds when she’s done and even that small amount of sensation is exceptional.

“What does it feel like?” She asks.

I stare into her flawless eyes. “One day you will know. I’m going to claim you and form that forever bond with you,” I tell her.

She looks away but the smile on her face lets me know she’s being shy and not mad.

I answer her question. “It’s like liquid fire running through your veins and igniting every nerve ending. It feels like it pays special attention to places that

bring pleasure. At least for me.”

“I guess that’s what makes a vampire the ideal predator. You feel incredible while they suck you dry.”

I laugh while using my grip to keep moving her against me.

“You’re right. We are deadly and the others should never forget that.”

Anna leans in to kiss me again. The fresh taste of my blood on her tongue is delicious. Knowing she has this piece of me is the hottest fucking thing.

Enough to sustain me while we continue to build our relationship.

There’s noise from the front of the house before the hinges squeak and I know we aren’t alone any longer.

We pull apart as the others come in through the door but Anna doesn’t leave my arms and I love it.

They tell us about the leave they took from work and I appreciate their commitment to Anna.

Felix and Griffyn have made the ultimate commitment but that doesn’t mean they have to put Anna before their career.

They put her first and are unwavering about ending the threats to her. I might have hated them at first but I can’t hate someone as devoted to my mate as I am.

A part of me still wishes I could hate Aksel but he’s been proving himself a lot to me when Anna isn’t around. That’s the real test. He’s not acting a certain way to impress her. Aksel is working with me because that’s what is best for her.

I respect that.

Anna snuggles tighter into my side while Felix snags the other spot next to her.

For this moment, all is right.

Twenty Five

Aksel



This fucking stalker is the absolute last thing we need to be dealing with right now. It feels like no matter how many problems we solve, three more pop up.

The red envelope has gone from a nuisance to something terrifying. Someone who has access to poison bullets is a danger.

We've dealt with enough poison bullets to last a lifetime. Especially where Anna is concerned.

I flick open my computer and pull up the camera feeds from the day Anna's stalker dropped his last note off for the hundredth time. I've been obsessively watching this tape to look for any clues I might have missed.

I can't wait for him to strike again before we act.

It takes me a couple minutes of fast-forwarding to see movement on the porch. Just like the shooting incident, he has a ski mask on, a black hoodie, and jeans on. I can't make out any details that would help identify him.

He places his note down on the step and takes a step backward. Before he departs, he does something that makes my stomach turn. He blows a kiss at the door and clenches his fist over his heart.

My educated guess is that little action was for Anna. His obsession is related to attraction or love for her. Which makes it confusing that he shot at

her. Was it a situation of if I can't have her then no one can?

I follow his movement across different cameras until he hops in his car and drives away. Getting his car on camera was lucky as hell. Just like always, I wait for him to turn so I can see his license plate but it's missing. The spot where it should be is empty.

My fist slams down on the desk before I even realize what I'm doing.

"Fuck!"

There's a light tap at my door.

"Aksel?" Anna's soft voice sounds muffled through the wood.

I stand up and collect myself before opening the door to see her. She has a hesitant smile on her face and worried eyes.

"Is something wrong? I heard you yell."

Of course she heard that.

I'm about to tell her nothing before I realize we are trying and I owe her answers to anything she wants after the way I've treated her.

"I was watching the footage of your stalker dropping off his note. I got to see his car but he removed the license plate. It was disappointing to lose the possible lead."

She nods before looking past me, into my room.

"Could I see?" She asks.

I step aside, granting her entrance.

Anna moves past me and over to the desk I have. It's nothing special but it's a space for me to work while we are here. I'm used to being on missions and not having all the amenities I would like.

She rewinds the video and hits play, watching the entire scene with the stalker until his car drives away.

"That's disturbing but there is a little good news." She turns to face me.

“This is a small area so there’s a good chance we will see this car around. I know there are probably multiple but it gives us suspects to look into.”

“We should plan some drives around town to scout it out,” I say, hopeful.

She smiles at my praise. She deserves more of it outside of sex.

“Great job, Willson. You’re proving to be an asset.”

She doesn’t immediately get up and leave my room even though her reason for being here is done. It gives me hope that she doesn’t hate being in my presence.

“While I have you, I also wanted to thank you for the clothes you got me. It was a nice gesture and a reminder of what was a decent day with you.”

I can’t keep the smirk off my face. Getting to buy her clothes and see her dressed in them is a unique pleasure. If she lets me stick around, I’ll be doing it often.

“Think of it as an apology when I couldn’t tell you why I was sorry.”

She smiles. “Deal. I like that.”

I have her in my room and I don’t want her to leave.

“You should wear my gift to you for the rest of the day. By tonight, you’ll be begging me to take care of you,” I tell her.

Her smile is dirty.

“Want to help me put it in?” She asks.

Absolutely I do.

I nod towards the door. “Go get it.”

It takes her seconds with her speed to bring it back here. I take my time grabbing the lube I’ve had in my nightstand drawer since Anna showed up.

Just in case.

“Good girl.”

I take the plug from her and take my time pouring the lube over it.

Her eyes darken the longer I take to prepare it.

“It’s black. Is that to represent your soul?” She asks.

“It’s black opal. You can’t think I would decorate your exquisite body with anything less than the best.”

I love the blush that spreads over her cheeks.

“Well, you need to bend over and present that gorgeous ass to me, don’t you?” I taunt.

“Now that you’re not completely an asshole, I’m never sure how to take your words,” she says but turns around after.

Anna slowly pulls her skirt up and pulls her plum, lace panties to the side so I can see that phenomenal pussy. Her ass is calling my fucking name and it’s a real struggle not to whip my cock out right now and make her take it.

“Are you wearing skirts around this house to taunt all of us because it’s working,” I tell her.

I step forward and grip the globe of her ass and spread her as best as I can with one hand.

“I’ve come to realize the easy access is convenient considering how many men in this house turn me on all the time,” she says.

My cock jumps at her words.

Maybe I should skip the plug and lube up my cock instead. I can just imagine how her heat would envelope me.

But I have a plan and I will follow through with it.

Tonight though. Tonight I’m taking that pussy and that ass.

If I thought I could get away with claiming her and tying her to me for life, I would do that too.

“Are you enjoying the view or are you going to finish the job?”

Her taunting makes me even harder.

I'm fucked up.

I don't respond, instead, I press the tip of the plug against her hole and watch as it spreads to take it.

Fucking hell.

I'm torturing both of us by delaying this until tonight. Knowing this is inside her is perfect torture. One I am happy to endure.

The prize is going to be so worth it.

Once the plug is snug in her ass, I grab her panties and straighten them out before flipping her skirt back down over her ass.

Anna squirms when she stands up and feels the weight of it inside her.

She backs up out of the room and winks.

“See you around, Aksel.”

Fucking hell. I don't think my cock is going to deflate at any point today.

Twenty Six

Anna



Leaving Aksel's room, I go back to mine.

I can't stop squirming with the way the plug is making me feel both full and empty at the same time.

I consider taking care of things myself but it feels like that might make me feel emptier and I want to be as worked up as possible for tonight with Aksel.

Where can I find a distraction?

It's probably a good bet that someone is downstairs that I can hang out with. I need to think about this car situation and how we can solve this.

Felix and Griffyn are in the kitchen. Where is Blaze?

When I sit to join them, the pressure increases making me gasp softly.

"Why are you so turned on right now? It's delicious," Griffyn asks.

"Do you need us to take care of you, Kitten?" Felix asks.

I'm saved from answering when Rion and Aksel join us.

Aksel's smirk is downright filthy.

"Tell her!" Rion says excitedly.

I raise my eyebrow at his enthusiasm.

Rion and Aksel are standing in front of me. A duo I would never expect to see working together.

Aksel rolls his eyes.

“Willson, we did something,” Aksel starts.

My heart rate picks up. What the hell did they do? I can’t imagine it’s anything good considering how nervous they are to tell me.

“You didn’t include me?” Felix says from next to me at the table.

He pouts his lip and puts on his best sad face.

“Correct,” Aksel says without even looking at Felix.

“Alright, just tell me what it is. You’re freaking me out,” I say.

Rion looks giddy with excitement as he bounces on his toes.

“We thought, if you wanted to, that since we are still so close to Brickstone University during this assignment-”

Rion cuts Aksel off. “You can go back and finish your credits.”

I freeze. They’ve shocked me into silence.

Never in a million years did I see this coming. It’s not even something I’ve talked to Aksel about but clearly Rion did.

My first instinct is to lash out in embarrassment that they’ve all been talking about my lack of degree behind my back.

“I think that’s a great idea, but only if you want to.” Felix rubs my back.

My hackles lower as I realize it hasn’t been all of them. Felix was left out and if I had to guess Blaze and Griffyn were too.

“That was a different me,” I say softly.

“It doesn’t have to be. Just because you were changed into a vampire doesn’t mean you have to give up your dreams. You’re still Anna and you get to choose what that means,” Rion says.

Aksel kneels in front of me. “We will help you achieve whatever you

want. If your English degree no longer satisfies you, then you can start over on something else. It doesn't matter if you have a degree at all. I will get you a job anywhere you want. But, I think it's important to you that you earn this degree and connect who you were with who you are."

I blink back tears. Damn, these men and their ability to turn me to mush in seconds. They're being so supportive. It's hard to turn them down.

Maybe it would be for the best to give it a try. If it feels wrong, I don't have to keep going.

"It might be a way to heal, Kitten," Felix says.

Slowly, I nod.

"I'll give it a try but I make no promises."

Rion and Felix cheer like they just won a championship game.

Aksel stares at me intently before a smile takes over his face. His blue and brown eyes both sparkle as he stares at me.

Of course, the next second he is serious again.

"We will need precautions to be safe, of course. Two people will be with you in your classes at all times. I took the liberty of looking at how many credits you need to graduate and it can be fulfilled with two upper-level English classes. Their summer session starts next week."

I roll my eyes. "Of course you've already figured it all out."

He did that for me. To make me happy. This complicates his mission and he's still willing to do it.

I lean in and kiss Aksel's cheek. When I do, it makes the plug shift and I jump. "Thank you, this really does mean a lot to me. I'm grateful you did this."

He gives me a knowing look. "You're welcome. I'll come up with a schedule of who will be with you. Otherwise I'm sure they'll be fighting over

it.”

