



Knot

GUARANTEED

JILLIAN WEST

Knot Guaranteed

Jillian West

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Thank you!!

Also by Jillian West

World Information

This book is set in an alternate universe.

You will recognize many things as familiar, but there may be a few you don't. If you recognize the terms alpha, beta, omega then you're probably good.

If not, welcome to the omegaverse!

Here's a small bit to get you started if you're unfamiliar with how things work.

Omegaverse is an alternate universe where similar to wolves or animal biology there is a hierarchy. Alphas are at the top. They're generally bigger, more aggressive, or dominant and they have a few extra features like a knot (think wolves but no shifting.) Betas are the regular humans. Omegas are the opposite side of the spectrum from alphas. They tend to be less aggressive, smaller, and they mate with alphas (and sometimes betas too, but omegas need the alpha to help them through their heat). Alphas and omegas have scents which attract compatible mates. Omegas calm an alphas more aggressive nature.

In my contemporary omegaverse books the world is very close to ours with just a few biological drives that are different & some extra features like alphas have knots & purr to comfort omegas, omegas and alphas have pheromones that attract compatible mates, and omegas have a heat cycle where they're super fertile. During this time it sends compatible alphas into rut. (Lots of practicing making babies.)

A few hundred years ago the birth rates for alphas and omegas were nearly equal. Nowadays there are nearly eight alphas born to each omega. As a result alpha packs have become the norm. Omegas are the center of the pack and as mentioned earlier calm and alphas more aggressive nature. Betas (the normal humans) do join packs sometimes, but their biological drives don't demand it like alphas and omegas.

These alphas growl and snarl, but you'll find no abuse from these men. There are no shifters in this book.

This is a reverse harem romance meaning our heroine will not choose between her love interests. She gets to keep them all.

I hope this helps clarify. You can always reach out to me via social media or email & I'm happy to explain further.

Now on to the good stuff...

Author's Note

Warrick and Ramsey were introduced in No Omega Needed as side characters. This book was written as a complete standalone. It's not necessary to read No Omega Needed prior to starting this book as all information is contained within Knot Guaranteed. This is an entirely new cast of characters.

>>>>Spoilers After This Point<<<<<

This book is quite fluffy. If you suffer from reading anxiety this book should be relatively safe. All issues that arise will be dealt with quickly and in a low stress manner. I never want to discourage anyone from reading any of my books, but I try to be as transparent as possible since I want you to be satisfied. If you're looking for something with a lot of drama and action this book probably won't hit the sweet spot.

There is no cheating and no OW drama. These men don't waiver. They know what they want and they go after it. There are brief discussions of possible fertility issues. There is a secondary character in the midst of addiction. This is discussed on page, but no drug use is shown. Brief discussions of a riot/crowd uprising and an attack of a main character that took place prior to the beginning of the book. There is a bit of "Call me, Daddy." There is no age-play. There are consensual sexy spankings.

Mental health is important! I always want my readers to know what to expect. If you have any questions or need something clarified please reach out through email or social media.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have!!

If I've missed any things that should be listed please reach out to me on social media or email me and I'm happy to correct it.

This one is for all the readers who have reached out requesting and/or mentioning how much they need more low stress books.

This one is pure fluffy comfort for all of you!

Prologue

Tinley

“You’re looking considerably rougher than I expected,” Shanna says, tossing herself down on my bed. Her Scottish accent is so watered down, it really only shines through on certain words, like *rougher*.

My eyes catch in the mirror across the room.

Damn, she’s right.

My bedhead is a little ridiculous, but it’s been a tough few days.

My best friend is always well put together, but she’s seen me looking much worse. If you can’t look a mess in front of friends, then who can you?

I’m fully embracing the breakup aesthetic. My long-sleeve pajama dress is oversized and kind of hideous, but I’m wallowing in the sadness.

Okay, I’m really not all that sad about the breakup. It’s just hard ignoring the constant calls and texts. We were only together for a little over six months, but he was a lot more upset than I expected.

Shanna grabs the front of my dress, pulling it close to her nose. “At least you don’t smell as bad as you look.” She chuckles, releasing the material. “Now tell me, are you heartbroken?”

“No, it was time. He asked me to move in with him.” My eyes widen to indicate exactly how much that conversation shocked me.

The hardest part is that Harvey is a great guy. He's just not the right one for me. It wouldn't have been fair to let things go on any longer. I thought we were more casual than he did, but once I realized the disconnect, I knew I couldn't put it off.

"Wow, yeah, that's nuts." Shanna pats my thigh. "You'll be all right. These things happen."

"Great pep talk," I groan, falling back against my pillows.

"We could all tell you weren't going to end up together. He's a bit bland, isn't he?"

I don't like that anyone could think I was leading him on. I've got a fondness for Harvey, just maybe closer to friends than a romantic relationship.

"He's a very sweet guy," I say a little defensively.

"Very sweet. Yeah, of course." She laughs and her hazel eyes sparkle. "Ohmigod, let me tell you..." She swipes long dark-brown hair away from her face, leaning in conspiratorially. "Your neighbor is mowing the lawn shirtless. I drooled. Like a lot. Is my shirt stained?" She looks down, and I snort a laugh. She always knows just how to cheer me up. "I watched until it got creepy. Oh, by the way, Fitz is here. He needs to talk to you about something important, and I need to go back to perving on the guy next door."

My jaw falls.

Fitz is Shanna's older brother.

Technically, Fitzpatrick is both of their last names, but Fitz hates his first name with a passion. The guys he played sports with in high school gave him the nickname, and eventually, it spread to all of us using it.

My cheeks heat.

I've done my best to keep my small crush a secret over the years, and making a big deal about how I look seems like a great way to out that fact. He's a musician and extremely attractive. Having him see me in full pouty-omega mode doesn't seem like the way to put my best foot forward. Also, did she just say she was creeping on my neighbor?

My brain finally catches up and...

Gross.

I stick my tongue out, pretending to gag.

“Eww, all my neighbors are way too old for you.” One or two of the guys next door might be in their early forties, but I think the others are closer to forty-five.

“He’s still hot.” She giggles, rolling over and pushing herself off the bed. Good God, I wish I had that much grace. If I tried that, I would likely land on my face. “Major Daddy vibes. He told me to be careful walking on the sidewalk because the grass clippings could make it slippery.” She wiggles her eyebrows.

Well, I can see the appeal of Daddy vibes, but a twenty-year age difference is a bit much for me, personally. Ten sounds good. Maybe twelve to fourteen years, like the difference between my mom and dads.

“Are you going to make me stand in the hall forever?” Fitz calls out in his Scottish accent. His is slightly thicker than Shanna’s, likely because he was a few years older when they moved.

Colin Fitzpatrick and I met when his parents’ pack relocated to the US during my first year of high school. Shanna and I became quick friends, and Fitz was always around. We’re friends too, but our friendship is nowhere close to what I have with Shanna. “Really? Nothing? I’ve got coffee.”

Damn, I really love his accent, especially when the sounds run together.

Why do I do this to myself? He treats me like a bonus little sister. Which was nice in school, because he didn’t pick on me like a lot of the other popular kids did. I’m generally kind of embarrassing, even on the best of days, but they never left me behind.

My friendship with Shanna survived the mass exodus after high school graduation, and even a few years later, she and Fitz are still a huge part of my life.

“Come in,” I call out, trying to swat down random flyaway hairs.

Fitz saunters in with a tray of coffees and a bag under his arm. He’s wearing ripped jeans and an old-school band T-shirt with *Madness* on the front. Their mom is Persian. Both siblings took after her, with their hazel eyes and dark olive skin, but Fitz’s is lined with bright tattoos that fit him to perfection, while Shanna doesn’t have a single one.

I glance away.

If I start drooling over him, there will be no hiding my ridiculous crush. When it comes to showing interest in someone, I’m not quite as brave as Shanna. Maybe I could pretend I was salivating over the delectable breakfast treats.

I’ll bet that bag has pastries.

“Here, take yours with you,” Fitz says to his sister.

Shanna grabs a hot coffee and grins. “I’ll leave you to it.”

“To what?” I push up until I’m sitting against my headboard. Fitz hands me my iced coffee and starts digging in the bag. “Thank you.” I take it, spinning and setting it on my bedside table.

“I’ve got something even better.” He hands me a double chocolate muffin wrapped in wax paper. The top has a little dome, and it’s kind of adorable.

It’s also strange for him to come to my house. I’m used to running into him at Shanna’s, but why is he in my room?

I narrow my eyes. I’m starting to think he’s buttering me up for something.

“Oh, don’t give me that look. Enjoy your muffin.” He sets the empty carrier down on the bed and gives me a playful grin. “Are you truly that heartbroken over Harold?”

I laugh, shaking my head. “Harvey, but no. Mostly, I feel bad. It was clear he was upset.”

“That’s understandable, but he had to know it was coming. Really, the man’s name is Henry. You’re totally out of his

league.”

“Do you have room to talk, *Colin*?” I ask, unwrapping my muffin and shoving a crumbly chunk into my mouth.

“Those are fighting words.” His hands open and close while he wiggles his fingers. I’m pretty sure he’s threatening me with tickles.

“So, why are you really here?” I grab my coffee from the bedside table and take a swig, but scoot back in case he decides to risk his life and actually tickle me.

“I’ve been offered a fill-in contract. The tour leaves in a month.” He smiles, but it’s tense.

Fitz is excellent on several instruments, but his favorite is the guitar. He’s also got a killer singing voice. Basically, he’s amazingly talented.

I feel like a jerk for being bummed when he’s got such an amazing opportunity.

I know how long tours last. This means he’s going to be gone during my birthday, Thanksgiving, and probably Christmas. Our families always spend the holidays together.

“How long is this one?” I ask, picking at my muffin.

“Two months. The final show is New Year’s Day, and it’s in New York City.” He grins, stretching a hand over to pat my ankle. “But that’s what I need to talk to you about.”

“Okay.” I wonder if he’s asking me to apartment sit for him while he’s away. I guess that wouldn’t be so bad. I’m the only one of my siblings left at home, and sometimes, I feel incredibly guilty about that fact. My family is far too polite to straight up tell me they want an empty nest, but it’s lonely without my sisters.

“I’ll be filling in for Warrick from Northern Star,” Fitz says a little breathlessly.

My eyes widen. That’s a huge step up from the bands he’s filled in for the last couple of years. “Wow, congratulations. That’s amazing.”

“I haven’t had the chance to practice with them—who knows if we’ll vibe—but yeah, it’s a major opportunity. That brings me to why I’m here, harassing you.” He bites his full lower lip as his brow furrows. “They’re looking for a tour photographer. I may have told them I’ve got the perfect person.”

“What?” I squeak. The muffin slides off my legs, and we both make a grab for it.

Fitz’s hand wraps around mine, and he runs his thumb over my inner wrist as he stares straight into my eyes. “It’s a huge opportunity for you too. It’s a temporary position, but if it goes well, they made it clear there’s a chance for full-time employment.”

“But I’m an omega.” I grimace at the reminder that my clock is running down on that.

“The execs are aware. We’ll be together on the same bus. Other than when I’m on stage, I promise I won’t let you out of my sight.” He smiles as his hazel eyes sparkle like they always do when he’s excited about something.

I don’t know what to say. Being in close proximity to Fitz for two months makes my impulses ecstatic, but it’s also a little stressful.

“There’s no way I’ll fit in on tour.”

My eyes fall shut. I really wish I hadn’t said that.

Now he’ll feel like he has to reassure me, and that wasn’t my intention. Honestly, I was being generous. Not fitting in is the least of my concerns. I’m likely to get overstimulated and melt down in front of an audience. I thrive on routine, but I also have to find a way to financially support myself, and any job could be stressful until I get the hang of it.

Fitz drops my hand and moves to brush a wavy tangle of hair back from my face. “You’re a majorly talented photographer with a specialty in people and action shots. I showed them some of the pictures you took of me. They want your skills.”

My heart races. That's crazy. I'm not a prodigy or anything. I'm average, but I am working hard to get better. Not to mention, supporting myself with my photography is my dream job.

"Don't make me go on this trip alone. They've been a band for ten years. I'm already going to be on the outside. I need a friendly face. Someone I can hang out with. Please, Tinsel?"

Tinsel is the nickname he's called me since high school, and hearing him say it now makes my chest feel tight. He's always looked out for me. I know it's because of my friendship with Shanna, but that does sound terrible for him to have to deal with. I'm definitely not brave enough to go into a situation like that, but Fitz has always been outgoing and courageous.

For him to ask me to come along, it must be really important to him.

I think that means he trusts me.

The problem is, I don't know if I believe in myself. I've spent years learning how to take good pictures, but if I bomb this job, it could reflect poorly on Fitz.

"Can I think about it for a few days?" I ask, swallowing thickly.

"Yeah, you've got some time." His face breaks out into a devastatingly handsome grin as he runs his thumb over my cheek. "I'll owe you forever if you do this for me."

I scoff. It's an opportunity for me too. A chance to break into a long-term career. "I'll give it some thought and discuss it with my family."

"If you say no, I may have to kidnap you in the middle of the night. So, just keep that in mind." He laughs. "Plus, it can't hurt to get out of town and away from Herbert."

I roll my eyes.

I know Fitz knows his name is Harvey, but it's still cute that he won't say his name.

Chapter One

Five Weeks Later

Tinley

I clutch my camera to my chest to ensure it doesn't go flying, but my hands shake violently. The chaos unfolding backstage is unlike anything I've seen. Glancing down at my cardigan and jeans, it's clear that I'm woefully underdressed. Or maybe overdressed, depending on how you look at it.

There are fans and people everywhere.

My chest rises and falls rapidly as I try to breathe through the anxiety. I don't know what I'm doing here. There are so many bodies crammed into one small space and no friendly faces.

I'm fairly sure I'm on the verge of bolting.

My head shakes, and I tuck my hair behind my ear when it slides over my face.

Even if I wanted to escape, I don't have my car, nor do I know the way out of the venue. Warm bodies press closely against mine. The crowd is only growing.

I can't believe I let Fitz talk me into this. He's a solid guy, and he usually makes good choices.

Unlike the call to bring me along for this tour.

No, that's not fair.

Fitz has a killer opportunity. He pulled me along for the ride to help me boost my career.

My gaze falls to my camera, and panic blooms again. I'm supposed to be up there, getting pictures of the show, but the people backstage are very pushy. I got corralled so far back, I have no chance of getting the shots I'm responsible for.

"Excuse me," I say to the massive guys in front of me.

Neither responds or even glances at me. My stomach drops. I'm going to have to try to shove my way through. I never should have let everyone elbow me out of the way in the first place.

I take a deep breath and shimmy next to one of the women. It has to be easier than trying to get by the giant guys...

Right?

Yeah, definitely.

This is a nightmare.

I'm failing at my job on day one. It's going to reflect badly on Fitz, since he vouched for me.

The noise amps up as everyone gets even more energetic, and the commotion gets worse.

The huge guys in front of me take several large steps back. I try to do the same but end up stumbling over someone's foot.

I'm majorly overstimulated.

I'm autistic with a dual diagnosis of ADHD. Things that are easy for other people to manage sometimes feel extra tough for me.

Everyone behind me tries to move forward while the people in front are still moving back. I cradle my camera to my chest. It's the most expensive thing I own, and it was a graduation gift from my and Shanna's families.

I try to breathe through the claustrophobic feeling I'm hit with. The scent of so many sweaty bodies in one place doesn't help. I glance around, but there's no clear path or exit.

My heart pounds erratically as people shove against each other. There's a wall off to my right, and I unceremoniously toss myself toward it while the chaos continues.

Women shriek and several guys shout. Not bringing my earplugs was a big mistake, but I wanted to be able to hear Fitz's performance.

Someone bumps into me, causing my shoulder to slam into the wall. A throbbing ache radiates down my arm. Okay, the wall hurts worse than the frantic bodies. I take two shuffling steps away again.

I have no clue how to get myself out of this mess.

There's no way I'm qualified to be a photographer for the label. Fitz never should have used his connections to guarantee they'd hire me. My thoughts are spinning through the facts over and over again, but I'm frozen in place, completely unable to fix the problem.

Someone very heavy stomps on my left foot. I squeak, trying to pull the toe of my Converse free. Thank goodness I'm not in heels, like some of the women around me. I cradle my camera in my right hand, scooting back toward the wall, and finally, my shoe comes free. I bump against the paneling with more force than I'm expecting, and my camera nearly goes flying.

I throw myself forward, barely catching it, but I'm slammed in the gut by an elbow.

A whoosh of air flies out as tears spring to my eyes. Wow, I didn't know there was a chance this would turn into a mosh pit.

"Watch what *the fuck* you're doing," a low, gravelly tone commands. "No, don't back up. Didn't you hear what I said?"

The guy in front of me gets moved to the side by a set of tattooed hands. My eyes fly up, and there's a *really* large man who stands nearly a head taller than all the others. He has dark wavy hair to his shoulders, a bright pinkish-red scar on his cheek, and another marring the side of his neck. He's covered in tattoos from his fingers to his throat.

I recognize him instantly.

Warrick Malone, former lead singer of Northern Star. He's the reason Fitz is joining the band.

Warrick was injured during a horrible attack at a show that turned into a riot. As a result, he can no longer land lead vocals. At least, that's what I've heard through the press and the small amount Fitz told me about the situation.

"Are you okay?" Warrick stares straight at me as he speaks.

"Holy shit, it's War," a woman to my left squeals, slamming into my arm in her haste to make it to the rock star. "You're Warrick Malone."

"Yeah, and you don't have a lick of common courtesy," he growls, flicking his gaze to the woman. My chest pounds as my foot and arm ache, but neither hurt as badly as my pride. God, this is embarrassing. "Move." His gaze stays on the woman as he speaks, but it quickly slides back to me. Somehow, there are two more women that I think might be her friends, and they're all shoving things at the massive alpha. It seems like they want him to sign autographs, but they're obviously ignoring his tone. I can be pretty oblivious, but even I am picking up what he's putting down. If there was anywhere for me to go, besides climbing inside the wall, I'd definitely be moving. "Don't make me ask again."

The women awkwardly sidestep, muttering under their breath about how he's rude, *even for a rock star*.

"You can take out all that angry energy on my body," one of the women says, leaning in seductively.

I blink, still trying to figure out if this is normal for the rock world, or maybe I slipped and fell into an alternate dimension where it's normal for people to speak their intrusive thoughts aloud.

Yeah, he's ridiculously hot, but I normally try to keep mine to myself. People always look at me weird when I say random crap out loud.

"Me too," another chimes in. "Is Ram around here somewhere? Can we have a tour of the bus?"

Warrick grunts, tossing a thumb back toward the stage. "He'll be coming from that way. Best of luck."

“Let’s go,” the first lady squeals, bouncing around on her heels. Who knows how they plan to make it through the crowd, but they take off, anyway.

“Are you okay?” Warrick asks again. He’s standing directly in front of me, and he seems to take up all the space around us, keeping everyone else away.

“Y-Yeah,” I stutter, nodding dramatically. “I-I’m fine.”

“Clearly,” he scoffs, tossing up a forearm to prevent a couple guys from getting any closer. He still stares down at me, despite the chaos around us. I don’t even know how he knew they were there. His peripheral vision must work better than mine. “You’ve got a fucking badge. Where the hell is security?” His long hair bounces as his head swivels. “Come on. Let’s get you out of here. This venue doesn’t have their shit together.”

He’s a big guy.

Fitz is over six feet tall, but Warrick is taller, if I had to guess.

Fitz never has a problem making it through a crowd. I’m five-six barefoot, maybe five-seven with tennis shoes on.

Someone more substantially sized probably has a better chance of helping us get out of this crowd.

“O-Okay.” I swallow thickly, nodding my agreement. “T-That sounds good. Thank you.”

Warrick gently grips my arm, spinning me around until my back rests against his front. He wraps his forearm around my middle and growls at the people now in front of me. “Get the fuck out of my way.” I jump at the sound of his deep tone, and he holds me even tighter. A couple of guys with venue badges scurry out of the way as Warrick carefully moves me forward. I’m stepping all over his boots, but his hand on my stomach keeps me from falling forward. He leans low enough to speak directly into my ear. “You’re okay.”

I nod my agreement, letting him deal with everyone who tries to block our path. We finally make it to the back of the mass of people.

“Care to handle that clusterfuck?” Warrick raises an arm, gesturing to the craziness we just escaped.

“Shit,” one of them grunts, pushing off the wall. “Come on.” He waves at the guy next to him.

Warrick moves his large palm to my shoulder and walks us down the hall. It’s crazy how tender his touch is as he somehow manages to guide me from behind.

I came with Fitz, but I instantly recognize the room we walk into. It’s Northern Star’s greenroom. The traffic was terrible, and by the time we made it into the venue, they ushered Fitz away, and I followed like a confused puppy.

My cheeks heat at the thought. It’s the same thing some of our meaner classmates said to me when we were in school. Well, before he graduated. After that, it was just me and Shanna.

My hand shakes as I reposition my camera against my chest. I dart my gaze around, trying to find somewhere to hide.

Omega impulses are so bizarre.

I understand that I’m physically safe, but all my nose can seem to process is the scents of all those bodies we were just being shoved against. Once I get overstimulated, it can be really hard to calm down.

“Are you okay?” Warrick asks from behind me.

“You keep asking that.” I frown, shaking my head. “That was rude. I’m okay.” I spin around to face him fully, but my line of sight barely makes it halfway up his chest. He’s wearing a black T-shirt that shows off his heavily tattooed arms. His sweaty scent is heavy in the air.

My nose twitches as I subconsciously lean closer, attempting to catch more of his smell. It’s like chestnuts and macadamia nuts, maybe? Or something nutty and lightly smoky.

It smells delicious and strangely comforting.

An equally tattooed hand gently tilts my head up until I meet his dark eyes. “How did you end up in that mess?”

I raise a shaky hand, showing him my camera. “I was supposed to be taking pictures.”

“You’re with the press?” he asks as his eyebrows rise.

“N-No.” I shake my head, and his calloused fingers scratch over my skin. It’s not painful. Just slightly unexpected that he doesn’t immediately release me.

The door slams open, ramming right into Warrick’s back. He grunts, seeming mildly annoyed, but doesn’t move an inch. Which is surprising. If the door hit me with that kind of force, I would’ve gone flying.

“Tinley,” Fitz calls out. He’s still a fair distance away, based on the sound of his voice. The noise of the crowd doesn’t drown him out. I think that means he’s yelling.

A shaggy head of shoulder-length blond waves pops through the door. It’s Warrick’s fraternal twin brother, Ramsey.

“Damn, man, back your big ass up.” Ramsey’s deep blue eyes sparkle as he gives his brother an expectant look.

Warrick carefully nudges me forward.

“We lost some chick, and Fitz is officially losing his shit over it.” Ramsey steps around his brother and does a double take when he spots me. “Holy fuck, we found you.”

“Yep.” I nod awkwardly, trying to hold back the grimace that feels like it’s crossing my face.

This is a mess.

“Yo, she’s in here,” Ramsey calls out through the still-open door. “Shit, man. Calm down, she’s fine.”

“Tinsel!” Fitz shoves Ramsey out of the way as he stomps into the room.

I’m so overstimulated and overwhelmed that seeing a familiar face is too much.

I whine, tossing myself into his sweaty chest as soon as he’s within reach. Whining is an embarrassing sound that omegas only make when we’re extremely distressed or begging.

My face kind of wallows around his shirt, looking for where his scent is strongest. “I didn’t get any pictures. Well, I got a few, but then everyone was pushing and shoving and...” I gasp in a breath as my anxiety makes everything seem more difficult to manage.

“You’re all right.” Fitz’s accent is especially thick, making his words run together. He nuzzles his cheek to mine, lifting me and wrapping me around his front in one move. I like it much better. He always feels like safety. Not that we cuddle like this a lot, but he’s always been good at helping defuse the rumble stage before I get to a full-on meltdown.

Images file through my mind of all the people bumping and pushing. It makes a shiver run down my spine. I don’t like to be touched by people I don’t know. The way Fitz runs his hand down my back doesn’t count.

“Careful of the camera.” Warrick reaches between us, grabbing it.

“What the hell happened?” Fitz glances between me and Warrick.

I turn farther into his chest, so I don’t have to answer.

“If you’re going to drag an omega around with you on tour, then do the decent thing and get her some goddamn security,” Warrick growls, setting my camera down on one of the chairs before striding out on long legs.

Ramsey shrugs, spinning to face us as the door slams. “Hey, nice to meet you. I’m Ram.” He holds out a hand. “Fitz has told me all about you,” he says, giving Fitz a look I don’t know how to decipher.

“Tinley.” I pull my arm free to shake Ramsey’s hand, but only because it would be rude not to. I shudder out a breath. “I’m sorry. It was crazy out there. I didn’t mean for it to become a whole big thing.” My head falls to rest against Fitz’s shoulder as he palms the back of my head.