What a nice moment that I can only partially enjoy with how turned on I am.

“Just them?” I ask.

Felix laughs. “No, him too, for sure.”

Aksel blows past that. “Last thing, you will have to be willing to miss if we get a lead and need to act. I know you quit your job so you wouldn’t leave him short staffed but this is different. The classes have generous attendance policies and you can always get the notes from someone. If you’re not comfortable with that, we can wait until we’ve solved the drugs and stalker cases.”

The old me would hate the possibility of missing classes but now I know some things are more important.

“That’s fine.”

Aksel nods before standing up and facing the others. “Enjoy your celebration.” Then, he goes to leave.

“No, Aksel! Stay and celebrate with us. Please?” I ask.

Aksel hesitates.

Felix tackles me back onto the couch and I giggle.

Rion rushes out of the room and comes back with a bottle of champagne.

“Where’s Blaze?” I ask.

He should join us.

Rion shakes his head. “I looked for him but he must be out. He can join us when he gets back.”

Rion pours us all glasses of champagne, including Aksel, and we cheers with them.

“To Anna following her dreams,” Rion says.

“And to the guys who all support me,” I add, looking at Felix and Griffyn too.

I couldn't do this without the pure love and support coming down the bond for me.

Blaze never joins us and I feel bad that he missed out.

When the night comes to a close, Aksel grabs my hand and tugs me out of the room. Their catcalls and whistles follow us as we make our way upstairs.

The ache in my pussy from being so neglected makes me desperate for release.

I'll do anything Aksel says right now and that's dangerous.

“Kneel,” he says and I immediately do it.

“Are you still wearing the gift I gave you?” Aksel asks.

I nod, looking up from my kneeling position.

“That's a good girl. You used my gift and now I'll reward you.”

Wetness floods my core at his words and I can't stop myself from squirming in front of him.

Aksel releases his cock from his pants, wraps my hair around his fist, and presents his cock to me.

I wrap my lips around the tip and suck him into my mouth without having to be asked with words. I take him as deep as possible and use my hand to pump the rest of him. I pay special attention to the tip, stimulating it with my tongue and a touch of teeth.

Aksel growls before using my hair to pull me off of him. The sting only adds to my desperation.

“You're going to take me over the edge and that isn't happening until I'm balls deep in your pussy so I can mark you as mine in the most primal way possible.”

His filthy words bring heat to my cheeks, which only get hotter as he strips in front of me.

Every inch he reveals is better than the last. His smooth, flawless skin is tight against the delicious muscles covering every inch of his body. He looks like a Greek god brought to life just for me.

“Stop staring at me like that and take those clothes off,” Aksel demands.

I grin and follow his orders, stripping as fast as I can until I’m almost naked in front of him with only that damn butt plug decorating me.

When I bend over to slip my panties off, I bend so he has a direct view of the black gem. His resulting growl is music to my ears.

“That’s excellent. You can stay just like that. Brace your hands on the edge.”

His cock traces against my opening and teases me when he pushes inside slightly.

When I try to push back against him, he pulls away completely leaving me empty.

I whimper and he laughs.

“I’ll take care of you, just be patient.”

That feels impossible but somehow I manage to hold my body still as he keeps teasing me.

I’m so fucking grateful when he finally pushes inside me.

Between his large cock and the butt plug, I’m stuffed fuller than I’ve ever been.

“You’re so tight,” Aksel groans as he thrusts again.

“I feel so full, Aksel.”

“I know. You’re doing such a good job. You’re going to let me take that ass tonight too, aren’t you? I’ve prepped you so well.” He punctuates his

words with another hard thrust.

“Yes!”

“Good girl.”

His hands grip my hips as he uses the leverage to pull me back onto him and he surges forward. He’s hitting so deep every time, stars are in my eyes.

It doesn’t take long for my orgasm to build until I’m trembling as I come undone around him.

Aksel shoves in as deep as he can go before coming in me. I can feel every hot splash as he marks me exactly like he said he would.

Aksel stays buried in me as I feel pressure on the plug. With no warning, Aksel slowly pulls it out of me while all my nerves are firing after my orgasm.

I feel like I might come again just from the sensation.

Once it’s completely removed, I feel the tip of Aksel’s dick press against my back hole. He never softened after his last orgasm.

Both of us groan as he presses inside me past the tight ring of muscles. As he moves, nerves I never knew existed are being stimulated in the best way possible.

I can’t stop myself from coming way too quickly as Aksel leans forward and rubs circles around my clit.

“I want to see you.” Aksel pulls out and flips me over onto my back before surging right back into my ass.

He thrusts into me at a mind blowing pace while his fingers sink into my pussy. It’s overwhelming how good I feel right now.

His fingers move in time with his cock until I’m moaning his name over and over. I can’t stop.

My vision is going black as I feel the orgasm coming like a tidal wave.

It washes over me and I come harder than I ever have in my life. Aksel joins me, coming deep in my ass and moaning my name.

Aksel gets a towel to clean us up before rolling me onto his chest and running his fingers through my hair. It's more affection than I was expecting.

"Fuck. That was incredible," he whispers.

I can't keep the smile off my face so I press it into Aksel's chest.

"Don't hide your happiness from me." He tugs on my hair softly until I look up at him.

"I never expected this with you," I confess.

Aksel's smile dims. "I didn't either but I'm ecstatic that we got here. You're my mate, Anna, I should have always treated you with respect. I can't promise to be perfect, I'm still an asshole after all, but I want to treat you right."

"You mean you're an Akshole."

He grins, showing me straight, white teeth. Is there anything wrong with this man?

"Yes, I'm an Akshole."

I burst out laughing and press a kiss to the bottom of his chin.

"You're my Akshole now at least."

"Yes, I am."

Twenty Seven

Griffyn



Apparently, driving around looking for the stalker's car requires all of us. Which is how I end up in a very crowded backseat with my mate on my lap.

I can't judge considering I didn't want to be left behind either.

Anna shifts on my lap making my cock think he's getting attention.

I don't bother trying to talk him down when our mate is so close. He's not deflating any time soon.

We're all looking out the windows while Aksel drives us around. He stops in parking lots every time we see one.

Felix is in the middle next to us, holding Anna's hand, with Rion on his other side. Blaze is in the passenger seat. He wouldn't fit back here with us.

"We need a bigger car," Aksel observes.

He's probably already planning exactly which one he wants and growing his attraction to it from a distance.

"I don't mind this one," I say honestly, giving Anna a little squeeze.

"Of course you don't," Felix says through laughter.

"You would get a new car?" Anna asks.

Aksel looks at her through the rearview mirror. "I won't be getting rid of this one, obviously, but I am happy to add a new car to my collection.

There's a seven seater with three rows I've had my eye on since Rion joined us. I'll make the call when we get back."

"A collection? Do you have more cars than this?" Anna leans forward and her ass rubs on my cock again, exciting him further.

Aksel smirks cockily. "Of course I do and we will be breaking all of them in."

Anna's lust fills the air and I drink it in greedily. I never get tired of the flavor of her.

"We haven't found anything," Anna says once we've driven through the local vicinity three times.

"It was doubtful we would find it the first time we try," Felix says.

"We will just have to keep trying," Rion adds.

He's been speaking up a lot more lately and it feels like he's a part of the group. I'm happy for him and Anna. Plus, his cooking is to die for and I want more of it.

"Dibs on Anna sitting on my lap every time!" I shout.

Felix punches me in the arm. "No way. It's got to be a rotation."

"Agreed," Rion says.

"I'll decide where I sit thank you very much!" Anna says, poking me in the side.

I shrug. "It was worth a try."

Felix's body perks up and he takes a deep breath before ducking to look under the passenger seat.

"Is there more glitter? I will fucking gut you, Griffyn, if he comes back with glitter in his hands," Aksel snaps.

His eyes are glaring at us in the back through the rearview mirror.

"It's not glitter. It's so much better than that." Felix pops back up with a

pair of panties dangling from his finger.

I can read Anna's signature all over them. I've known they got naughty back here since the moment I got in but I didn't even think to look for evidence.

"Have you been looking for those ever since the day I ate you out back there?" Aksel asks.

"Fucking hell. That's hot as fuck. You messed around in this car?" Felix asks.

Anna hides her blushing face behind her hand so we can't see her.

Rion leans forward. "In the backseat?"

"Yes," Aksel says smugly.

I groan. Now my cock is poking her like it wants the same attention back here.

"You guys are ridiculous. Let's go home," Anna says.

I pull her back into my chest and hold her tight to me.

We all keep our eyes on the lookout for the car but I don't feel hopeful about this method working.

When we get home, everyone disperses. I wait until it's dark enough outside before making my escape.

"I'm going to do a flyover and see if I find anything. Be back soon."

I leave through the back door and free my wings before taking off into the sky.

I will do a flyover and look for that damn car but I also have an appointment to get to.

There's no car in sight so I take off going north. Normally, I have to take a transport charm to get to my guy but he's within flying distance from here.

Which is lucky because Aksel would ask too many questions if I had to

ask him for one.

My wings can fly me pretty damn far, pretty damn fast if I do say so myself.

When I land, my feet smack the ground and the neon lights let me know I'm in the right place.

I open the door to Forever Magic and once again laugh at how simple the name is without drawing the attention of humans.

I know they tattoo and pierce humans too.

You need magic ink to tattoo a supernatural since we heal at an accelerated rate and might destroy the tattoo. Mac is the best and has done all my other art.

There's no one else I would trust this with.

Even though Anna has marked me twice with her fangs and her pentagram, I still want to get something for her. My tattoos are a part of me, it's only right the most important person in the world to me has one for her too.

"Griffyn! What's up, man?" Mac says, spinning his chair for me.

I go take a seat and smile at him.

"So much, Mac," I tell the mage.

"Shit! You're mated! I can sense it. Good for you."

My smile is huge. "That's why I am here. I need to get a tat for my girl."

"What do you have in mind?"

Mac and I work through the design until it's flawless. I barely feel the pain as he tattoos up my neck and behind my ear.

When he shows me the final result with the mirror, I am ecstatic.

Anna is going to love this. I can already imagine her tongue tracing the design.

“I know my art is good but I don’t know if it should be turning you on,”
Mac says.

I narrow my eyes at him. “That’s for my girl, make no mistake about it.”

I pay Mac and make my way back to the house. I’ve been gone a long time and might have to answer some questions but now I can reveal the surprise as my answer.

Twenty Eight

Anna



“Griffyn, where have you been?” I ask when he comes in the back door.

I’ve been waiting for him to come back since he said he was doing surveillance. I didn’t like the idea of him out there alone.

“Close your eyes, Vixen!”

I narrow my eyes at him instead. Something is different about him.

“Close them!” He shouts.

I can’t help but laugh as I listen to him and close them.

He picks me up and carries me up the stairs before setting me down on my feet. When I sneak a peek I see we are in his room.

He’s been sleeping with Felix and I in the other room most nights but all his stuff is still in here.

“What’s going on?” I ask.

The lights flick on bright behind my eyelids.

“I have a surprise. You can open your eyes now.”

He’s standing there with a manic grin on his face practically bouncing.

I look at his hands first but they’re empty. His shirt is off like it was when he came back from flying, but he still has pants on so the surprise isn’t his dick.

It takes me longer than I'd like to spot it.

I gasp and move closer.

"It's beautiful Griffyn. You got this done?"

"For you, Vixen. I saw sparks the moment I met you, so I thought it was fitting even though Blaze stole the idea with his nickname for you. Obviously, I'm happy to share."

I could cry at this gesture. He added a piece to his beautiful art to represent me and I adore it.

"It's perfect," I tell him truthfully.

Sparks cover his neck and up behind his ear in a beautiful design that somehow looks natural. A tiny fox is weaving between them.

"A fox for Vixen?" I ask.

His smile grows. "Exactly."

I jump into his arms and start kissing him. His tongue meets mine until I'm grinding against him and trying to get closer.

I pull away.

"I want one."

His eyes light up.

"A tattoo?"

My cheeks hurt from smiling so hard. "Yeah, one that represents all of you. I'll have to start thinking about it."

"Don't tell the others. The surprise will blow their minds. I'll help you and you can use my guy. He's incredible."

"What if I want it somewhere compromising?" I ask.

Griffyn frowns. "Maybe not then."

I laugh, feeling so light at this moment with him.

Griffyn knows how to just make me happy. Even when he's being a brat,

he puts a smile on my face.

His tattoo still has to heal, so I can't do everything I want but I do get on my knees and thank him properly.

* * *

I had a brilliant idea and I know just the person who can help me. Cameras helped give us this lead, so why not use them to finish it?

I dial up one of my best friend's mates who is unbelievable with technology.

"Anna, hi, what can I do for you?" Ajax's shy voice comes down the phone.

He sounds unsure why I'm calling him.

"Hey Ajax, I was wondering if you could use your hacker powers for me and get me access to some of the cameras around town?"

"Uh, I'm sure I could. Just to be clear that's illegal but if you want me to, I can. Can I ask why?"

I don't want to tell him about the stalker but I can be broad.

"I need a quick way to see around town and find something. I figured this would be better than trying to do it in person."

He laughs and it's a relief. "You're right this will be easier. I'll send you a link within the hour that will connect you to some of the cameras around town. I won't be able to get all of them but it should be enough."

I fist pump the air. I am a genius and so lucky my best friend has the best mates.

"You are incredible Ajax! Thank you for your help."

"No problem."

The call ends and I sit back in my bed with my laptop open. I'm waiting for his link with bated breath.

Forty-five minutes later an email comes through with a link. I open it quickly and see what an amazing job he did.

I can cycle through multiple cameras seeing spots all over Brickstone's campus and the surrounding area. I feel powerful with this much access.

I don't see the car I'm looking for but I didn't expect to get lucky right away. I'm going to keep checking these feeds until we have a lead.

I bring my laptop downstairs and find Aksel, Rion, and Griffyn sitting in the kitchen eating. They're sitting in awkward silence.

These three don't vibe that well with each other but at least they're sitting here without fighting.

Griffyn perks up immediately. "Hey, Vixen."

The others turn to me too like a beacon.

"Hey guys, what are you up to?" I ask.

There are shrugs and noncommittal noises like they don't want to admit they were all sitting here in silence even though I witnessed it.

"Well, I have good news. I thought of a way to help us find the car and executed it."

"You did it without telling us?" Aksel asks.

"I wanted to see if it would work and I had the resources to do it so I did," I say.

Felix joins us and hugs me. He leans against the counter but stiffens when he sees Griffyn.

"What's on your neck?" Felix asks.

He leans in and looks at Griffyn's new tattoo.

"New ink."

“Holy shit, you got a tattoo for Anna?” Felix asks.

Aksel moves closer and looks too.

“Fuck yes I did and she was very happy about it. Trust me.”

I chuckle and admit, “That’s true.”

Aksel looks angry as he stares at it.

Griffyn smirks at him and taunts, “Are you jealous my body is more marked by her than yours is?”

Is he?

“You won’t be for long.”

Aksel turns his back on him and stalks over to me. He takes me completely off guard when he leans me backward and kisses the fuck out of me. His tongue licks inside my mouth like he’s marking his territory and I love the primal rage I can feel from him.

I’m breathless when we break apart and Aksel is smirking at the others.

Felix and Griffyn look happy about it which only makes Aksel scowl again.

“You did get to kiss me. Shouldn’t that make you happier than annoying them?” I ask, annoyed.

Like a switch, he turns his smirk back on and kisses me again until I’m breathless and trembling.

“Fuck yes. You’re all I need,” he whispers against my lips.

I set my laptop on the counter and show them the screen. “Back to what I was saying. These are live feeds around the town. We can watch for the sedan all over town, all the time.”

“That was smart Anna,” Rion says. He moves closer to the screen for a better look.

“How did you get access to this?” Griffyn wraps his arm around me and

pulls me tight to his body.

“Ajax is a talented hacker, he helped me.”

“One of Ashford’s pack?” Aksel asks dubiously.

I can’t help rolling my eyes. “Yes, one of my best friend’s mates. You need to get over your issues with Nic because if you’re sticking around then you need to get along with them.”

“They’ll never like me,” Aksel says indignantly.

“You would be surprised. If you gave them a reason to like you, I’m sure they would.”

Aksel crosses his arms and looks away. He’s so stubborn.

“We should take turns monitoring the cameras,” Rion suggests.

“Yes the more eyes on them the faster we find the stalker and deal with him,” I agree.

“Is it weird for you to be dealing with technology?” Griffyn asks Rion.

Rion looks up at him in surprise. It might be the first personal question he’s been asked by one of the guys that wasn’t an accusation.

“You don’t have to answer that if it’s uncomfortable,” Griffyn rushes to add.

Griffyn is being awkward about it but he’s trying. Normally he just pokes at the guys and makes jokes, this is out of his normal comfort zone.

“No, I’ll answer, it just caught me off guard. Yes, it is weird but before I went to the university and met Anna, I worked hard to get caught up in modern times. Most of it is phenomenal but I will admit some things still surprise me. Ajax being able to get access to this is one of those things.”

“Well, hackers have always been outside my understanding so you’re caught up with me,” Griffyn says.

Rion gives him a nod and a small smile.

I feel like my heart is overflowing right now. These guys are trying to get along, for me! I mean that much to them and that's an incredible feeling.

Even Aksel staying quiet and not making a harsh comment is a step in the right direction.

Twenty Nine

Anna



Blaze has been more absent than usual. I haven't had a moment alone with him that wasn't dominated by something else.

So when I find him in the gym running on the treadmill, I take the opportunity and join him.

"Hey," I say.

He doesn't break stride. "Are you coming to work out?"

"Yes."

I wrap my hands, move over to the punching bag and start a light warm-up.

I don't put headphones in like I normally would.

Blaze shuts the treadmill off and comes over to hold the bag for me.

"I wasn't trying to interrupt you," I say.

He just grunts in response and keeps standing there.

I take advantage of his help and start my routine. He even corrects some of my moves or helps make them more powerful.

He's a good teacher even if he's mostly silent aside from his corrections.

"You have skill. We should train more to bring you to the next level," he says with a slight smirk.

I punch the bag directly in the center before executing a spin move.

“I would love that. Maybe we can set up a time each day or every other day to do that.”

Blaze grunts with a nod.

“I’ve been meaning to ask you something. Why did you pay my rent?”

His eyes narrow. “What are you talking about?”

“My landlord spilled the beans so your secret is out. Why would you do that?”

He leans back in his chair and looks away from me. His body is tense.

“I know how important a home is. A place for yourself that you can always go back to. When you had to quit the bar, I wanted to make sure you didn’t lose that.”

I’m quiet as I absorb his words.

“Do you have that?”

He still hasn’t looked at me. “Yes, even though we are on missions all the time and I never get to spend time there, I know it’s waiting for me. That’s enough for me.”

I want to ask him more and find out every detail of his life but his phone beeps shattering the moment. He looks down at it and tenses up even more.

“Everything okay?” I ask.

My eyes are glued to his reaction. What about this text has him so stressed?

“Yes. I have some work to do so I better go do that.”

Blaze stands up and starts to leave but I stop him.

“Thank you, Blaze, for paying my rent so I could keep my apartment. It was incredibly thoughtful of you and I just want to make sure you know how grateful I am.”

I wrap my arms around his waist and pull him into a hug. My head rests on his chest and I can hear how fast his heart is beating.

“You’re welcome, Spark.”

He hugs me back, tighter than normal, and starts to walk away. Blaze turns back and catches my eyes with his.

“Will you go on a date with me?” He asks.

I smile, flashing all my teeth.

“I would love to,” I tell him honestly.

He gives me a small smile before leaving. I can hear the front door open and close.

I’m surprised he left but I don’t know much about their responsibilities. I’ve been on this case with them but still don’t know that much about what it means to be an agent.

I need to shower and change before my first day of classes today.

A nervous energy bubbles inside me as I think about what this means. It feels like my very first day when I was a freshman and didn’t even know where to go.

I’m more experienced than that and I don’t need to feel this way. I push those nerves aside as I put on a cute but casual outfit.

Of course, I pair my outfit with a white pair of wedges, for confidence.

Felix and Griffyn are waiting for me at the bottom of the stairs, ready to go.

I appreciate that it’s the two of them taking me. They provide the best emotional support and are perfect for today.

We take Aksel’s car and Felix drives us.

“You’re allowed to drive his car?” I ask.

“Ha! He’s only letting me drive because this is for you. It was still a long

discussion. He wanted to drop us off but in the end, the safety of an escape vehicle won out.”