“We’ll handle it for next time,” Ramsey says, flashing a smile filled with perfect white teeth. “Never a dull moment.”

He bumps his shoulder against Fitz's and heads out the same way Warrick did.

Fitz stomps over to the couch, tossing himself down on it and bringing me to rest over his lap. He smells like rich coffee. I breathe in deep hits of it as my shoulders slump.

"I'm really sorry," I whisper, refusing to meet his eyes. "It's your first show with your new band and—"

"Enough," Fitz says. "You didn't do anything wrong. There were some issues with security and them not having enough guys to provide decent coverage." His skin is warm as his hand wraps around the side and back of my neck simultaneously. His fingers run through the hair at the base of my skull. It's normally an excellent way to calm me down, but I'm still frazzled. The way his forearm of bright tattoos bulges draws my attention. His veins poke out, likely from the workout of playing his guitar during the show. "Tell me what's going on in your head. If you want me to hire security..."

My head shakes. That would cost a lot of money. "I think we both know I'm not cut out for this," I whisper, burying my face in his shoulder. "I panicked. I always panic when there are crowds."

"You're one of the most talented photographers I've ever seen. Don't let those thoughts sabotage you." He cuddles his sweaty cheek to the top of my head. "If you want to hear about freaking out—I hard-core panicked. I tossed my guitar at some guy, who may or may not work here, and started scouring the entire backstage area." He squeezes my hip. "Remember our deal?"

I snort, cuddling deeper into his shirt. He made a promise to me in ninth grade that, should I ever do anything truly embarrassing, he would see my embarrassment and raise it so that he would be the one everyone was talking about.

"Thank you."

"Nah, don't thank me. I need you to explain why Warrick's scent is all over you."

“Everyone was pushing and shoving. I got moved back from the stage. When you guys exited, the crowd got a little crazy.” I sigh. “I tried to find a path away from everyone. I ended up jammed against a wall, and then Warrick was there. It was really kind of him to step in.”

“Yeah, he’s a helpful guy. Sounds just like him.”

“I hate that I missed most of your first performance. How was it?” I ask to change the subject. He seems kind of tense, but I’m sure some of that’s because he’s still hyped up from being on stage.

“The crowd had good energy, but it’s a pain in the ass with two lead guitarists.” He runs his hand up and down my spine. “It’s only to ride out this fill-in contract.”

Donovan Lee is one of the owners of Ruined Records. He bonded with Fitz’s mom earlier this year. It’s kind of a weird situation. They met through the music industry, since Fitz’s dads used to be pretty well-known in the UK back in the day, but it’s still strange to add an alpha to a pack so late in life.

I mean, they aren’t ancient or anything, but they are all in their late forties, and Donovan joined an already-established pack.

It’s how Fitz started doing fill-in work for some of the bands on the Ruined Records label. Back when I was taking photography classes, he was flying across the country to do shows with bands who needed a last-minute replacement.

I don’t like thinking about all those chances he had to hook up with random groupies.

I grunt, snuggling deeper into his sweaty chest. He’s never dated that I’ve seen, and delusionally, I’d like to keep it that way. Sometimes my system gets confused and thinks of him like he’s *my* alpha, even though my brain knows better.

“They’re lucky to have you.” I tilt my head, giving him a reassuring smile.

“And we’re lucky to have you and your amazing photography skills.” He bends low, kissing my forehead, and

my stomach bubbles with butterflies that feel exceptionally dangerous.

That brain-body disconnect is such a pain in the ass sometimes.

Chapter Two

Warrick

“What the fuck is Jamen thinking?” I growl, pacing the gravel parking lot.

“That you’re under contract for at least a few more months?” Gavin says with a laugh.

Jamen Jacobs is the main owner of Ruined Records. He’s also an alpha. He should know better than to put an unbonded omega on a bus full of alphas.

I spin around, glaring at our tour manager. It’s difficult to remind myself I normally don’t hate the guy. Gavin is a damn good manager, and he visited me every day while I was in the hospital recuperating.

My hands fist at my sides. I hate thinking about the attack. It was a cheap shot, or several, but they successfully ended my career as a vocal artist.

I’ve spent the last few months doing vocal training twice a week. It didn’t do shit to get me back to where I’m supposed to be.

It’s been almost a year and a half since that fucking riot, but my physical scars are still wicked to look at, and my voice will never be the same.

Not that I particularly care.

Ten years in the industry is more than enough. I wasn’t fully done with it before being stabbed, but I’ve realized since then that life is short. All the money in the world won’t mean shit if I never get to enjoy my life.

I've never been as carefree as my bandmates, or even Ramsey. Not that my twin brother doesn't like to party and enjoy the benefits that come with our level of fame, but it hasn't gone to his head the way it has with the others.

Fucking my way through countless faceless bodies isn't my idea of a good time. Being on the road doesn't lead to healthy relationships, and some of my proclivities require privacy and trust. Cramming five people into a tour bus doesn't allow for an ounce of the former.

Which brings me back to my initial sentiments.

"A fucking unbonded omega on a bus with five alphas?" I growl, taking a step toward Gavin. "It's a disaster in the makings."

"Six," he corrects, reminding me that Fitzpatrick is here to replace me. "But that's why we brought in a second bus."

I scoff. "The label is really going all out to accommodate that nepo baby, huh?" My head shakes. Even with the level of fame we've achieved, they've always stuffed us into one bus.

Fitz is now related to one of the owners of the label. I'm pretty sure that says it all. I half liked the guy before this shit.

He should know better!

You don't bring anyone that soft on tour. It's asking for trouble. Add in her designation, and it makes this a monumental shit show waiting to happen.

"One bus was crammed full with just the five of you," Gavin says calmly. "We're trying to make this as easy as possible. And believe it or not, I heard you loud and clear about Carter."

Carter is our rhythm guitarist. He also does some of the backup vocals with Ramsey and Jack. The main problem is fame has twisted him over the last couple years. He's got more addictions than any of us will ever know, but one of the darker ones came out when I realized he was stealing my pain pills after I finally made it back to living with the band following my injury.

The only positive thing that came from the disaster with Carter is I'm a spiteful son of a bitch. I quit the meds cold turkey to ensure I cut off his supply. I live on a regimen of ibuprofen nowadays.

Over a year later, I'm still paying the consequences with permanent nerve damage. I was trying to do the right thing, and ultimately, the woman I stepped in to save was able to escape.

I don't regret intervening, but I do wish I'd been better prepared. I've spent a lot of our downtime practicing MMA and self-defense. Much to my doctor's dismay. The scar and tissue damage on my neck needed more time to heal before so much physical exertion, but I couldn't put it off.

Mentally, that would have left me in a bad place. I had to know I'd never walk into a situation like that unprepared again.

Gavin crosses his arms over his chest. "We're going to split the band between the buses."

"I don't want Carter anywhere near her." I'm not fucking around, either. The more strung out he gets, the more questionable his behavior becomes, but women still love him. I've made Gavin and the label aware of the things I've seen, but I get the feeling they're biding their time until this contract runs out. "What the fuck is she even doing here?"

"That's complicated," Gavin says. "But the decision came from the top. Jamen said it's a personal favor to Donovan. In the last twenty-five years, Donovan has asked for less than a handful of concessions. That means she's not going anywhere. Her name is Tinley Rhodes, and she's a damn good photographer. I've seen her portfolio. She's here to document the mini tour."

"Ah, something else for them to market, in case we don't come back." I sigh, shaking my head at the dark sky. It's the middle of the night, but due to the streetlamps and city lights, you can't see a single star.

I don't know exactly when I got so bitter.

“Hell of a way for you to introduce yourself,” Ramsey says, jogging up to join the conversation. “What the fuck, bro? She was terrified, and you were a total dick.”

“She was getting slammed around backstage when I came across her. She had every right to be scared. What the fuck is Fitzpatrick thinking? She’s an unbonded omega.” I give Ramsey a look that indicates he should know what I’m saying.

Her scent is nothing I’ve ever experienced. It’s sweet like pumpkin pie with a side of vanilla ice cream.

I barely stifle the growl that wants to escape. She’s delectable, and it’s not just her smell that I can’t seem to shake from my nostrils. It’s the big blue eyes and the way she instantly let me take the lead to keep her safe.

Fuck, this is why omegas are so dangerous.

Alpha impulses have one goal in life—find and protect our omega. There’s some breeding and claiming in there too, but I don’t let myself focus on that. She might not be my omega, but my instincts wouldn’t let me walk away without intervening, and that was *before* I realized her designation.

“Jack, Carter, and Xavier are on the other bus. They can keep the one that’s a pigsty. Ramsey, Fitz, the omega, and I will be on the new bus.” I glance between Gavin and Ramsey, but neither says a word. We’ve only been on the first bus long enough for the drive from New York to Chicago to start the tour, but it’s already trashed. “I still don’t think it’s smart to bring an unbonded omega on tour.”

“You’ll be away from her before you know it. It’s not even a standard-length tour,” Gavin says. “Aren’t the two of you supposed to be at the meet and greet?”

“Fuck,” I groan. I hate this shit. Half the time, the groupies can’t decide if they want to fuck me because I used to be able to sing, or if they want to say they screwed the giant, scarred alpha and took a walk on the dangerous side.

“You best get to it,” Gavin says, clapping me on the shoulder. “I’ll have the team start moving your things to the new bus.”

“I’m serious, man. Keep her the fuck away from Carter and vice versa.” I stare directly into Gavin’s eyes, so he understands I’m not playing about that.

“We’ll all keep an eye on her,” Ram assures me.

I grunt, but it’s better than nothing.

If you’ve done one meet and greet, you’ve done them all. You get a variety of faces, from middle-aged housewives with the money to drop on an hour-long experience, to college guys and twenty-somethings with dreams of their own.

Finally, you get a shit ton of available women. Not that the housewives don’t occasionally act like they are, but that’s an entirely different story.

Carter, Xavier, and Jack are huddled on one couch with a solid two-to-one ratio of women trying to fit in their laps.

Ramsey is off to the side, signing his sticks for some guys who seem to like our music.

Fitz is chatting with a couple of chicks in short skirts and even smaller tops.

I roll my eyes, focusing on the poor photographer he dragged along for the ride. Maybe they are just friends, but from the way she’s focusing on anything but Fitz, I’ve got my doubts.

I wonder if she’s got any actual talent, or if she got the job through Fitz’s connections. It could go either way, despite what Gavin said.

Tinley is obviously out of her depth. She sidesteps a couple of women who are waiting for their chance to pounce. The second any of those women all over Carter, Xavier, or Jack get up to use the bathroom, or grab another drink, the ones in waiting will make their move. I’ve seen it play out one too many times.

I get it. It's a fun story for them to tell their friends, but I guess I'm getting bored in my old age. This shit didn't appeal to me when I was in my early twenties, and it sure doesn't do a goddamn thing for me now that I'm almost into my thirties.

One of the women elbows Tinley, completely ignoring that she's at fault, and glares at our new photographer for having the audacity to be in her way.

I roll my jaw from side to side and hold myself back from interfering.

It's not my place. I'm already considered a dick, even by industry standards. The last thing I need is to rip that chick a new asshole in front of an audience, but come on. What happened to basic human decency?

These things really lower my opinion of humankind.

My eyes cut to Fitz. He's apologizing and trying to disengage from the women he's speaking to. He immediately beelines for Tinley, and I exhale heavily. He's going to have his hands full. It'll be practically impossible to be there for her and keep the fans happy. If he's constantly focusing on his girlfriend, the masses will notice, and he'll gain a reputation for being an asshole.

The label wants us to be attainable and accessible to perpetuate the dream that any lucky fan can land a rock star.

I never put any real energy into settling down for a reason.

This business ruins relationships.

Xavier starts grunting, and my eyes flick to the side. Fucking lovely. It's reached the part of the night when the orgy starts.

I scoff, pushing myself off the couch.

Fitz guides Tinley toward the exit, but her eyes keep flying back to the show the guys are now putting on. It's no great wonder why they make these things twenty-one and up.

It's definitely not child friendly.

I snort, nodding at Ramsey to let him know I'm out.

I follow Fitz as he wraps an arm around the omega.

“Yeah, it’s kind of always like that.” He shrugs, but it’s clear he’s on edge by the fake nonchalance in his tone. I’ve noticed his accent only really shines through when he’s anxious or excited. It makes all of his words run together.

“I didn’t mind,” she says, tilting her head to look up at him. “But I guess that’s probably not the kind of thing the label wants documented.”

I laugh, swiping a hand over my face. No, probably not. That’s the kind of shit they end up having to buy to squash when someone gets a video they shouldn’t have.