That sounds right.

Being back on campus is strange. It was an entire lifetime ago that I was a student here. At least it is the summer session and the campus is emptier than usual.

“So, this is Brickstone University. I liked picturing you in a tiny uniform when you went to school but this is fun too,” Griffyn whispers.

I laugh. “It’s a human university, not a weird private school from your dreams.”

He wraps his arm around me. “A guy can dream.”

It’s easy to find the pretty empty classroom. This is a summer session so that makes sense.

The professor introduces himself and hands out a syllabus. The class sounds interesting as he talks about creative writing.

Griffyn can’t sit still as the class goes on. He’s tapping his foot or wringing his hands.

“How did you ever sit through training to become an agent?” I whisper.

“It was a lot more hands-on,” he responds.

Griffyn puts his arm around me and starts playing with my hair. It’s relaxing so I let him do it while the teacher talks about deadlines.

Felix sees what he’s doing and starts drawing patterns on my exposed leg under the desk attached to the seat.

Being sandwiched between my two mates with their hands on me is the best place. Any tension I had melts away until my eyes are drooping closed.

I shake both of them off and try to refocus on the professor.

“What’s wrong?” Felix whispers, trying to put his hand back on my leg.

“You two are putting me to sleep!”

At least as supernaturals, we can talk low enough for the professor to not hear because knowing my luck he would hear us and call me out.

Griffyn chuckles and Felix gives me puppy eyes.

“It’s not our fault you feel safe with us,” Felix says.

“I need to pay attention.”

When class ends and everyone starts packing up Griffyn asks teasingly, “Were you always like this in school? So focused.”

“Yes,” I admit. “I’m pretty sure it annoyed Aly’s mates too. You guys would all get along better than you think.”

“You could never annoy us,” Felix corrects.

I elbow him in the side. “That can’t be true because you all can annoy me.”

Griffyn clutches his chest. “I’m wounded.”

“Don’t be dramatic,” I say,

“He’s always dramatic.” Felix punches him in the arm.

“It’s part of my charm.”

“Sure it is,” Felix teases.

Griffyn slows down and looks into a classroom as we pass the door.

“What is it?” I ask.

Griffyn’s smile is mischievous. “One of my powers as an incubus is to see past spikes of pheromones and lust. If I know the person, I can even identify them.”

“Really? Doesn’t that always distract you?” I ask.

“Usually there are layers on layers of it and you can’t identify one round. I’m able to ignore it most of the time but it catches my attention when it’s somewhere unexpected. Like a classroom.”

“So, someone has had sex here? That’s hilarious. Should we top them?” Felix asks.

“The best part is, it was Aly and some of her mates!” Griffyn is practically bouncing as he reveals this.

“My best friend Aly had sex on campus? No way. Are you making this power up?” I ask.

“He’s not making it up. We’ve used that skill in a case before,” Felix says.

Griffyn laughs. “You can’t believe that? Their house is covered in pheromones.”

I blush. “Well, I did live with them so trust me I know that. I’m just shocked they would do it here in a classroom! So, are you just dealing with this all the time? Even in our house?”

“I can even clear a room so when we got to the house I erased the history. Now, I just get to enjoy all the places Anna’s had sex.”

We all laugh and keep walking back home.

“I think we could get you to have sex with us in a classroom,” Griffyn says way too loudly.

People on campus look over at us and I can feel that my cheeks are so red.

“Will you be quiet?”

“Are you embarrassed that we could talk you into having sex with us on campus?” Felix says even louder.

When more people look over I duck behind a building.

“Oh, right here Anna? At least they had a door. Kinky, I like it,” Griffyn says.

“You two are the worst. You could not convince me to have sex on

campus!”

Felix moves so fast I don't see it coming when he picks me up and pins me between him and Griffyn. His nose presses into his mark before he lightly presses his teeth into my skin.

Griffyn isn't being left out. He grips my hips and grinds himself against my ass. He's hard in seconds, just like Felix who is pressing his cock against my core through our clothes.

Griffyn's hand slips between Felix and me. He starts pressing circles against my clit and working me up.

Knowing he can feel Felix's cock there is hot as hell.

What pushes me over the edge is Griffyn brushing his hand against his mark on my ribs. Both of them touching their marks at the same time sends electricity shooting through me.

I come, moaning as they surround me with their scents and bodies.

“What were you saying?” Felix asks.

It takes my brain a minute to come down from the high I'm on to realize what he's talking about.

I lean around Felix to see if anyone saw us and use my hearing to see if anyone was close.

“Don't worry Vixen, we wouldn't let anyone besides your mates see what belongs to us,” Griffyn whispers in my ear.

“And that orgasm belongs to us just like your body,” Felix adds.

I'm wiggling between them as their words make me crave more. This orgasm was only an appetizer and my body is craving the main event.

“Fine, you've convinced me. Now fuck me and take care of me.”

They both laugh but set me down.

“As much as we want to, we should get you home. The others are

probably waiting to hear about your class,” Felix says.

“Oh, they can wait,” Griffyn tries but I know we are going back now.

“We will fuck you until you can’t walk once we get back,” Felix promises.

It doesn’t take us too long to get back and Felix was right that the others would be waiting.

Rion is bouncing in the living room when we get back. I glance longingly at Felix and Griffyn but give my attention to Rion. He did help me get this opportunity after all.

“Did you enjoy your first class?” Rion asks.

Aksel is sitting there listening intently.

“Yes, it reminded me why I loved it. I’m excited to be doing it so thank you both so much.”

Rion looks ecstatic and Aksel is smiling.

“You’re welcome,” they both say.

I press a kiss to both of their cheeks in thanks before sneaking upstairs with Felix and Griffyn so they can keep their promise.

Thirty

Anna



The group of us are all relaxing in the living room and watching the camera feeds. There still hasn't been anything helpful on them.

My phone rings, drawing everyone's attention.

"It's Aly." I pick up the call. "Hey!"

"Hey Anna, your, uh, mom is here," Aly says down the line.

"My mom?" I ask.

"She said she came to see you since you haven't been answering her calls but when she got to the apartment no one was home. So, she came here to see if I knew where you were."

"What do I do, Aly? She doesn't know I'm a vampire or that I have multiple mates. We haven't talked since right after I was changed. It was too hard to feel that link to a life I wasn't connected to," I tell her honestly.

"Anna, your mom loves you and will accept you no matter what. You could even tell her you're a vampire if you wanted to but first, you should just see her and spend time together."

"I guess."

"Plus, she's already here and at my house so you don't have much of a choice left."

I roll my eyes. “Of course she just showed up here. If someone isn’t answering your calls that probably means they are busy.”

“I don’t think she thinks that way. I’ll see you soon.”

I hang up and realize the guys are all staring at me.

“Your mom is here? Please can we meet her? You don’t even have to explain that we are all together but introduce us?” Felix begs.

My stomach cramps with indecision. There is already a lot going on with seeing her for the first time after being changed. She is going to be suspicious but I’m not going to spend my entire life without her knowing my mates, even if she won’t know about the mate part.

There’s nothing wrong with what I’m doing so I don’t need to feel embarrassed or unsure. I’m in a loving relationship and she will need to accept that.

“Yes, any of you who want to come, can. I won’t make any of you sit through what will probably be an awkward few hours but you’re all welcome.”

“Yes!” Felix shouts.

His excitement about meeting my mom is adorable and melts some of the tension.

Griffyn looks like he’s going to puke. Aksel and Blaze are sitting there stoic.

“Do you think she’ll remember me?” Rion asks nervously.

All eyes shoot to him.

“She knows you?” Aksel shouts.

“You’ve already met her?” Felix whines.

Rion shrugs.

“We were dating and my mom and I used to talk a lot more, so they’ve

met over video,” I explain.

“What does she think happened between us?” Rion asks.

I feel the heat in my cheeks. “Nothing. I stopped talking to her so she probably assumes we are still together.”

“No fair!” Griffyn whines.

They all look a little jealous.

I roll my eyes. Of course they’re jealous about this.

“For anyone who wants to come, I’m going to be honest about our relationship so there is nothing to be jealous about.”

“You’re going to tell your mom that you have five mates?” Aksel asks.

“Well, I was going to say boyfriends. Unless one of you doesn’t want to be included in that. I know we haven’t put any titles on things,” I say awkwardly.

Felix laughs. “I think being bonded mates means you can use whatever title you want.”

Griffyn grins and nods.

“Obviously, I wasn’t talking about the two of you,” I scold.

I watch the other three for any reactions.

“I’m fine with being your boyfriend but once we are bonded you might need to upgrade me to husband,” Aksel says.

“Us,” Felix reminds.

“We’re in a relationship, her knowing that is what’s important,” Rion says.

Blaze is the last one who just grunts but flashes me a tiny smile to let me know his answer.

“Then let’s go. She’s at Aly’s place now and I can’t let her deal with that alone. What are we doing about watching the cameras?”

“There hasn’t been anything helpful yet. I think we can take some time off from watching it,” Aksel says.

“I agree.”

We all get dressed, the guys spend longer getting ready than I do and I know they want to impress my mom.

When we get close to Aly’s house I can feel Felix and Griffyn’s nerves coming down the bond.

I knock and my mom is the one to open the door.

“Anna! You’re here and alive!”

She wraps me up in a big hug and pulls me inside. I can sense the others following behind me.

Once she’s hugged me for a solid three minutes she pulls back and notices the guys I came with.

“Ryan! Is that you? It’s so great to see you again. I wasn’t sure if you would be here,” she says.

Rion smiles and gives a small wave. “Good to see you again, Donna.”

My mom looks around the room which is crowded since all of us got here.

“There certainly are a lot of men here.” My mom looks at Aly’s mates standing around their living room. “Aly, do you live here with all of them?”

Aly freezes and looks over at Nic and then at me.

“Mom, Aly is in a committed relationship with these five guys,” I answer for her.

“Oh, that’s nice. Wow, so many men!” Her laugh is uncomfortable.

Her eyes flick to my mates who are gathered behind me.

“And who are these young men?”

“Well, this is Felix, Griffyn, Aksel, and Blaze.”

“How do you know each other?”

Why do I feel like I’m in high school introducing my mom to my prom date?

“They’re my boyfriends too, mom. I’m sure this is surprising but we are in a relationship altogether and I’m very happy with them. They treat me with respect and I know I’m safe with them.”