Tinley jolts, turning to face me as they head down the hallway toward the buses. “Thank you for the save earlier.” She gives me a timid smile. “I promise to try not to need any more rescues.”

Fuck, she’s entirely too naive to be anywhere near a Northern Star tour. She’s triggered my impulses too strongly to back down now.

I give her a nod and mentally remind myself to plan my shows around making sure she doesn’t cross paths with Carter, *ever*, under any circumstances.

Or Xavier.

Or Jack.

Or half of our fans.

So yeah, totally fucking feasible.

Chapter Three

Tinley

The bus is massive. I've never seen anything like it, but it still manages to feel cramped with four of us. There's a large bedroom at the back of the bus, and although they all make it clear they're fine with me taking it, I still opt for one of the four bunks.

I'm supposed to be essentially invisible on this tour. Take pictures, splice together some interview clips and videos, provide it all to their social media manager weekly, and job complete.

At the meet and greet, I overheard the guys from the other bus saying they use their bedroom as the groupie hookup spot. I probably shouldn't take it up, just in case one of the guys wants to use it.

Fitz helped me get settled in my bunk last night before the buses took off.

We're on one side of the hallway, and Ramsey and Warrick are on the other. For being fraternal twins, their personalities couldn't be any more different. Their facial features and body types are eerily similar. They both have chiseled jaws, strong noses, and broad shoulders. But even from the little I've seen, it's easy to tell Warrick is serious and stoic. He's also the older of the two, if the article I read a few years ago was accurate.

Ramsey is playful and more energetic. He reminds me of a surfer, with the long blond hair and dude-bro vibe, but he's been more than welcoming. He's the easiest one of Northern

Star to be around, but maybe that's because he spent a few minutes last night making sure to reintroduce himself.

Warrick comes off as super intense. Combine that with how I made a fool of myself, and I kind of wish we could have ended up on different buses.

With a groan, I roll over in my bunk.

I replayed every nuance of our interaction over and over again last night. My instincts are a little obsessed with how growly and protective the whole thing seemed. I'm equally embarrassed, but what's new?

I'm awkward by nature.

Thankfully, I only have to survive with these guys for two months. I can make it through two months of anything for what they're paying me.

I have stage fright over peeing on the bus, at least when anyone else is on it. Unless my ears failed me, I think the guys headed out a while ago. I felt my bed shake as their voices followed them down the stairs. The television is on in the living room, and hopefully that will help cover the sound. I remember traveling with my grandparents in their RV when I was younger. There was no privacy at all.

It feels like now is my chance. My overfull bladder agrees it can't be put off any longer.

I slide the curtain back and eye the distance to the floor. The top bunks have a slightly shallower height compared to the bottom ones. Being the smallest, I figured it wasn't a bad plan to take the top.

Fitz tried to talk me out of it, and the reason why suddenly makes a lot more sense. I needed a helpful boost into my bed last night, and the ground seems ages away.

My thighs clench.

I don't have any time to waste.

I roll over, planning to toss a leg down, but somehow, I get all tangled up in my fuzzy blanket. I squeal, frantically trying to grab on to anything solid. My pillows go flying as I lose the

battle, rolling toward the ground. My arms fly out in front of me, but a warm, very nude chest collides with my face.

“Oh, fuck.” Ramsey slides around under me. His back hits the carpeted floor of the hallway as he pulls me down on top of him. I have no idea how it logistically happens, but I’m straddling his towel-covered pelvis, and my face ends up plastered to his muscular chest. “That was close, shortcake.” He gives me an easy grin as I push up, using his shoulders as leverage. “You almost face-planted. It wouldn’t have felt great from that height.”

I don’t know where the nickname *shortcake* came from, since my scent is more pumpkin-tinged. If we were giving each other nicknames based on scents, I’d probably call him something like *gingerbread* or *molasses*. My head tilts as I realize I’m still all up on him.

“I am so sorry.” My head shakes, and my thighs involuntarily clench with the reminder that my bladder is dangerously full. “I really have to use the restroom, and it’s an emergency.”

“Damn.” Ramsey sits up and ends up lifting me until we’re both standing. I blink in pure confusion at how he managed that move with the added weight of my hundred-and-sixty-pound frame. I can’t do a crunch with my own body weight, let alone someone else’s. “I like leisurely showers. If it’s ever an emergency, just knock and come on in.” He slides to the side, nodding to the open door to the bathroom.

I nearly scoff. Like that’ll ever happen. I am not using the restroom while a rock star showers a couple of feet away.

“Sorry. Thank you,” I say as my hands fly to my face. His towel has fallen so low on his hips that the top of his pubic hair is visible. My face flames as I shove myself inside the spacious bathroom and lock the door.

My back falls against it as I stare at the ceiling.

Please tell me that didn’t just happen.

Watching Northern Star practice is the highlight of my day. I've loved their music for years, but it's weird hearing Fitz slay the vocals that usually come from Warrick. His voice is similar, but he's got a different gravel to his tone. It's also a little intimidating to see how easily he falls into the role of tattooed lead singer.

Fitz is gorgeous.

It's kind of impossible to miss.

His muscles flex, bulging as he bounces around the stage. Watching him sling the mic around before leaning toward the non-existent audience, I see an entirely different side of him. It's like he's made for the stage.

We really are polar opposites. It's never been more apparent to me than at this very moment. I think I've managed to keep my crush on Fitz a secret over the years. I'm sure every woman who's ever seen him play has had similar thoughts.

He's not just sexy.

He has killer talent.

It's not that I don't think I'm pretty. I am. I get comments a lot that I'm cute or adorable. It's just never words like gorgeous, smoking hot, or a total bombshell.

I blow out a breath and remind myself I'm here for the opportunity to build a solid career, not to drool over my best friend's older brother.

I push myself out of my chair, grab my camera, and get back to work.

We have a late lunch that's delivered to the venue, but I pick at it. It's hard to relax when there have been so many changes in

the last twenty-four hours.

Fitz eats with me, which I appreciate, but he has to head back to practice with the guys as soon as we're done.

I don't know all the details, but he spent a month with the band before the tour took off. It's complicated because both Warrick and Fitz play lead guitar. It leaves them with three guitarists. I can't hear a problem, but I do know there's a lot of discussion about who should be doing which part of each song.

The entire stage seems a little crowded with the six of them, now that I think about it. I've taken some incredible pictures during the last few hours. I'm considering that a tiny win. Then again, there have been no fans to get in the way of collecting the good shots. The guys aren't as animated as when they're in front of an audience, but the label asked for a variety of pictures.

So, I'm going to make sure I get them.

The others are still playing, but my eyes widen as Warrick pulls off his instrument. He hands it off to one of the helpers and makes his way to the table I'm at before taking a seat.

The next song starts as Warrick stretches in his chair. His eyes are on my leftovers.

I frown, trying to decide if it's weird to offer them to him. They served us what seemed like a ton of food for me, but he is a big guy.

Maybe he's still hungry after all that practicing.

He tosses an arm over the back of my chair and leans close. The music is so loud that I probably wouldn't be able to hear him otherwise. His smoky, nutty scent floods my senses, and I run my hand over my dress to keep from trying to sniff out where it's strongest.

"You didn't touch your fruit or the salad," he says in his low, gravelly tone. "And barely nibbled at your sandwich."

"If you're still hungry, you're more than welcome to it," I say, bouncing in my seat. It's been tough sitting in one spot for

hours at a time. Tomorrow, I'll bring my computer, so I can edit while they practice.

"I'm good." He nods to the box of food on the table. "Do you have allergies to any foods?"

"No."

"Things you don't like?"

"No, I'm just trying to eat light, since I don't know what's coming next." My gaze falls to my lap. Why did I say that? I don't really handle stress or change all that well. If I eat too much when I'm nervous, then I'll end up with an upset stomach.

Which is not something you admit to the gorgeous, growly rock star, I remind myself.

"You'll get the hang of it. It takes a little time, but once you do, you'll see it's always the same. Days are spent practicing and testing the acoustics of the venue, afternoons are free unless we've got press to do, evening shows, and then hitting the bus to travel all night before we do it all over again." The warm heat of his breath fans over my neck as he speaks close to my ear. Wow, he is *really* close. My leg shakes under the table, and a large hand lands on it, giving it a reassuring squeeze. I stare at the contact in shock. "Really, don't let it intimidate you. It's not all that glamorous once you do it for long enough."

Glamorous? It sounds terrible.

My impulses thrive on having a safe place to retreat to.

I've always been a homebody. I like comfortable pajamas and having a home base where I can regroup after a long day.

Routine helps me feel safe.

I tricked myself into being optimistic about this tour because it's a great opportunity to get my foot in the door as a photographer for Ruined Records. But it's also hard to imagine bouncing all around the country and never staying in one place.

It's complicated because, even as an omega, I still have to make a living.

My family pack helped pay for college, and they've made it clear they aren't kicking me out of my childhood home, but it's also embarrassing that I've never lived on my own.

Luckily, I had most of my basic core educational college classes done before graduating high school. I love my family. Continuing to take advantage of their kindness seems like a crappy way to repay all they've done for me.

I don't come from a wealthy pack, like Fitz and Shanna. I only attended the same high school they did because I got a scholarship.

My two older sisters had the same opportunity, and they ended up leaving high school practically bonded. Okay, that's an exaggeration, but they did end up sticking with the same pack, long-term.

It's ridiculous to feel left out, considering my age, but I haven't even had my first heat yet. I'm entering the danger zone of never presenting, despite my designation.

Over ninety-eight percent of omegas have their first heat prior to turning twenty-one.

My scent has always made it clear that I'm an omega. Physically, I have the anatomy necessary to take a knot, but what alpha would want to bond with an omega who doesn't have a heat cycle?

None, that's who.

It's a terrifying prospect, because I've always had the impulses that define my designation. I want a family and a pack full of alphas to protect, love, and cherish me. I'll gladly do the same in return.

Even during college, I wasn't bombarded with men trying to date me. There were a few, but no alphas. My grandma lied when she swore I'd be beating them off with a stick when I got older. I snort at the thought.

“After we leave here, we’ll find Karla,” Warrick says against the shell of my ear. “She’s the nutritionist who runs food services for the tour. She’ll be able to find you options that you like.”

My head shakes, and my cheek brushes against his mouth. He’s warm, and the contact is surprising.

“No, that’s okay. I’m not picky. Truly, I’m not.” I bite my lip to keep more rambling from escaping. I’ll say the same thing in fifteen different ways if I’m not careful.

“You’d be surprised how quickly being on the road can take a toll on your body,” Warrick says. “If you’re not eating regular healthy meals, it’ll zap your energy before you know it.” He stretches back, giving me a stern look. “It’s especially important because you’re an omega. You can’t expect to stockpile nutrients for your heat if you’re just eating junk or, even worse, barely eating at all.”

My stomach drops, but I nod to let him know I hear what he’s saying. I’m not on suppressants, and I haven’t had one yet.

Little does he know, there’s a chance I never will.

There’s no way he could understand how that comment cuts a little too close to home, so I give him a polite smile and focus back on the guys’ practice.

Chapter Four

Ramsey

Half the time, I don't know why we even bother trying to make a cohesive unit out of the six of us. The sad part is that it doesn't have much to do with adding Fitz to the mix. It has a whole lot to do with the fact we're all over Carter's bullshit.

Well, except for Xavier and Jack. They don't seem to mind as much. Those two are slightly more tolerable, but there's a clear divide, and I'm not talking about between the buses.

The fans are rabid tonight. It might be because we didn't tour last year, or maybe they can tell it's unlikely we'll be coming back again.

We're the headliner, but we've got three other bands opening for us. The fans are good and wasted by the time we take the stage. Not that it's unusual, but they're even more fanatical about getting as close as possible, and every meet and greet is sold out.

Jack dragged some poor chick with him to whatever fucking city we're in tonight.

I check the cheat sheet by my feet.

Oh yeah, we're in Indianapolis. We've got another show here tomorrow night.

Huh, I wonder how that woman plans to get back to Chicago.

It's not my problem, but hopefully my bandmate has the decency to make sure she has cab money before kicking her

off the bus once he gets bored.

Our manager, Gavin, set whatever-her-name-is up with Tinley in the front row. I like that she's not out there alone.

I've kept a close eye on Tinley during our entire set, and I'm not the only one. She is one-hundred-percent my brother's type.

War is going to need someone who feels comfortable letting him take the lead. I'm not sure if the quirky little omega is on board with that, but something inside me says she is. She's got big blue eyes and wavy dark brown hair that falls to her ass when she's sitting. She bounces around in her seat, dancing to the music. She spent a while earlier with her giant camera plastered to her face.