I tell her everything I know she’s wondering in her head.

She looks between our two groups before surprising me by smiling. “Okay. As long as you’re happy, I’m happy for you. Is this why you stopped talking to me? You were worried about how I would handle hearing the details of your relationship.”

I know it’s a huge cop out but I need to give her a reason and this is the best one. I still don’t want to lie to her, though, so I stretch the truth.

“I changed, Mom, and I was nervous to see how you would react. Thank you for taking things so well.”

She pulls me into a tight hug. “You look happy and that’s what matters. Plus, they’re all so attractive. You’re a lucky girl.” She gestures to Aly. “Both of you are. Is there something in the water on this campus?”

Everyone laughs and my tension melts away. The best part is, she can go home and tell my dad without me having to do it myself. She’ll soften him up, I’m sure.

I pull her over to the couch and everyone else makes small talk away from us.

“I’m sorry I wasn’t answering your calls or reaching out, Mom. I shouldn’t have worried you like that. Is that why you came?”

She grabs my hand. “Yes, I was worried about you but I’m glad to see you’re happy and doing well.”

We sit down and have dinner all together. Being around my mom's positive, infectious energy is the final reset I need.

I've been feeling like my life ended when Killian turned me into a vampire but I did that to myself. My mom loves and accepts me for who I am. I've been putting limits on myself and that needs to stop.

Good things are happening to me. I found my mates and we are building a relationship, I'm going back to school and I will become an editor.

The new Anna is something special and I need to feel good about that.

Thirty One

Anna



I search every room in the house before finding Aksel, Rion, Griffyn, and Felix in the living room. I'm surprised to see the four of them hanging out.

"Where is Blaze?" I ask.

"What are you talking about? I thought you and Blaze have a date tonight." Felix looks worried.

"We do. Which is why it's crazy that I don't think he's home. We were supposed to leave thirty minutes ago."

"I can feel your worry down the bond. I'm sure he's fine and just lost track of time," Griffyn says.

"Did you check the gym? He spends most of his time down there," Aksel asks.

I nod. "Yes, this was the last room for me to check. He isn't here."

Everyone stands up and helps me look for him. It would be so strange for Blaze to miss our date. I'm scared that something happened to him.

"He isn't here," Aksel confirms as they all come back to the room.

Felix wraps his arms around me from behind. "Relax. Blaze is a trained agent and a beast of a man. He can take care of himself. He wouldn't want you worried about him."

“What if it was the stalker?” I ask.

“Let’s check the tapes then,” Griffyn suggests.

Aksel grabs his laptop and starts pulling the tapes up.

When I watch, Blaze leaves of his own free will and nothing happens to him. It feels more like I’m spying on him than checking on him.

“I guess he’s okay then,” I say.

Hurt blooms in my chest. Did he forget about our date? It seemed important to him but it doesn’t feel like it anymore.

How many times am I going to let him hurt me?

The four of them gather around me in the living room and we put something on TV to pass the time. They all keep a smile on their face but tension grows in the room the longer it takes for Blaze to show up.

“Maybe we need to go look for him. Just because he was fine when he left doesn’t mean something didn’t happen to him once he was out in the world,” I say standing up and moving towards the door.

Aksel’s phone pings, drawing everyone’s attention.

“Is it Blaze?” I ask when he frowns down at his phone.

“He’s okay. He will be back soon.” I open my mouth but he cuts me off before I can ask for more details. “That’s all I know, Willson. I’m sorry.”

The guy’s agitation grows with mine the longer we sit there waiting. I’m not paying any attention to what’s on the TV or the conversations around me.

As I sit there, my mind runs in every direction. He better have an explanation for blowing me off like this. It’s been hours since we were supposed to leave and he didn’t even text me. Blaze texted Aksel instead of me.

When I hear the front door open, I’m on my feet before I think about it but don’t move a step further. My heels are glued to the carpet.

Aksel stands up and moves in front of me and slightly to the side.

Blaze steps into the room with an emotionless face and closed off body language. “Anna, can I talk to you?”

“Where have you been, Blaze?” Aksel asks.

Blaze crosses his arms. “None of your business Aksel. I want to talk to Anna.”

“It’s my business when your actions hurt Anna. She went looking for you all over this house and we were all shocked you would miss your date. So give us a damn good explanation so we can stop hating you for hurting our mate.”

I set my hand on Aksel’s arm. “Aksel-”

“No, Anna. Let us stand up for you. He needs to explain,” Felix says, more serious than usual.

I look around and Felix, Aksel, Griffyn, and Rion are all glaring at Blaze.

“This isn’t an interrogation. I know Blaze has a good explanation. Go ahead Blaze,” I say.

Blaze swallows and looks around at all of us.

“I lost track of time.” Blaze doesn’t sound apologetic. His voice is stiff.

“What?” I ask.

The four have moved closer to me until they’re all bumping into me.

This is starting to feel like a showdown, which is ridiculous. Blaze isn’t the enemy no matter how shitty this made me feel.

Blaze let me down tonight, that doesn’t mean he won’t make up for it.

“No, you didn’t. Try again,” Aksel says. His voice is dangerously low.

He’s lying? What is going on right now?

“I’m not talking about this anymore. Anna, let me apologize to you.”

“Go ahead then,” Griffyn says.

Blaze grinds his teeth. “Privately.”

I try to take a step forward but Aksel turns around and cups my face.

“If he upsets you then I will-”

“No threats, Aksel.” I lean up and press a kiss on his cheek.

I do love his protectiveness. He doesn’t need to aim it at Blaze, though.

I move into the kitchen with Blaze and lean against the counter before looking at him.

He looks tired and a little haggard.

“What happened, Blaze?”

“I messed up, Spark. I’m sorry. Please give me another chance to make it up to you,” Blaze begs.

I have such a soft spot for Blaze considering how hard it is for him to be in a relationship and deal with all the constant communication required.

I don’t want to push him too far and that’s why I decide to let this go and give him another chance.

“Don’t miss the next one, okay?”

Blaze sighs. “I promise.”

I move forward and wrap my arms around his middle for a hug. I’m shocked when his entire body locks up and he hisses.

“What’s wrong?” I ask.

“Nothing.” He steps back from me.

Is he pushing me away right now?

He hissed. Did I hurt him?

“Blaze, I’m worried about you. Something is going on,” I say.

He shakes his head no but doesn’t meet my eyes.

I push boundaries and use my speed to lift his shirt before he can stop me.

A giant purple and yellow bruise decorates the center of his chest.

He steps back and tugs his shirt down.

“What is this? Another bruise?” I ask.

I can’t stop suspicion from coating my words.

“I told you training can get rough.”

I narrow my eyes at him.

“You’ve been gone for hours. How did training give you this? If I go ask the guys will they confirm one of them gave it to you?” I snap.

My patience has run thin right now with Blaze.

“I can train with people other than them,” Blaze snaps right back.

Of course, the other four hear that and come in.

“You better not be raising your voice at her,” Rion warns.

Blaze takes a deep breath through his nose.

“I need some space.”

My mouth drops open as he walks out of the kitchen and abandons this conversation.

“I pushed him too hard,” I whisper.

The four of them come closer

“No, he needs to be pushed. Something is going on and we’ve been too distracted by everything else to give it the attention it needs,” Aksel says.

“Let’s let him cool down and have some space. We can figure this out when everyone has a cooler head,” Felix says.

I lean against him and take some of his strength. Blaze makes me weak. I want to take care of him and make everything better but his actions are hurting me and I don’t know what to do.

But I know I can’t leave him hurting.

I give the four of them quick kisses.

“Thank you for defending me,” I say.

I leave them behind and gather up some first aid supplies. My gut tells me that a bruise isn't the only injury he has.

I knock on Blaze's door and only hear silence.

"Blaze? It's me. I won't push the issue right now so please let me in," I shout through the door.

There's no response and I'm about to turn around and abandon this idea when the door slowly opens.

Blaze stares at me with searching eyes before they catch on the first aid kit in my hand. The slight tilt of his lips makes this cease-fire worth it.

He steps aside and lets me inside before sitting on his bed. I perch on the edge and give his shirt a little tug. He needs to choose to remove it, I'm not forcing him.

His hesitation only lasts a second before he's revealing his chest to me. With more time, I can see some smaller bruises that are already almost completely healed so they weren't bad to start with.

I want to scream at him when I find a gash in his side that he was going to leave untreated if I didn't come up here and check on him.

Somehow, I keep my thoughts to myself and just start cleaning the cut.

I use antibiotic cream and some butterfly bandages to close the wound and help it heal faster. It shouldn't scar and add itself to the multitude of scars covering his body.

To scar a shifter is difficult and yet here he is covered in them.

I rub some arnica cream over the bruises even though it is unnecessary. I want to take care of him and this is the only way I can right now.

"Want to watch Big House?" Blaze asks, pulling me away from my thoughts.

His face looks hopeful and that show of vulnerability does it for me.

Blaze needs love despite mistakes and I can give that to him.

“Absolutely.”

We turn the show on and cuddle up on the bed. I’m trying to be careful of his injuries but he just pulls me right up to the side of him.

This episode is one of my favorites and I even get Blaze to talk about some of the player’s strategies with me which is the highlight of watching it with him. He has a unique perspective even if it’s clear he thinks the premise is silly.

I don’t think he can imagine a world where playing a game on TV could be the most intense thing happening to you.

I hate that for him.

Once upon a time, I wouldn’t be able to relate to him. Reality TV and normal human issues consumed me.

Now I know differently.

But I’m healing and so is Blaze.

I want that for both of us more than anything. For all of us really. We all have trauma in our past that we need to overcome to live a happy life together.

We’re going to do it.

I snuggle deeper into Blaze and enjoy this moment with him, knowing we are going to have to work through this soon.

Thirty Two

Anna



A knock on the door distracts us from dinner.

Everyone freezes before moving into defense mode.

We aren't expecting anyone. It could be my stalker or a different enemy.

When Aksel opens the door, the rest of us are standing on the sides prepared to attack.

"Aksel! You have not been answering all of my calls," Adelina says.

I relax and let my body deflate.

"Adelina? What are you doing here?" Aksel turns to the guys. "Stand down. It's just my cousin who didn't think to call ahead."

Everyone reveals themselves and says hello but tensions don't just melt away. This put everyone on edge.