She has this undeniable sweet vibe that has me intrigued. I catch Tinley's stare as I land my sticks and give her a wink. She gives a soft smile that makes me chuckle. It's wild because, when we're alone, she's always kind of hyper, but watching us play, she's actually chill.

Maybe Warrick has rubbed off on me, but I'm getting tired of the energy of the industry. It was killer to be considered a sex symbol for a while, but it got old.

Somewhere around the time War almost died, I realized exactly how gross it feels that women don't really want me. They want to fuck a rock star, and swapping me out for Carter, or hell, even Fitz, wouldn't matter. I'm not sure how it took me so long to recognize the truth of it, but it's not a great feeling now that I have.

Not that I've got any room to talk; Northern Star has set us up for life. We could retire at the end of this tour and live a more than decent lifestyle without having to work again.

I'd likely go completely fucking insane from boredom, but it could be done.

If I'm ever going to settle down, it'll have to be with someone I genuinely like. That's a big *no thank you* to ending up with someone who only wants me because of my fame. Getting involved with anyone at this point in my life is

dangerous—or it has been for the last ten years—but the end is in sight.

I don't see War signing another contract just to play. He's used to landing vocals and being the star of the show, but more than that, I know his injury was a wake-up call of his own.

I don't see myself signing a contract without my brother.

Fitz sings the hell out of the last few verses of the song, and he almost manages to cover for how blitzed Carter is. I'm not supposed to back up lead on this song, but I still finish out the last few lines, trying to cover for how slurred Carter sounds.

We finish the extro, and my eyes fly to Tinley. Gavin is out on the floor, ushering her and Jack's chick toward the backstage area. Well, thank fuck for that. Someone managed to do their job correctly.

The after-show routine goes as expected. I'm fairly sure Carter is on the verge of passing out. Both War and I took our concerns to the tour manager long before we ever got back on the road for this go-round. I have a feeling it's why we're only on a two-month tour instead of three.

I roll my eyes and try to focus long enough to sign the memorabilia being shoved at me, but I'll be damned if my line of sight doesn't search out our newly acquired photographer.

I do a double take when I spot her curled up in one of the club chairs in the corner. She's got her camera wrapped up in her arm, and she's passed out cold, which is kind of impressive, considering how fucking loud it is in here.

"Ram, oh my god! I am your biggest fan," a female voice says as a red dress appears in my line of sight.

"We both are," another woman says, stepping up next to the first.

I give them a megawatt grin. “That’s awesome. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Can you take us on a tour of Northern Star’s bus?” the one on the right asks.

“Carter and Xavier are around here somewhere. They might be up for a tour.” I yank the black marker out of my back pocket as they giggle. “Can I sign something for you?”

The one on the left yanks her dress so low I can see nipple and nods to her boobs. “Could you just...” She laughs. “Right here.”

“Of course.” I sign her and move on to the next, and before I’m done, there are three more women. That signature would probably be worth more on a T-shirt or a CD, but it makes them happy, so I keep my mouth shut. A couple of frat guys see the tits and make their way over.

I continue signing my way through the random shit people shove at me but start meandering in Tinley’s direction. Sleeping in that position can’t be comfortable, but more than that, I need to double check if she’s okay. Sleeping through this kind of chaos seems weird.

Fitz steps into my path when I’m only a few feet away from Tinley. “I need to keep my eyes on her.”

I shove my hands in my pockets as I check out what Xavier and the others are up to. The women I was talking to took my advice. “From the looks of it, it’s about to get loud in here.”

“Fuck,” Fitz growls, shaking his head. “I never should have brought her with me.”

“It’s kind of late to come to that realization.”

“I’ve got to finish up this interview.” He swipes a hand over his face, looking seriously miserable.

“I’ll take her to the bus and hang out,” I offer, shrugging. “She’s probably going to have a hell of a crick in her neck tomorrow if she’s not careful.”

“You won’t leave her?” Fitz asks, but his eyes are still on the sleeping beauty.

“Nah, I’m beat anyway.”

“Thank you. Make sure she uses the restroom before bed. Just from experience, she will fight you and swear she doesn’t need to go.” He laughs, smiling authentically for the first time since we got off stage.

I laugh. That would be right up War’s alley. He’s a caregiver and protector through and through, but I keep that to myself. It’s also something one of my dads would say to the other when passing off shifts of looking after my mom, which is so totally random that I take a step back.

I’m just helping a bandmate look out for his woman. Nothing more and nothing less.

“I’ll do what I can. We’ll see you back there whenever you can escape.” I clap him on the back and head over to Tinley. I maneuver her camera from under her arm without waking her and toss the strap over my shoulder before bending down to pick her up.

“Fitz?” she mumbles sleepily.

“Nah, shortcake. It’s Ram,” I say in a soft tone, which is ridiculous. Our music plays through the speakers to keep everyone hyped up. If she can sleep through the insanity around us, then my voice isn’t going to startle her.

“Oh.” Her eyes close and she snuggles into my chest. My nostrils flare as I breathe in vanilla and pumpkin pie. Her scent sure is potent.

I head for the exit as I get faint hits of something light and fruity. Maybe strawberries?

It’s hard to tell.

It’s definitely not part of her natural scent. If it’s a perfume or body spray, then she should switch, because it clashes with her normal smell.

She wiggles around. I hold her tighter in case she fell back to sleep, but her small fingers brush over my chest as I walk.

I grin, shaking my head.

Omegas are dangerous for unbonded alphas to be around. I've heard it my entire life, but you'll never convince me this little omega is a threat to anything.

"There you are." I spot War on the couch as I take the stairs to the bus as quietly as possible. He's stretched out across the sofa with an ice pack on his neck and shoulder. Fucking hell, I was hoping the nerve pain was getting better. He's so damn stubborn. He'd rather suffer through than take any of the meds the doctor prescribes.

"What the *fuck* happened?" He tosses the ice pack aside, shoving himself off the couch.

"She's fine. She fell asleep." I keep my voice low in an attempt to remind him not to be a dick.

War stomps over and leans close, taking a deep hit of her scent. I frown like an old man when he gets close to her mouth and does it again.

"She's been drinking?" he growls, glaring at me like I'm the one who gave her the alcohol. Which I didn't, but it would explain why her scent is so off.

"Fuck if I know," I grunt, heading for the bunks. I take a step back when I remember she almost tumbled out of the top bunk while completely sober. Yeah, that's not happening on my watch. I glance over to my bunk, but it's also on top.

"We made it to the bus." Tinley rubs at her eyes like a sleepy kitten.

"We did," I agree, grinning at the way she squints. She's kind of precious.

"How old are you, Tinley?" War asks.

"I'll be twenty-one soon. My birthday is just before Thanksgiving. I'm a Scorpio." She laughs, rubbing her forehead. "Those drinks were way stronger than I thought.

Ava... Wait, do you know Ava? She's the woman from Chicago. She's nice. She'll be graduating this year as an accountant." She glances between us, like any of that is going to ring a bell. "Anyway, she said the drinks were kind of weak, but don't know if I agree."

War growls, spinning around like he's about to make a scene. My forearm keeps Tinley cradled to my chest, which makes my hand tighten on her ass to keep her steady as I grab for War with the other.

I catch the back of his T-shirt, yanking him back.

"Stop," I bark.

"Ahh," Tinley squeaks, jolting in my arms. "Where did that come from?" She slaps my chest. "Inside voice, Sir Malone."

"Sorry, shortcake." My head tilts down to study her goofy grin as War turns back to face us. He prowls closer, and I fight the ridiculous impulse to turn away to protect her from whatever wrath is about to come from my twin.

"Do you know what the legal drinking age is in our country?" he asks like he wasn't blitzed with me before we even hit eighteen.

"I do," she says, blinking owlshly. "But I was really thirsty. The waitress forgot my water twice and..." Her lip pokes out as she pouts. "I wasn't trying to get drunk or anything." She wiggles her legs, patting my shoulder for me to let her down. "I'm not wasted. It was a long day. I'm just sleepy."

"I'll bet." I chuckle, holding on to her arms as I set her on her feet.

"I'm sure that has something to do with the alcohol," War mutters.

"I'm fine." Her chin tilts in the air defiantly, and War lights up with a look I haven't seen in way too long.

Maybe I'm not that great of a guy, because I'm okay with him tormenting her a little as long as it keeps that spark of life

in his eyes. It's been touch and go for a while. No matter what I do, he's just kind of existing.

"After barely eating *all day*, you thought, hey, why don't I consume alcohol to see what happens," he growls, raising his eyebrows.

I flick my eyes to hers to find out what she comes up with next.

"I already explained how that happened." She swipes a hand through the air like she doesn't know why she's continuing to discuss this. "If you'll excuse me, I need to get into my pj's and use the restroom."

"And Fitz thought I would need to remind you." I boop her nose. "Don't let me stand in your way." I step around her while War watches the interaction carefully.

"Thank you," she grumbles, moving to dig in the drawers under Fitz's bunk. "I'm going to have to have a serious talk with Fitzzy about oversharing."

I grin.

Listening to her mutter under her breath is kind of cute.

She wobbles as she stands, and War and I take a step forward, but she rights herself quickly. She's obviously not shit-faced, no matter how badly War is wishing she was. After all, it would give him the perfect excuse to punish her.

Damn, maybe I'm the delusional one, making up stories. But I haven't seen my brother's eyes gleam like they do when he looks at Tinley since before he was attacked. I just need to figure out how to take that spark of life and turn it into a fire.

She stumbles into the bathroom door and grumbles, "I'm okay." She makes it inside and shuts the door.

I laugh. "I think I finally see the appeal. She's kind of a fucking mess, but absolutely adorable at the same time."

War doesn't say a word, but his eyes cut to the side like he's trying to decide if he's going to murder me to keep me away from her.

I laugh even harder.

Oh, hell yeah.

I'm starting to think Fitz bringing her along was actually a blessing in disguise.

Chapter Five

Tinley

I wake up very sure I've done something horrible to greatly offend the universe. My head throbs and my mouth is weirdly dry. I roll over and immediately go stiff. Holy crap, I do not want a repeat of yesterday morning.

The fact I roll into a naked man-chest might also have something to do with my sudden inability to move. My eyes flutter open as the scent of coffee hits my nose. I exhale in pure relief.

It's just Fitz.

It's just Fitz turns real freaking quickly into *it's Fitz*.

Why exactly am I in bed with my best friend's older brother? It's an excellent question that I absolutely do not have an answer for.

He's on the edge closest to where I'll need to climb out. I briefly get distracted by the fact we shared a tiny bunk smaller than a twin-size bed together last night, but that moves to panicking about how I'm going to climb out.

My leg is tossed over his pelvis and my head is on his shoulder. That's apparently how we fit. Now I just need to deduce how I climb out without waking him. I've never had a one-night stand. I'm totally ill-prepared for this. I've had two long-term—which, for these purposes, are defined as longer than six months—relationships.

I've never had to try to escape.

I've definitely never woken up with anyone who looks like Fitz. I mean, it's a little ridiculous how well-defined his muscles are. My stupid fingers won't seem to stop caressing his muscular chest.

A huge hand tightens its hold on my butt, and I freeze in some silly attempt to pretend like I'm not awake. I've been holding my breath for thirty seconds when my chest gets a little tight, but in for a penny, in for a pound.

I'll just never breathe again.

Clearly, that's the only feasible option.

"Mmm, morning, Tinsel," Fitz says, nuzzling his face to mine. "You always smell so damn rich and creamy in the morning." My jaw falls. "What?" He chuckles, brushing his lips over my cheek. "You do. You smell like the most delicious pumpkin pie I've ever smelled."

My mouth finally closes as my teeth dig into my lower lip. His words make my thighs clench, but his leg blocks the way.

This is Fitz. He's always flirtatious and fun with everyone. He probably doesn't even realize how that sounded.

I've always been really careful to ensure I keep my guard up around him, which sounds worse than it is.

It's clear he's not the kind of guy I'll end up with. I have zero interest in getting my heart broken or ruining my friendship with Shanna.

Even the couple of relationships I've been in didn't mean as much to me as he does. That's why I know catching feelings for the hunky alpha with his hand on my rear end would be the kiss of death for our friendship. And possibly my relationship with his sister.

"M-Morning," I stutter and my eyes clench closed. I hate it when that happens.

"You were in my bunk," Fitz says as his messy hair falls over his forehead. "So, I made myself at home. I hope you don't mind."

“No.” I sit up slightly. “I’m sorry. I couldn’t seem to climb up into mine last night, and Ramsey refused to help because he said I was a danger to myself being up that high.”