"You haven't been answering my calls," Adelina says again once she's said hello to everyone.

"I've been busy," Aksel replies moodily.

"And I've been busy keeping you on top of your duties as councilman. Which are a lot by the way."

"Sorry, you have my undivided attention right now. Let's go over it all."

I leave them to go over everything that I want nothing to do with.

I do, however, want to spend some time with Adelina. So I find a couple of bottles of supernatural-friendly wine that I stored for a rainy day and make loads of snacks.

Felix and Griffyn see what I'm doing and ask to join.

"Friend time is important and you two are squarely in mate territory, sorry."

They pout and I have to promise Griffyn that I'll help him plan a prank soon to get him to leave us alone.

It's cute how much they want to always be with me but I want time with Adelina.

I move back into the living room with everything, where they're working, to see they're finishing up.

"Last thing, the demon elder has an attitude with me and is making my life difficult when it comes to working with his team," Adelina says.

"Don't worry about it. I'll handle him."

"With threats?" I ask, pulling their attention to me.

"Of course, but they will be discreet," Aksel says.

Something must be wrong with me that I think that's so hot.

"What's in your hands, Anna?" Adelina asks.

I smile but suddenly I'm nervous about what I'm going to ask her. Maybe she won't be interested in hanging out with me.

Is she going to feel obligated because of Aksel?

"Sorry, did I make you uncomfortable?" She asks when I don't say anything.

It's the nerves in her voice that give me the courage to ask.

"I don't know if you need to rush back but I was thinking we could hang out if you have time?" I'm rambling.

Adelina's face lights up. "I would love to! Is that wine?"

"Yes!"

I give Aksel a look to get lost and his smile looks exacerbated.

"I guess I'll just go and work on everything Adelina just gave me. Have fun," Aksel says.

I move into the room and spread my goodies across the table before speeding back to the kitchen to grab some wine glasses.

We cheers and sip our drinks before browsing the TV.

I hesitate over the reality TV category and she notices.

"You like human reality TV too? I'm obsessed with all of them!" Adelina says.

"I do!"

We bond over our thoughts on all the different shows. As soon as I've locked Adelina down as a friend, I will introduce her to Aly.

We settle on one of the dating shows that just started a new season. Three episodes are available and we binge all of them.

It feels like we've known each other for our entire lives.

"So, tell me about your guys. How's it all going?" She asks.

I try to fight it but a smile bursts free.

"It's been going," I say dodgily.

She smacks my arm. "Don't hold back on the details! You're bonded with Griffyn and Felix, right? Who is next?"

Maybe it will feel good to talk about this.

"Until recently, my answer would have been Blaze but he's been acting so weird lately, and until we can fully trust each other I don't see that happening. What's crazy is I think it might happen with Aksel soon. He's still surly, but everything has changed since Joka disappeared."

I almost said died but I can't confess that even to her.

Adelina nods sagely. "First of all, I told you! I knew you two had something. Second, Joka was a poison and I'm not surprised his being gone is a tipping point in your relationship. Aksel seems freer and less feisty when I'm dealing with him."

"It feels like my comfort and trust in him developed quickly. I feel bad that considering everything Aksel put me through, I feel closer to him than I do Blaze right now."

"What about Rion?" She asks.

I'm smiling again. "Well, he's my mate too."

Adelina shrieks. "You're so lucky!"

I laugh. "Trust me, I know it. They're all hunks."

"I'll take your word for it," she says with a wink.

She's got me laughing again. "It's weird rebuilding considering we had a relationship. The fresh start was almost easier in terms of moving fast. We need to relearn who each of us is."

"That makes sense. You feel like you should be able to jump back where you left off but it doesn't work that way. You didn't grow together so you need to adjust."

"Exactly!"

"Do you feel like you're moving in the right direction with all of them, even if it's at different speeds?" She asks.

I nod. "Yes, but there are road bumps in the way for sure."

"Then you should be happy, which it seems like you are."

"I am."

We pour another glass of wine and I take a handful of the pretzels.

"How's your relationship?" I ask.

Adelina smiles and laughs. “A lot less dramatic than yours. We’re doing marvelous and our bond is strong. I can feel her emotions like they’re my own instead of just knowing what they are. It’s beautiful and makes me feel so connected to her.”

My heart skips a beat with how happy she sounds.

“I think you are goals. I want to be you,” I tell her honestly.

“I can tell that you’re going to get there.”

I wrap her tight in a hug.

“Thanks for staying. I don’t want to be weird but I want to be friends,” I say awkwardly.

“Me too. It feels like we’ve been friends forever even though we just met.”

“Agreed. Forewarning, I’m going to start texting you a lot more and we need to plan another hangout,” I tell her.

We end up hugging and finishing our glass of wine which leads to us laying back on the couch giggling. It feels wonderful.

Apparently, the guys can’t wait another second to join us because they all come in and stand there.

I roll my eyes and huff, but they did give me longer than I expected.

“Go get wine glasses,” I say.

Adelina stands and hugs me. “I should get home to Jen. This was great. I can’t wait until next time.”

I walk her out and feel spectacular about the friendship we are building.

The guys all have a glass of wine when I get back and I end up cuddling on the couch with all my guys watching reality TV, getting tipsy off wine, and feeling ecstatic about my friendship with Adelina.

Thirty Three

Anna



It's *the* car. We've been searching for it everywhere and haven't seen one of them. The red sedan is parked at the bar. My bar. The bar I worked at.

"Guys!" I shout.

Footsteps pound as they all rush into my room. Rion gets here first.

"What's wrong?" Blaze demands.

Aksel has his darkness surrounding him, ready to attack.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. It's the car!" I point to my screen so they can see what I see.

Shoulders drop as they all crowd around me.

"We should have thought about the option that he met you at the bar. You aren't going to recognize all your customers but they might notice you," Aksel says.

"We should go now," Felix says, moving towards the door.

"Yes but someone should stay here and watch the car in case it leaves. We need to know where it goes," Rion says.

We all glance at each other.

Felix sighs. "I'll stay but I'm not happy about it."

I give him a quick kiss. "Let's go, quickly, before they leave."

Aksel drives us to the bar faster than legal and pulls into a spot in the parking lot.

“Let’s see if we can find clues in the car. It’s going to be impossible to know who it is on a busy Friday night,” I say.

We agree it would be too obvious to have all of us go so only Aksel and I do. The car is empty with no personal items inside or on it. The license plate is still missing so it’s a pretty good guess to say this is the same car.

“What if we just wait in our car for them to come out? We can grab them before they leave,” I say when we get back inside Aksel’s SUV.

They agree so we sit here watching the car until someone comes.

Three hours later and it’s still sitting there.

“It is closing time. They have to leave now, there are almost no other cars here,” I say.

But they never show up.

“Are they still inside?” Griffyn asks.

We go look in the window of the bar and try the door. The bar is closed and no one is left inside.

When we get back to the car Aksel slams his fist down on the wheel.

You know he’s furious when he’s risking hurting his car.

“They were here tonight and got away! How did they know not to come back to their car?” Blaze roars.

Everyone is frustrated.

We needed this win.

I call up Felix and let him know what’s going on.

“At least we have an idea of where to look again: The bar,” Felix says positively but I can still feel his disappointment through the bond.

“You’re right, we can stake out the bar and find them. They won’t get

away again,” Griffyn says.

Aksel pulls the car away and we head back home to make a plan.

We need to take action immediately.

* * *

The guys couldn't decide who should come with me, so they all came.

Of course, Mike agreed to let me work this one-off shift when I asked. He's amazing like that.

The car is still sitting here like it has been since we spotted it.

I'm behind the bar like I always was, but this time my five guys are hidden behind Aksel's darkness in the corner watching everything.

I can feel their eyes on me.

It's absurd they all felt the need to come.

Bartending comes easy even after my time off. It's second nature to pour beers and mix drinks for the patrons of the bar.

I take this opportunity to look for any troublemakers. Maybe it will be like old times and I can compel a predator and help humanity.

The night is uneventful, at least from my perspective. It will be interesting to see if the guys spotted anything.

They are trained to do this afterall.

When the bar closes, we keep an eye on the car but it's clear it has been abandoned now.

“Did you guys notice anything?” I ask them.

“There was one guy we need to keep an eye on,” Aksel says.

“He came in casually and stopped short when he saw Anna behind the bar.” Felix folds his arms.

Griffyn says, "I saw him too and assumed he had a crush on our girl until he started causing problems."

"He harassed that girl right in view of Anna," Rion adds.

"It was suspicious," I concede. "So that's why you wanted me to ignore what happened and let Rion take care of it?"

"He was the least noticeable since he has his speed and could help the woman without drawing attention. The suspect didn't even stick around and show more interest in the girl. It doesn't make sense," Felix says.

"So, you think he's suspicious? Now what?" I ask.

"We do this again and see if he comes back," Aksel says.

"Alright."

Thirty Four

Anna



I work five more uneventful shifts before the suspect shows up again.

He waltzes in, gaining attention as he goes. This time he doesn't even glance toward me as he sits at a table off to the side.

I have to stop myself from glancing at where the others are hidden.

Tonight, Blaze had something else and didn't come but the other four are here.

Two hours later and the man is still at his table.

Someone else steals my attention by sitting at the bar in front of me.

"What can I get you?" I ask.

"A whiskey coke please."

I don't give him more focus than a small smile, barely taking in his blond hair and lanky features.

He hands me his card when I set his drink down.

"Open or closed?" I ask about his tab.

"Keep it open, I want to spend more time with you."

His words make me stop short. I've been flirted with more times than I can count working behind this bar.

Time for a polite refusal.

“I have a boyfriend, but thank you.”

More than one and they're terrifying if you upset them but I won't mention that part.

“I don't see any boyfriend.”

I can feel Griffyn and Felix's annoyance through our bond. I'm sure they're dying to come stake their claim but they can't.

I ignore this guy while I serve everyone else.

My shift ends when the suspect decides to leave. Marvelous timing for me to corner him and find out if he's my stalker.

I can't keep doing this game.

I'm a badass vampire, I refuse to be afraid of a human male.

We follow behind him until he turns the corner behind the bar. My old stomping grounds.

I use my speed to get in front of him and make eye contact, leaving the others behind to stay hidden.

“Stop.”

My compulsion works immediately, making him freeze.

“Have you been leaving me notes?” I ask.

“No.”