Fitz’s calloused hand runs over my cheek, pushing my hair back. “I heard you had a wild night,” he chuckles, “and an adventurous morning getting down yesterday.”

“Ohmigod,” I groan. “I only had a few sips of the watered-down mixed drinks Ava was having.” Which is definitely a fib, but I’m not mentally prepared to have that kind of talk this morning.

“I’m not lecturing you.” Fitz’s hazel eyes stare straight into mine. “I want you to have fun and enjoy yourself, but if you want to party, then I need you to do it when I can keep an eye on you.”

I scoff.

I’ve had a glass of wine or a single beer here or there while in college, but I have no interest in being that out of control, especially in this type of environment.

“I mean it,” Fitz says. “This tour is for both of us. I still feel like I dragged you along. I can’t stand the thought of you being miserable the entire time.” He sits up in a crunch and cuddles his cheek to mine before doing the other side. It marks my skin with his pheromones, which is kind of an intimate thing between an alpha and an omega.

My heart races almost as fast as my brain.

Was that a purposeful move or instinctual?

Which one do I want it to be?

Like, if he did it instinctually, does that mean he’s as attracted to my scent as I’ve always been to his?

If he did it purposely, was it a friendly move just meant to comfort me?

It’s too damn early for racing thoughts and insecurities.

I move to climb over him, saying, “Sorry, I need the restroom.”

“Careful, sweetheart.” Fitz yanks back the curtain and helps me climb out with a hand on my ass. “We both know how clumsy you can be.”

I grunt my agreement as my head aches, and I escape to the bathroom.

I use the restroom, wash my hands, and wander out to ask about etiquette when it comes to showering.

“Good morning,” Warrick says when he spots me. He’s sitting in one of the swivel chairs, and he turns to face me, using his feet. “There’s breakfast on the counter.”

“Thank you, but I was going to check if it might be all right if I take a quick shower.” I fidget, pointing a thumb toward the bathroom when he doesn’t say anything. “When I was a teenager I traveled with my grandparents in their RV. They were super strict about water usage, but I promise I’ll be quick.”

“The bus staff makes sure we’re always stocked with water. You don’t need to worry about rushing. You can shower after you eat something.” Warrick nods toward the counter. “I asked Karla to make a plate special for you.” His eyes gleam in a weird way I’ve never noticed, and it seems a little predatory.

“Is it poisoned?” I blurt out.

Damn intrusive thoughts.

“It is not,” he says without batting an eye.

“But I’m not hungry.”

“Do you know the tour has special red bracelets for anyone under twenty-one? The meet and greets are also exclusive to those of drinking age.” He raises an eyebrow, nodding at the coffee table.

The label hired me.

They have to know how old I am. But what if that fact slipped through the cracks?

I gasp when I spot said bracelets. “You wouldn’t.”

“Are you sure you’d like to put that to the test?” he asks ominously.

My foot bounces against the floor as the stare down between us continues, but I also find it difficult not to squirm. There’s something about the unapologetic dominance Warrick exudes that I find fascinating.

And incredibly attractive.

I bite my cheek to keep from blurting that out. Sometimes my brain-to-mouth filter feels especially thin.

Warrick unfolds his massive frame from the chair and prowls closer. No one that giant should have that much grace. It’s unnatural. The thought instantly reminds me that Fitz is around here somewhere, and we totally had a moment before I bolted.

My eyes fly to the bunks.

“Oh, pretty girl. Do you think he’s going to save you?” Warrick growls.

I turn back to face him, and he’s bent low like he wanted to make sure I could feel that question vibrating in my bones.

It worked.

It also places his face precariously close to mine.

My knees go a little weak as I stare up into his dark eyes. He and Ramsey look so similar, but their features are completely opposite from one another.

I take a step back.

I’m not sure what my plan of action is.

“Tinley,” Warrick growls, but he doesn’t finish his sentence.

I think I want to know what he has to say.

I’m generally pretty agreeable.

I don't like to buck the rules or make a scene. I'll do an activity that I don't enjoy rather than hurting someone's feelings. Like movies. I hate going to the movies because it's too much time sitting still, and I can't even internet search the ridiculous plot holes in the theater. I have to wait until we're home, but I'll do it just because it's easier than negotiating something I'd rather do.

It still takes every ounce of self-control I have not to see what happens when I push Warrick's buttons.

A literal shiver runs down my spine at the thought.

My chin tilts.

"I'm perfectly capable of saving myself." I spin to head toward the damn breakfast. "I can also make my own decisions." There's a white takeout container with my name in black marker, and I grab it, along with a package of plastic silverware.

"Excellent choice," Warrick growls from directly behind me.

I'm not proud of the fact I let out a squeak while jumping a foot in the air.

Seriously, no one his size should *ever* be that silent.

Warrick's warm breath fans over my shoulder as he chuckles. His hand wraps around mine to help support the takeout container, and my thighs clench at the feeling of his strong frame pressing into my back.

Are all alphas this touchy-feely? Maybe that's not even the word. Hands-on?

Uh-oh.

Chapter Six

Fitz

That is not motherfucking happening.
Not a chance in hell.

I'll quit, take Tinsel, and leave before Warrick fucking Malone steals the woman I've been in love with since I was sixteen.

I may have temporarily taken his role in Northern Star, but that doesn't mean he gets to move in on *my* omega.

I've spent six years laying the groundwork for her to notice me. I'm not about to let another alpha swoop in and steal her when she's finally fucking within reach.

My hands clench at my sides.

I'm about three seconds away from losing myself to the alpha fog that's slipping in. Everything is hazy, and pure rage takes over as Warrick murmurs something close to Tinley's ear.

Why isn't she slapping the *fuck* out of him for being all up in her personal space?

"Aww, damn," Ramsey says from behind me. The next thing I know, he's dragging me down the hallway toward the room none of us use. He opens the door and shoves me inside.

My chest is heaving like I'm about to lose my shit. I don't even bother saying anything. My shoulder slams into Ramsey's as I make a break for the door.

“Nah, man. You’re too jacked up right now.” Ramsey shoves me back. It’s a confined space. My legs hit the mattress, and eventually, my ass lands on the bed. “In all the times you talked about Tinley, you never mentioned she’s an omega,” Ramsey says pointedly.

“She’s technically not.” My hands fly to cover my face. No matter how pissed off I am, it’s not right to let her secrets slip. It’s no one’s business, anyway. I exhale heavily, pulling my hands down. “I shouldn’t have said that. Please don’t repeat it.”

His head tilts, and he takes a few steps to the side before sitting down on the other end of the bed. “What do you mean?”

“She’s never had a heat, so technically, she hasn’t presented.”

“She will,” he says confidently. “She’s too potent not to.”

“It doesn’t matter to me either way. I’ve told you; she’s it for me.”

“Yeah, I got that when I realized you were about to try to rip my brother’s head off with your bare hands. Are you good? Still feel like you’re about to freak the fuck out?”

“I’ve waited so long for her to take me seriously. I feel like this is my one shot.”

“Right,” Ramsey says. “But she’s an omega. Omegas are built for packs.” He pauses, then nods. “You’re not ready to share her.”

I’ve never even had her.

I barely hold myself back from sounding like a complete asshole, but the thoughts still cross my mind. If she never presents, then I’ll never have to share her. Omegas need packs because of heats. It’s almost impossible for one alpha to meet the sexual needs of an omega in heat.

It’s wrong to hope for.

I know that, but I guess I am a selfish motherfucker, because anytime I’m faced with the reality of it, I turn into a

raging asshole.

“I don’t know if I’ll ever be ready,” I mutter. “Just because I don’t want to doesn’t mean I don’t understand reality. I wouldn’t leave her suffering just because I hate the thought of anyone else touching her.”

“Good, you’re sounding a little more rational.” He laughs as I glare. “What? The fog got you for sure back there.”

He’s not wrong.

I was about to start shit with Warrick.

“I haven’t seen my brother actually interested in anything in a long damn time.” He gives a pointed look. “It seems like she’s open to him too.”

My chest wouldn’t ache so violently if I didn’t know what he’s saying is true. I’ve seen enough to know they aren’t bad guys. Hell, I even liked them back when we were practicing for the tour.

That was true until they started getting close to Tinsel.

“Yeah,” I agree, shoving myself off the bed. “That still doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

“I guess we’ll see.”

“See what?”

“Whether or not you really love her.” He scratches his bare chest. “If you do, then you’ll adapt. If not, then that’ll be obvious too.”

His words hit me square in the gut like a ton of bricks. I grew up in a pack. I’ve seen how much my mom needs each one of her alphas. My dads love her enough that they agreed to let her add to their pack after twenty-plus years of being a cohesive unit.

Donovan Lee isn’t someone I ever would have expected to see in a pack, but he specifically helped me set this up to give me a chance to get close to Tinley. He’s also good to my mom, and their relationship really isn’t any of my business, as long as that continues to be true.

I walk out to find a showdown in progress.

My head swivels between Warrick and Tinley.

Tinley is in full-blown pouty-omega mode, while Warrick looks strangely chipper. He's not smiling. In fact, that look might border on a glower, but there's something in his energy that says he's enjoying every second of their face-off.

"I don't eat oatmeal or grits." Tinley glares back, crossing her arms over her chest. "Which I've already said *twice*."

"And as I've already mentioned, I'll be happy to note that for tomorrow. It's apple cinnamon. Have a few bites, then you can take that shower you're so desperate for." War smirks, nodding to the open container of food on the coffee table.

"You're not my boss," she retorts. "Nor my father."

Ramsey cracks up from somewhere behind me.

I barely hold myself back from laughing.

This is the real Tinley. She's finally warming up enough to come out of her shell.

I love it when she's feisty.

Warrick hums and gestures to the red paper bracelets fans wear at the show. They're for the attendees that aren't legal to drink. "Would you prefer to revisit our earlier conversation?"

They stare at each other for several long seconds before she sighs.

Grumbling under her breath, she leans forward, grabs the takeout container, and pokes at the oatmeal. She takes a bite, and her face indicates her displeasure.

I'll be damned. I can't recall the number of times I've tried to get her to eat more than a few bites over the last couple days. It's been mildly alarming, because she's got a much healthier appetite at home. It's another reason I've worried I made a mistake dragging her along with me. And Warrick

managed it with very little effort. I'm not sure if that makes me hate him more or less.

"Come on." Ramsey claps me on the back. "I see boxes with our names on them."

The next week is spent bouncing from city to city.

It's exhausting.

I'm used to it from doing fill-in work for the label whenever they needed someone to take a last-minute spot, but it never gets easier. It's just easy to forget during the off periods when I'm home and comfortable.

We've been in Ohio, but since the trip to Columbus is so short, we end up with an entire day to burn.

Ramsey and Warrick are working out. It's the perfect opportunity to put my plan in motion. I'm in crunch mode because Tinley's birthday is tomorrow, but I've had this mapped out since we left Chicago.

"Are you planning to stay in your polka-dot jammies all day?" I ask, resting my head in her lap while we lounge on the couch in the bus.

Tinley runs her fingers through my hair, laughing and shaking her head. "No, but it's not even noon. Does my laziness offend your sensibilities, good sir?"

I scoff. "Hardly. Once we make it back home, we're spending a week in our pajamas just to make up for all the times we missed out by having to wear pants on this tour."

The bright smile that crosses her face makes my chest tight. She's so fucking beautiful, I'd give anything to be able to kiss her.

"You're ridiculous."

My stomach drops. She doesn't see me the way I see her. Not yet, anyway, but I'm doing everything in my power to

change that. “Can I talk you into keeping me company? I’ve got some shopping I need to do.”

“I don’t know,” she grumbles, resting her head on her palm on the arm of the couch. “Pants seem like a lot of work.”

I smirk. “Then feel free to wear a sexy little skirt.” She laughs like she thinks I’m joking. “Please, Tinsel?”

She bites her lip and finally nods. “Okay.”

I sit up in a crunch and shove myself off the couch before pulling her up too. She careens into my bare skin when I yank a little too strongly. Her fingers brush over my pec as I smile down at her, squeezing her hips.

I only have one goal for this entire tour: I won’t give up until she’s mine.



The label is giving us a few days off surrounding Thanksgiving. We’ll be in a hotel, and I plan to do something special once we get settled. It’s hard to get any privacy on the bus. Not to mention, we’ve got a show tonight and another on her actual birthday.

We wander the street looking for the cute little clothing boutique that I scouted out before we left the bus. Tinley doesn’t fight the contact when I wrap my arm around her lower back and link our fingers together. She’s kind of short—well, compared to me—but it’s convenient since her arms are the perfect length to make the move possible.