“What do you want with me?” I try.

“Nothing. You're just a hot bartender.”

Fuck!

I thought we had a lead. That we had found this person and instead we've been focused on the wrong guy.

“Forget this. We never talked. Don't ever harass a woman again.”

I go back to the others, leaving this man to keep walking home. Aksel pulls back the darkness to reveal them all looking as disappointing as I feel.

“What now?” I ask.

“We look for the next suspect. Sometimes stakeouts take a while but we will find the culprit,” Aksel says.

He puts an arm around me and starts walking towards our car.

I guess we will just have to do this again.

And we do.

It's shift after shift of not identifying a suspect and meeting dead ends.

Frustration is clear in all of us and tensions run high as we go to the bar once again.

At this point, I think Mike is confused by my employment status but he's let me work every shift I've asked for.

We are here again. This time Blaze was busy again with no explanation given.

I'm going to freak out soon if this continues. I hate secrets.

Someone flirts with me at the bar again and I'm pretty sure if this keeps happening, one of them is going to snap.

They hate being hidden but it gives us an advantage.

A blond-haired idiot won't leave a woman alone at the bar.

“Sweet thing, your ass is fantastic in those jeans,” he says.

Her eyes meet mine and she mouths, “Help.”

I can't resist taking care of this situation. I'm here, I might as well help.

“Hey!” I shout.

The guy looks at me with an appraising look that is completely obnoxious.

“Leave her alone.”

She scurries away while I handle him. That allows me to take care of him out back.

“Meet me behind the bar, by the dumpster. Go now.”

He follows my words immediately.

I can feel the guy’s annoyance through our bond.

I don’t rush making drinks for anyone, letting him stew out there.

“Let me handle this. I can manage a human,” I say under my breath so only the guys can hear me.

When I get outside and none of them follow me, I’m grateful they trust me.

He’s standing there waiting for me.

For a second, it feels like nothing has changed. That I never met the guys and I’m just working at the bar and taking care of the trash.

“You will not force yourself on a woman who doesn’t want your attention. You will listen to her wants and needs, including body language. A woman must make her interest in you clear before you act and you will remember that no means no. Now leave and forget I exist.”

The guy leaves, his footsteps echoing as he goes.

“Well hello there Anna,” a voice says from behind me seconds before something pricks my neck.

My vision gets fuzzy and fades until I lose consciousness.

* * *

I wake up behind the bar, by the dumpster, and slumped against the brick wall. The ground is littered with trash and wet from the rain sprinkling down on us.

It’s disgusting to be down here.

“Wha-” My voice comes out slurred and slow.

“I’m sorry my love. I didn’t want it to be like this but I’m dying for a hit. Bite me.”

I try to place his face. It’s familiar but not someone I know personally.

His arms are too long for his body and his blond hair looks greasy.

“I don’t-” I try again.

“You’re waking up from some drugs. You need blood, take some.”

Why is he offering me blood?

I don’t want to drink from anyone else but my mates now that I know how intimate it is. But, I need to get my strength back quick. The best way to do that and get away from whoever this is, is to drink his blood.

Before I can open my mouth he pulls out a knife and cuts open his wrist. The scent of blood fills my nose making me starving.

I latch onto his wrist, drinking the stale, human blood. I keep going until I finally feel like the drug is being burned out of my system.

It takes me way too long to realize he’s moaning. Loudly.

He’s excited and rubbing at his crotch. Luckily, he’s kept himself contained in his pants but I no longer want anything to do with this.

Where are the guys? They have to be wondering where I am. I have no idea how long I was out for.

I can feel their panic so they’ll be here soon.

I break away from his wrist. I spit the remaining blood out, feeling tainted.

Does it smell like burning?

“Yes. It’s so good my love. We don’t need to be apart any longer. We are together now and I’ll keep feeding you forever.”

He sounds insane. Clearly, he is.

I blame the drugs that it takes me this long to realize who he is.

“You’re my stalker?” I ask.

He looks down at me with sad eyes. “Stalker is such a dirty word. I’m sure those filthy boys planted that idea in your head. I love you, Anna, I just wanted to make sure you knew I was there watching.”

“If you love me, why did you shoot me?” I ask.

The blood burns away the last of the drug. I can attack him and escape any second but I want information first.

“They weren’t meant for you! I’m so sorry. How could those idiots have let you get hurt?”

I’m saved from answering him when the back door to the bar crashes open, my men coming out.

I can see flames licking up behind them

Before they can freak out too much, I shoot to my feet and restrain the stalker and toss the gun from his waistband on the ground.

“What the fuck is going on?” Aksel shouts.

“We need to move somewhere more private to question him further. We don’t want to deal with random humans finding us,” I say.

“They’re all distracted with the kitchen fire that erupted inside. That’s what distracted us,” Griffyn says.

I take a step forward but none of them move an inch.

“Tell us who this is then we will go,” Felix says.

They all look seconds away from murdering him. I don’t think my next words will help.

“He’s my stalker. He attacked me and now we need to question him so let’s get him back,” I say quickly, trying to move again.

Rion growls before snatching him from my grip and restraining him, himself. “Let’s go then.”

Thirty Five

Anna



Aksel sends his darkness into the night around us without explanation.

“There’s an empty building two doors down that we can use,” Aksel says.

Griffyn pulls his phone out. “I’ll let Blaze know where we are and that we have him. I’m certain he’ll want to be here.”

Aksel leads the way and it’s a quick trip to that building where Felix easily breaks the handle to get inside.

All of them have only grown more agitated with each step. They are boiling with anger at this point.

I feel the same but that’s somewhat offset by the fact that we have him here in our grip.

Felix drags him inside and confines him to a chair before turning to look at me.

“Did you drink his blood?” Aksel asks. His tone is soft and menacing.

They all stare at me, waiting to hear an answer.

They’re going to hate mine.

“Yes, but-”

Felix shifts into snow leopard form before hissing at the man.

“But, it was only to survive. He drugged me and I needed blood.”

Aksel nods before glaring at the stalker. The others follow his lead except for Griffyn who comes up behind me.

He presses his wrist to my lips. “Drink from me and remove his terrible taste from your mouth. Replace him with your mate before we all kill him instead of questioning him.”

“Oh, he will die, we just need answers first,” Aksel says.

I sink my fangs into Griffyn and his perfect taste explodes on my tongue. It’s delicious and feels so right, replacing the taint that was there.

He presses against my back and I feel his cock against me. “That’s a good girl.”

Aksel goes to the bathroom and gets a cup of cold water and dumps it on the human.

He wakes with a start, confused.

“Anna! Anna! Where are you?” He says.

The human is worried about me?

“Don’t say her fucking name,” Griffyn snarls from behind me still.

“We were meant to be safe and get away! These idiots have ruined everything!” The human screams as a giant snow leopard stalks in front of him.

Is he even scared?

He’s blaming them and apologizing to me?

Felix looks feral in his snow leopard form. The human is alive, though, so he contained himself. He prowls around the human who can’t tear his eyes from me, even with a fucking snow leopard about to rip him to pieces.

“Thank god you’re alive!” The human shouts.

He’s acting erratic.

Aksel raises an eyebrow. “You’re happy she’s alive but you’re the one

who drugged her.”

“That was only to get her away from the monsters holding her captive.”
His eyes are wild as he glares at the guys.

Felix shifts back. He’s standing there naked as he turns to me. “Do you know him?”

I stare at him intently, clearly trying to place him. “No.”

“Yes, you do. You love me and my blood!”

His blood? White-hot jealousy surges through my bonds.

“I only had your blood for the first time today,” I say.

“That’s not true! You kept coming back for more before they stole you away! I was just about to make my move!”

Felix moves closer to me. His movements are jerky and stiff as he comes to me and wraps himself around me. He nuzzles into his mark on my neck.

I bring a hand up and run it up his back. “I’m okay Felix. I’m right here, safe and sound.”

He nods against my neck but keeps quiet.

The door opens and all of us tense until Blaze comes through the door.

“This is the stalker?” He asks striding towards him.

Aksel stops him in his tracks. “Yes, and we’re gathering information right now.”

Time to get back to it.

“When have I drank your blood?” I ask.

Blaze is staring at me, eyes blazing as he searches my face.

Now the human decides to stay quiet.

I run my hand down Felix’s back one more time before moving closer to the human.

Something about his features is familiar.

I study them until it hits me.

“You’re the guy from the bar. You’ve been flirting with me while I work,” I reveal. I ask again, this time using my compulsion. “When have I drank your blood?”

He still refuses to answer.

“How is he resisting?” I ask.

Everyone moves closer.

“It’s wev. He has wev somewhere on his body to block your compulsion. If he drank it, it would be in his blood and you would have tasted it.”

It all comes together. Where I’ve seen him, when I might have drank his blood, everything.

“Oh my fucking god, you’re one of the assholes I compelled to stay away from women. I drank your blood before I knew the effects but you weren’t compelled like I thought. Am I right?”

When he doesn’t respond, I scream, “Am I right?”

“Don’t be upset love. You’re right. You shared your venom with me and when I came back you chose me again. We were meant to be.”

Felix growls.

So when I was trying to help the women of the world be safer, I created my stalker. I gave pleasure to someone who shot and almost killed me. To the person leaving me notes and terrifying me?

I feel sick.

“Where did you get wev? Is it the same place you got the bullets you used on Anna?” Aksel asks.

“I’m not telling you anything until my love and I are free to leave here together,” he says.

Aksel laughs manically. “You’re not leaving ever and certainly not with

Anna. She wouldn't leave with you, so get that through your head."

He's right but I'm not sure that's the best way to get him to talk.

"You know what vampires are but do you know about other supernaturals?" Felix asks menacingly.

The man nods staring Felix in the eye.

"You're in a room surrounded by deadly supernaturals and you have no fear. Someone has led you wrong about how much danger you're in." Felix's eyes flash gold.

The other guys follow his lead, releasing their powers.

Rion flashes his fangs, Blaze shifts his claws, Aksel releases some of his darkness, and Griffyn's wings pop out.

Finally, the guy looks scared. He gulps as he looks around at the display of power around him.

"I'm guessing whoever told you that you can face off against supernaturals and win is the same person who gave you this gun." Blaze holds the gun up and starts inspecting it.

I don't know enough about guns to do it myself but he releases the bullets. Blaze bares his teeth when he picks up the bullet, examining it.