I keep her tucked into my side and make sure she’s closest to the businesses instead of the road. I’ve always had the innate need to keep her safe, but the urges have turned into compulsions over the years. My mind constantly files through possible threats and ways to prevent them.

I don’t know if it’s like this for all alphas with their omega, or maybe it’s just a part of being in love.

The security guy hits the door to the shop before us and gives the signal for me to wait. He's part of the label security team, but I'm not one of the core members of Northern Star.

It's more of a precaution than anything.

I wouldn't even bring security if it was just me, since it's a rare occasion for anyone to actually recognize me. We get the signal that we can head inside, and he holds the door open for us.

"Ohmigod, they have ugly Christmas sweaters," Tinley squeals, bolting for a rack of clothing.

I chuckle, shaking my head as I follow her. She's fucking beautiful inside and out. Her joy over the most bizarre shit makes me happy.

I've got a type and it's Tinsel.

She's goofy and sweet, but not afraid to stand up for what she thinks is right. The more comfortable she is around someone, the more her true personality shines through. I miss her when I can't see her face, and the sadness that comes when I go more than a few days without being in her presence makes it clear.

She's mine, but I'm also hers. I long ago accepted that fact.

I grab my phone out of my pocket, snapping pictures as she browses.

I take a couple and send them to Shanna. My little sister is waiting on pins and needles for the call. She knows it's coming.

Well, unless Tinley shuts me down.

That would fucking suck.

My stomach drops at the thought.

I've heard it all over the years. I've been harassed by *friends* about my obsession with her for so long that it no longer fazes me.

I got lucky with a solid foundation. Otherwise, I might have caved to the taunting and peer pressure to date just to fit

in.

My parents' pack is so sickeningly in love that I've always known it exists.

The first time I met Tinley, she was talking to my little sister. She gave me a silly smile, like she couldn't quite understand why I was hovering around, trying to insert myself into their conversation.

I went home that day and told my dads that I met the woman I'm going to marry. They laughed it off, but after a few years, they realized I wasn't fucking around.

Even Shanna accepted it somewhere along the way. I'm sure it doesn't hurt that her best friend will end up being her sister-in-law if I have anything to say about it.

"I think I'm going to try these few things on," Tinley says, gesturing at me with the pile tossed over her forearm.

"Sounds good," I agree.

She heads off toward the dressing rooms, and I search for someone who works here. The two sales associates are bubbly and around my age.

I lean on the counter, keeping my eyes peeled in case Tinley pops out so I can give her opinions.

"All right, ladies..." I give them a grin. "I'm going to need a favor."

Chapter Seven

Tinley

I try on a couple of items that are cute but out of my price range. It's still fun to dream, so I twirl in the mirror in the silver-and-baby-blue Christmas dress.

Shoving my hair behind my ears, I study my reflection.

This dress is beautiful and puffy in a way I adore. There's also a texture thing. The top layer is silky smooth, but so is the inner piece that touches my skin. The crinoline layer doesn't scratch against me, and I really love that. I stare for a few more moments before deciding I'm going to ask Fitz to take a picture so I can remember it.

I unlock the door, head down the hallway, and stop dead in my tracks. Fitz is leaning over the counter, talking to the saleswomen.

My heart drops. They're both beautiful and smiling. It only takes a few more seconds for my impulses to want to strangle them. They shouldn't be grinning at *my Fitz* like that. And he absolutely shouldn't have that glittering sparkle in his eyes that comes when he's about to cause trouble.

Or, I guess, when he's actively flirting.

My feet tangle together as I spin around to retreat, but I trip over my own toes. The carpet burn doesn't sting nearly as much as my wounded pride.

I thought he might see me in this dress and...

I don't know.

Think I'm pretty?

Realize he can't live without me?

My thoughts are so ridiculous that I don't let myself focus on them. I right myself with the help of the wall and aim for the dressing room.

I need to change into my own clothes.

I shove through the door, but a calloused hand wraps around my wrist, spinning me back around.

"Fuck, Tinsel. This dress was made for you," Fitz growls.

My head shakes as I stare at his band T-shirt. It was silly. I have my phone. I very well could have taken a picture of myself. "Sorry to interrupt."

"I was waiting for you to come out and show me your outfits." He tilts my chin up, so I'm forced to look at his gorgeous face. His nearly black stubble is longer than ever, but it's the way the hair on the top of his head falls over his forehead that takes my breath away. He's so hot and totally out of my league. He's performing every night with a world-famous rock band.

I have no business thinking outlandish thoughts.

A wave of warmth pulses through my entire body, sending unexpected cramps to my lower stomach. My forearm flies to the area to push back against the weird throbbing.

"Are you okay?" Fitz murmurs, studying me carefully.

"Yeah." My nose twitches with his rich coffee scent. Damn, he smells even more potent than normal. I have the irrational urge to lick his skin so that I can taste it.

He stares for a few long seconds and nods. "You've got to get this one. It's incredible."

"It's a little outside of my budget if I want to get anything else today."

"It's not up for debate." He grins shamelessly. "It'll be my birthday gift."

"No way," I gasp, but keep my voice low. "It's almost four hundred dollars!"

“So?” he scoffs. “I’d pay four thousand to see you in it again.”

That’s not the kind of thing a friend says... Right?

No boyfriend has ever said anything that makes my heart race the way it does when he says stuff like that.

“I should try on the other clothes,” I say, turning to retreat into the dressing room.

He and Shanna are so laid back and low maintenance that I forget they come from the kind of money that’s intimidating to think about for too long.

Fitz finally releases my wrist, and I shove myself inside the dressing room before flicking the lock.

The metal bolt rattles as I lean against the door for support. My stomach still feels uncomfortable and kind of crampy. But I’m so focused on what the hell changed during this trip that it’s barely a thought in my mind. I can’t decide if I’m majorly misreading things because I want it to be true.

I exhale heavily, shoving myself off the door and stretching an arm back to handle the zipper. Only, it’s practically impossible to get down. I have no clue how I got it zipped alone, but unzipping without help isn’t happening.

I open the door, and Fitz is leaning against the wall with his booted foot up.

“I’m trapped,” I grumble.

My knees clench as a slow, sexy smirk crosses his face. It’s so unexpected that I take a step back as his dimples pop.

“Oh, Tinsel, I’ve got you.” God, I really love his accent when he calls me *Tinsel*. He prowls closer, and I retreat even farther. He gives me a little shove, using his hands on my hips before turning back to close the door with his knee. He spins to face me and twirls a finger in the air, indicating I should give him my back.

The dress flies up as I face the mirror. My eyes catch his. He grins as his hands land on my hips, and he gives a solid squeeze.

“You’re always beautiful, but this dress looks like it was made for you. It makes the blue in your eyes pop. Don’t get me started on how it shows off your curves.” He moves a hand up to pull my hair to the side.

My eyes slide shut as a ragged breath escapes. Fitz’s warm breath fans over my neck, and he slowly unzips the dress. His huge hand slips around to my middle as he kisses my cheek.

“Such a delectable little omega,” he growls, nuzzling his cheek to mine. I’m left staring at the mirror in pure shock as the door closes behind him. “Don’t forget to lock it.”

I have a minor nervous breakdown when the sales associate tells me my total. I mentally calculate how much is available on my credit card before trying to decide how embarrassing it would be to put one or two of the items back.

“Sorry,” Fitz says, jogging up to my side. “All of this is together.” He drops the dress I picked out, along with a few other items that I didn’t.

My head tilts as I open my mouth to assure him I can buy my stuff. I’m a solid seventy-eight percent sure my transaction would go through.

Probably.

Fitz laughs, gripping my hip and pulling me into his side as he grabs his wallet with the other hand. Damn, I wish I had that kind of coordination. “It’s my treat for your birthday, remember?”

The fancy dress maybe, but the sweaters, onesie, pajama set, and comfy dress I picked out were not included in that. I’m about to spew all of that when Fitz swats my hip and ass, chuckling darkly.

He looks at the sales associate. “Ring it up quickly before she starts to riot.”

The woman laughs politely, but she still looks a little flummoxed over seeing the two of us together.

I barely hold back the urge to tell her, *me too*.

We browse a couple more stores and end up at an adorable little mom-and-pop restaurant. They tell us we can sit wherever we like, and I glance back for the security guy I know is following us.

“Should we invite him to eat with us?” I ask.

“No.” Fitz leads me to a booth in the back, and instead of sitting on the opposite side, he shoves our bags over there before sliding in on the same side as me.

I scoot back in the leather seat and turn to face him. It’s very hard for me not to ask what the heck is going on.

Fitz stretches past me to grab the menus as his left arm wraps around the back of the booth. Either his scent has gotten stronger recently or my response to it has.

I grab the outstretched menu, clutching it in some vain attempt to keep myself busy. My eyes scan the items, but I’m not comprehending anything I see.

“We both know you’re going to go for the chicken tenders and fries,” he says close to my ear.

“I might,” I concede.

“We could share a chocolate milkshake if you’re up for it,” he offers.

My lips push together as I nod. I’m always down for ice cream in drinkable form. “Can we add peanut butter cups?”

Fitz laughs, leaning his shoulder against mine. “I knew that was coming.”

My chest flames as I desperately try to control my raging hormones. It’s kind of addictive how special it makes me feel

when his entire focus is on me. I wonder if every woman he's around has the same reaction when he smiles at them.

“Where the hell have you been?” Warrick growls as we make it onto the bus after our day out.

“I took Tinsel shopping because her birthday is tomorrow.” Fitz's face appears over my right shoulder. He grins, cuddling his cheek to mine.

“We spent the better part of three hours scouring the venue and surrounding area, trying to figure out where you disappeared to.” Warrick looks *really* pissed. “Next time, answer your damn phone or give someone a courtesy heads-up.”

Did Fitz miss a practice to hang out and shop with me? This trial run is his chance to prove himself and land a real contract.

“Come on, shortcake.” Ramsey grabs the bags I'm carrying before moving to take the ones from Fitz. “We'll let them hash that out among themselves.”

I turn back, and the two alphas are glaring at each other. A large part of me wants to soothe their anger. After all, it's an omega's entire purpose in life.

Ramsey leads me to the room at the back of the bus. He tosses the bags on the bed and kicks the door closed with his shoe.

“You're going to be legal tomorrow. Are you excited?” He bounces down on the bed, stretching out and nodding to the bags. “Did you get something sexy to celebrate?”

My face breaks out into a silly smile. “You make it sound like I'm turning eighteen, not twenty-one, but yes, after tomorrow, I'll no longer have to sneak into your meet and greets.”

“And the sexy little number? Did you get something fancy?” He wiggles his eyebrows until a real bubble of laughter escapes my lips. “There it is. That’s the smile I was looking for.” He runs his fingers over my cheek.

“I got a dress, but it’s for Christmas.”

The tattoos lining his forearm flex as he continues to caress my cheek. Maybe he’s just one of those touchy-feely people.

“Can I get a private fashion show?” He grins wickedly as his long blond hair falls around his face.

I laugh, swiping his hand away. “Hell no, but you can help me decide what to wear for the show tonight.”

“Fine. I accept your offer.” He smiles so playfully that I find myself cheesing right back at him.

“I get the feeling you’re a bad influence,” I say, grabbing my new goodies out of the bags.

“Maybe. If I was the one keeping you company today, you definitely would’ve come back with a lot less material making up your clothing choices.” Ramsey smirks, picking up one of the ugly Christmas sweaters.

“I can only imagine.”

“God, I’m pretty sure my grandma owns this same one.” He shakes the knit sweater. “Don’t worry. I’m sure you’ll pull it off much better. Try it on now. I promise not to check out your tits while you change.”

A bark of laughter escapes. There’s something about Ramsey’s energy that makes me feel light.

Chapter Eight

Warrick

Back when we were making a name for ourselves, before we sold out full concert venues, we used to do shows in clubs. During the years we were building up our name, bars and nightclubs could pay for a promotional package to have us show up to do an “impromptu show” and then hang out for the rest of the night.

Only, we haven’t done that shit in years.

Until tonight.

After we leave the stage, Gavin reminds us that we’ve got a promo show at one of the huge clubs. They must have paid a fucking fortune.

I barely hear a word he’s saying as I search for Tinley.

“She’s with Jack’s guest, getting changed,” Gavin says like he can read my damn mind. “They’ve got Steve from label security guarding the bus.”

“Which bus?” I snap. In no way, shape, or form do I want her anywhere near the other bus.

“Yours, *obviously*.” He sighs. “There really is no chance we re-sign Northern Star for another contract, is there?”

I scoff, glancing around for Fitz and Ram. They’re both hung up talking to the press. I stomp over. “She’s on the bus. I’m heading there now.”