When he sets it down, I see the red welts on his skin.

"Blaze!" I move over to him.

"It's fine, Spark, they're poisoned. Like I expected."

I kneel in front of the stalker and put the nicest smile I can muster on my face. Time to try some manipulation. We need answers so we can be done with him.

"What's your name?" I ask.

He smiles back. "Jess."

"Jess, those bullets are dangerous to me. When you shot me I almost died

because of the poison in them. It was really scary.” I pout my lips.

“You weren’t supposed to get hurt my love,” he whispers.

His eyes keep moving around my face and his hands are shaking. Like an addict waiting for another hit.

I turn to the guys. “Is he addicted to my venom? I can’t have fed from him that much.”

Aksel’s eyes widen. “Have you been getting hits of vampire venom from somewhere else?”

Jess’ eyes narrow into slits at Aksel.

I bring his attention back to me. “Is it my venom you need?”

He nods his head fiercely. “Yes, I need you. Please.”

“Answer my question and maybe I can help you. I’m not safe until I know where the poison came from. Where did you get it?”

He stares at me but doesn’t say a word.

“Is it the same place he’s been getting vampire venom?” Aksel whispers so softly, only a supernatural would be able to hear.

I repeat his question. “Is it the same place you’ve been getting vampire venom?”

Slowly Jess nods.

“Where is it? You don’t need venom anymore, I’m here.”

I have to push Griffyn and Felix’s fury out of my mind.

“You’ll give me what I want?” He asks.

I smile but it’s forced. “I’ll give you what you deserve, Jess.”

His eyes light up when I say his name but they’re still bouncing around the room.

“There’s a shop pretty close to the bar that will sell you anything you want.”

Fucking hell. There's a shop right by us that's selling this stuff?

We're lucky we haven't run into it even more.

"What's the name?" Aksel demands.

Jess is hyper focused on my mouth. He won't look away from where he knows my venom is.

It's disgusting.

Blaze slaps him across the face with only a small percentage of his strength. Otherwise, I think he would have taken the human's head right off.

It takes two more strikes before Jess pays him any attention.

"I'm not sure he's sane enough to be affected by pain," Felix says.

"I need to know the name of the shop before I can give you what I promised," I say softly.

Jess looks around the room with jerky shakes. "I don't know."

"You don't know?" Griffyn asks incredulously.

"Liar. Hit him again, Blaze," Aksel demands.

Blaze follows his instruction immediately, punching the human in the stomach.

A series of blows does nothing and he doesn't give us the name.

I step back closer to Aksel. "I don't think he knows. I'm surprised we didn't notice him in the bar if he was acting like this."

"He was probably taking hits to keep himself normal," Aksel says. "I agree. He doesn't know. His emotions are all over the place. There's only one more thing to do."

Aksel steps forward and starts looking at Jess' arms and feet.

"What are you doing?" Felix asks.

"We need to find the wev item. What is it?" Aksel asks.

Jess' eyebrows scrunch. "What?"

“What stops vampires from compelling you?” Griffyn asks.

Again, Jess doesn't realize the situation he's in. He laughs manically.

“Oh, they told me that was a must if I was trying to get it from the source.”

He points to his ear which has a small stud pierced into it.

Aksel rips it out making Jess scream.

“Compel him.”

I step forward and say, “Jess, what is the name of the shop?”

It's clear this time the compulsion is working.

“I don't know.”

He doesn't know the name of the shop that he gets his drugs from. Which means magic is involved.

“Do you have traps we need to know about that put any of us in danger?”

“No. I only had the gun.”

“Then it's time to lock you up and throw away the key,” Felix says breaking the compulsion.

Jess bellows, “What are you talking about? You promised me venom! I need your bite.”

Time to correct him.

“I promised you would get what you deserve and you deserve to be locked up for everything you've done. You need to detox from venom and stay far, far away from me.”

His eyes get even wider.

“Is there any trial?” I ask my guys.

“We have all the proof we need and I'm a councilman now. The justice system isn't necessarily fair for humans but in this case, it means he can be locked up immediately,” Aksel says.

“Wait here and we will be right back. We can go home together,” Felix

says.

Felix and Blaze grab him and transport him away from here to bring Jess to lock up.

And I say goodbye to this burden, forever.

Thirty Six

Blaze



I rushed back when they told me they caught the stalker. Some things are more important but I know I'm going to have to face the consequences.

Felix and I drop this scumbag off at the processing center where he will be locked up and forced through a detox.

It's better than he deserves. That's for sure.

The others are waiting for us and we all drive back to the house.

I check my phone. No messages and it's too late for me to go back now.

I keep my phone on vibrate but hold it tight in my hand. As soon as the message comes in, I need to see it.

Aksel drives up to the house but stops short at what he sees.

"Fuck."

He parks the car down the street and we all file out.

The lights are on in the house and I can see shadows through the window.

There are people inside.

I am so fucking fucked.

"What now?" Felix groans softly.

There's silence as we move back away from the house and out of sight.

"You guys should go. I will deal with this," I say.

Predictably, they don't go along with that.

"Are you insane? We are all dealing with this together," Anna demands.

I sigh. I think it's time to come clean.

Is Anna still going to want me after I do?

I don't face them when I say, "I skipped a fight tonight because of our lead and now they're here to collect."

"What the fuck are you talking about?" Aksel snarls.

He's furious. I can smell it all over him.

"Blaze?" Anna's voice is soft and compassionate.

It feels like I'm vulnerable right now.

I stay silent.

"Is that where you've been sneaking out to? Why is it a big deal if you've been fighting Blaze?" Anna asks.

It wouldn't be if it was for normal people.

"They did me a favor which means they own me for as long as it takes to pay it off. I didn't come when called. Just let them enact their revenge and it will be over," I say softly.

"What the fuck?" Felix growls.

"If you think I'm going to stand by while these goons hurt you then you are dead fucking wrong," Anna snarls.

I fucking love her fire. She's too good for me.

I don't even turn to look at her.

"You're right Spark, you aren't staying. None of you are. Guys, get her out of here."

No one fucking moves.

"Thank fuck none of you moved one fucking inch because if you tried to drag me away right now I would start cutting off balls," Anna says.

“We aren’t leaving you, Blaze. We are a team and no one gets to hurt you,” Griffyn steps forward and rests a hand on my shoulder.

I don’t shrug him off but I do try to absorb some strength from him.

“If we fight them, there will be consequences,” I say around the lump in my throat.

“Whatever trouble you’ve gotten yourself into, we will get you out. Together. Tell us what we are dealing with,” Aksel declares.

So I tell them. “My original captors weren’t who I got the weaver from. They would never help me. It’s the people who I went to next. They weren’t much better. The only difference is that I wasn’t a prisoner locked up with them. I was a fighter paying off my debt for them to help me escape.

They made that debt last as long as they could, keeping me with them for another five years. I needed the weaver to remove the spells placed on me by my captors. That’s how I knew they had access to one.”

“So you fought that night as payment for the weaver?” Felix asks.

I nod. “I knew I would be creating another debt and they would ensure I paid it. I have to keep fighting. I don’t have an option or they’ll come for all of us. Our refusal to let them punish me for missing a fight is only going to cause problems for us. They won’t be letting that go any time soon.”

Anna steps up and wraps her arms around me from behind. “We are a family Blaze. We stick together. We will get out of this.”

“Okay,” I choke out softly, sounding so tired and lost.

I guess we are doing this then. This is truly terrifying.

I don’t think I’m worth what is to come.

* * *

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About the Author

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I am an indie author living in Colorado with my fiancé and my dog Bentley. She is my favorite writing companion but she loves to distract me when I'm in a groove! I have always loved to write and had stories rolling around in my head, so I decided to write some books and see where it takes me. Thanks for joining me on this adventure!

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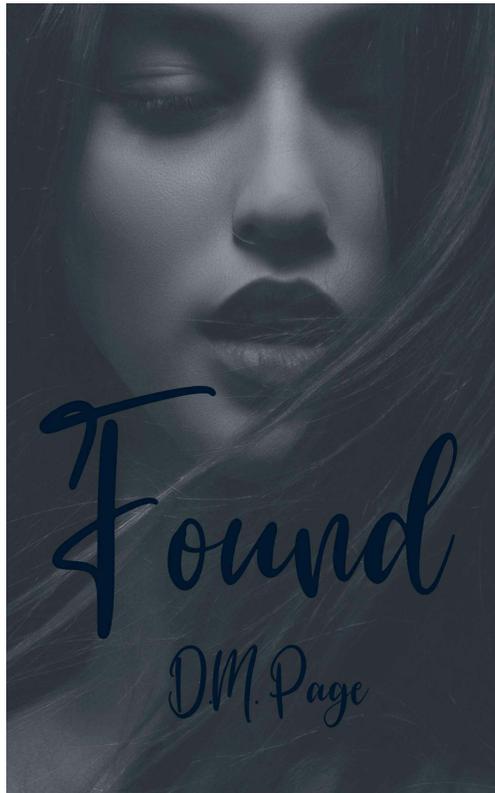
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A HALLOWEEN WHY CHOOSE ROMANCE

FOR ONE NIGHT

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For One Night

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Standalone Novella

Halloween is the night ghosts get to roam the streets and live like a human. Micaela is planning to enjoy her night to the fullest when she meets three paranormals: a vampire, a werewolf and a warlock.

What happens when your fated mate is a ghost who only gets to be corporal for one night? You find a way to keep her.

Will they be able to or will they lose their fated mate after only one night?

This is a fast burn, paranormal, why choose romance, meaning she doesn't have to choose between the love interests. This is a standalone novella. The story changes POVs between the main character and her men. This is a steamy story and is intended for 18+. This is 30,000 words.

D.M. Page



CAPTIVE

FORGOTTEN GODS
BOOK ONE

Captive (Forgotten Gods Reverse Harem Romance)

On [Amazon](#)

Complete series!

I was a normal girl, until one day I wasn't. The very same day, men stole me away and held me captive. They imprisoned me with four guys, all with powers of their own: Apollo, Ares, Hephaestus and Hermes. They keep me sane while we plot our escape. But will we make it out alive?

This is a medium burn, paranormal prison fantasy, reverse harem. The story changes POVs between the main character and her men. The steaminess factor will go up as the series goes on and is intended for 17+. This is a short novella for the first book, 30,000 words and ends on a cliffhanger