Fitz gives me a clipped nod.

Gavin stands, blocking my path when I turn around. “I asked you a question.”

“I’d say it’s highly unlikely. You know how I feel about the shit Carter and Xavier have been up to.” I ignored it a lot better when we were younger, but they’ve upped their game to include things I want no part of. You’re always going to see coke and weed—it’s the nature of the business—but they’re spiraling into territory I won’t be around. I tried to get them to clean up their act and got exactly nowhere. If anything, I became the butt of their jokes because I don’t know how to “chill the fuck out.”

You can only pour so much energy into someone who won’t help themselves. Especially since my focus has been on healing after almost losing my goddamn life.

When Gavin opens his mouth to reply, I wave a hand.

I don’t have time for this shit. I jog toward the hallway that leads to the bus. I’m not sure I even like the idea of Tinley coming out with us tonight, but there’s no way I’d leave her with the buses, and there’s no way we’re getting out of this appearance.

I nod at Steve, whose name I’m just now learning, and stomp up the steps. He’s a big guy, and he seems to take his job seriously. Which is a good thing, because if he fucks it up, I will kill him.

I make it inside and head down the hallway, but Tinley pops out of the bedroom at the very end.

My jaw falls.

I stare open-mouthed for about three seconds before my head falls back and shakes at the ceiling. Fuck, she’s stunning. There’s also way too much soft skin on display.

I’m probably going to end the night in handcuffs.

Jack's chick, Ava, knows people in Columbus from college. I know this because she talks nonstop about it on the way to the club.

We're all shoved into one limo for the trip, and every time Carter glances Tinley's way, I barely stifle a snarl.

He leans around Ava, holding a hand out to Tinley. "I'm Carter. That's a nice dress."

"Thanks," she says, glancing down at it. "I borrowed it from Ava."

"Did we pick you up at the venue tonight?" Carter asks, running his hands down his jeans over his thighs.

Tinley frowns, shaking her head. "No, I'm the tour photographer."

"She's been with us since Chicago," I growl, but I'm not surprised. I'm probably guilty of the same bullshit. All the faces blend together when you don't put the effort in to remember them, but I know I've seen her specifically ask him to move an arm or look in a different direction to snag a shot.

"Oh damn, you take pictures?" Xavier laughs, and it grates on my nerves.

Ram leans forward like he's about to hop into my lap if I make a move to strangle our bandmates with my bare hands.

"This is Tinley." Fitz wraps his hand in hers. "I spent the month we were practicing talking about her nonstop."

Tinley's head swivels to face Fitz, and she looks genuinely taken aback. Apparently, those two are both oblivious.

He wants her.

She wants him.

Neither thinks the other is interested.

It's baffling.

"Damn, no shit?" Carter glances between them, and my fists clench at my sides. I will tear his fucking head off if he says a single thing to hurt her feelings. His eyes rake over

Tinley, focusing a little too long on her tits, and my concern turns to fury. Everything about Carter and Xavier pisses me off lately.

The limo comes to a stop, and I thank the universe for that clutch timing.

Tinley follows Ava to meet up with Ava's friends as soon as we get inside. It takes everything in me to watch from a distance. I glare at anyone who dares to get too close for the next hour, but my nerves are shot.

Their entire group is dancing and drinking to celebrate Tinley's birthday.

It's after midnight, meaning I can't say anything about it. She's officially of age and legal to do as she pleases. It makes me want to punch something. I should be at her side, watching her drink up close and personal.

I also need to make sure no assholes try their luck.

I want her to have fun and enjoy her birthday.

I just need to keep her safe while that happens.

It was so *incredibly* thoughtful of Jack to get all five of Ava's friends into our club performance.

Any cluster of women is going to draw attention.

"Bro, if you don't stop glaring, your face is going to get stuck that way," Ram says as we check out the stage where we'll be performing our set.

"That glower is seriously impressive. Just make sure Tinsel knows it's not directed at her." Fitz laughs, clapping me on the back. "I'm not going to lie. It's nice having backup to keep an eye on her."

Backup?

I scoff.

I'm the first line of defense.

It's the only thing my instincts can focus on. Where is my omega? Is she safe? What possible dangers might pop up?

Ways to eliminate those threats without ending up in prison for murder...

There's no way around it.

I'm teetering on the edge of going feral.

I hate that we'll be on stage, but I will straight-up walk off if Tinley leaves my line of sight in that skintight little black dress.

I have no real preference toward short skirts or tops that show off tits. I've got nothing against them, but personally, I find myself more intrigued when a little less is showing. The tension and buildup of being able to explore to find out what lies beneath the fabric really does it for me.

The exception to that is Tinley. I'm as attracted to her in the naughty little dress as I am every morning when she stumbles out in her soft pajamas.

Which means other men are too.

I should buy her a parka.

It's a little cold in here.

Maybe I could find her a jacket.

I could definitely send one of the roadies out to buy the biggest coat they can find. Then I'll wrap her up in it and snuggle the fuck out of her.

In the corner.

In a very romantic way, so she's satisfied and has a good birthday. While blocking her from sight of all the assholes here tonight. It's a solid game plan.

I curse under my breath, shaking my head.

I really am losing my damn mind.

There's ultimately no guarantee that she'll be up for handing off the level of control that I need to be content in a

relationship.

My instincts tell me she might be, but those fuckers have been all over the place lately. I exhale heavily and accept the fact that I'm not going to be comfortable at all tonight. Not until we're out of here and settled in somewhere safe.

I take my eyes off Tinley for less than a minute to hand off my guitar to a roadie following our performance, and when I look up, she's gone.

My chest heaves as my fists clench. I don't think I ended up with PTSD following the riot. Large crowds don't bother me, or they didn't until I had someone else to keep safe. Fine, maybe I do have a little trauma surrounding how fucking unpredictable humanity can be.

I don't bother heading backstage and around to get to the dance floor.

I jump down from the front of the stage and beeline for Ava. Fans try to stop me to talk or for autographs, but I've got tunnel vision.

This is the problem with friends who aren't real friends.

There's no loyalty.

"Where is Tinley?" I growl, making it to their cluster at one of the high-top tables.

"She got a phone call." Ava points to the hallway with the restrooms. "She went to answer it." Her words are slightly slurred. It would do no good to lecture her. "I offered to go with her, but she said she was fine."

I spin around, stomping toward the bathrooms. If that's true, then Tinley and I need to have a conversation about safety in numbers.

I'm a big motherfucker, even for an alpha. Not many men can meet me at eye level. It makes it easy to spot Tinley. She's at the back of the hallway, real fucking close to the emergency

exit, talking on her phone. She's alone, but it's the two assholes standing four or five feet away with their eyes on her that make me very sure I'm going to jail for murder tonight.

The club is in the opposite direction. That's where their interest should be. I slide up behind them long enough to gauge their intent.

"Damn, I wonder if she has glasses. She could totally pull off a hot nerdy vibe." The one on the right bumps his shoulder against his buddy's.

"She's pretty enough," the other asshole replies.

"You're going to want to fuck all the way off," I growl. "Right now." Their reactions are almost cliché, but they scurry away just fast enough that I manage to hold myself back.

I take their spot against the wall and watch as Tinley cluelessly continues her conversation.

I can barely hear her over the music, but I'm pretty sure she's talking to a friend or family member who called to wish her a happy birthday.

"You're ridiculous," she says, laughing. "A girl can dream. Ohmigod, forget I said that." There's a short pause, and she groans. "He sent pictures? He better be afraid to go to sleep tonight." There's silence, likely while the other person speaks. "Shanna! Yeah, I better get back out there. I miss you too. Thank you for calling."

I wait with an unnaturally giddy excitement for the moment she spins around.

A jolt goes through her entire body as she catches sight of me. Her phone bounces between her hands as she wobbles.

I take two giant steps forward, catching her phone in my fingers as her hand also wraps around it.

"Shit, you scared me." She laughs, craning her neck so she can meet my eyes.

"Is that right, pretty girl?" I ask, still holding her hand.

"Yeah, I wasn't expecting anyone to be that close."

“I’ll bet you weren’t. You know what else you weren’t vigilant of?” I take a step forward as she takes a step back. She almost bumps into the push handle on the emergency exit. My free hand falls to her hip to pull her forward. “You certainly weren’t checking to make sure no assholes tried to snatch you up and tote you right out that easily accessible door.”

“First of all, I’m really not light, and not everyone is a giant. Secondly, I’m pretty sure an alarm would sound.”

I haven’t been in this club before, at least not to my recollection, but they all blend together after a while. My hand leaves her hip to shove the push handle. The door pops open with a scratching sound and no alarm. I’m sure a couple or two pop out of it every night for a quickie and even more clubgoers sneak out to smoke a joint or a cigarette.

I quirk an eyebrow.

Her shoulders bounce as she gives me a tight smile. “Well, you learn something new every day. Thanks for keeping an eye on me. I should probably get back.”

I try to bite my tongue. I really fucking do. I’m not sure if it’s the look on her face or the overwhelming drive I have to keep her safe, but I back her up until she bumps fully against the wall next to the door. It could also be the need to know how she’s going to react. It’ll tell me if we’re ultimately compatible.

“You *should probably* keep yourself from unsafe situations before your backside meets my palm,” I growl close to the shell of her ear. “I can assure you, the type of spanking that comes from putting yourself in danger will be nowhere close to as enjoyable as a birthday spanking.”

She gasps as her hands land on my chest.

I take her phone and shove it into my back pocket as she leans into me for support.

A slow smile crosses my face when she doesn’t slap the shit out of me or tell me to get fucked.

“I understand,” she says, blinking up at me from behind long brown lashes. “Thank you again for making sure I’m

safe. It means a lot that you cared enough to come looking.”

Goddamn, she really is sweet. Thank fuck she seems receptive to my personal brand of crazy. I’m overbearing when I care about someone. My hand moves down to link our fingers. “Always, pretty girl. Now let’s ensure you have a birthday to remember.”

She lights up with a smile that makes my heart beat funny.

No doubt about it.

This little omega is mine.

Now I just have to convince her to look beyond my physical scars and get to know me for me. Not the rock star stage persona. Not the guy the newspapers and media called a hero.

Just me.

Why does that feel impossible?

“Has she always had... whatever kind of rhythm that is?” Ram asks, chuckling at the sight of Tinley dancing.

“Wasn’t that popular in the seventies?” I ask incredulously. The dance is retro to the point I don’t even know what it’s called, but I do vaguely recognize it.

“Indeed.” Fitz grins around the beer he’s been nursing. “Her grandma taught my sister and Tinsel a bunch of dances before prom. I think those were popular a few generations before our grandparents’ time.”

“Oh, God,” Ram chuckles. “That’s actually fucking adorable.”

“You should’ve seen it in person.” Fitz grins.

It’s pretty clear just from that look that the man is done for. I’ve seen him brush off countless women and a few guys since we met.

If this tour has an unofficial name, it's the celibacy tour, at least for the three of us. I'd really like to rectify that at some point.

My eyes flick to Carter. He's been subdued and lazy recently, but tonight he's bouncing off the walls like maybe he picked a different substance to shove up his nose.

I sigh.

Ramsey tried to tell me my feelings were hurt, and that's why I'm so pissed off about the whole situation. I know I'm an asshole, but the trust is gone in that relationship. I don't see how we can ever get it back.

By the time my gaze moves back to Tinley, Jack has started dancing with Ava. Several randoms are talking and dancing with the friends she met up with, and one particularly brazen idiot is smiling at my omega.

"I'm going in," Ram says, dropping his beer bottle on the table. "You two need to have a come-to-Jesus moment. Also, maybe spend some time figuring out how to lighten the fuck up. It's her birthday. There are three of us to keep her safe. Let's make sure she enjoys it."

Fitz scoffs as I sigh, but my brother is probably right.

I explain what happened in the hallway earlier, crossing my arms over my chest as I watch my brother flirt with the woman I'm actually really into. "I warned her to be more careful, or her ass would meet my palm."

"Really?" Fitz asks, taking a much longer pull of his beer.

"Yup." I stretch back against the uncomfortable leather couch. "I'm not going to back off. There's chemistry there I haven't felt in a long time."

"And you think that entitles you to make a move on the woman I've been in love with since high school?"

"I *think* it's insulting you're essentially trying to call dibs." My eyes don't leave Ram and Tinley. "That's her call. Not yours." I lean forward, resting my elbows on my knees. "Believe it or not, I'm not trying to be a dick."

“No, you’re just making it clear that my feelings on the matter don’t mean shit.”

I grunt. He’s not wrong, but I am trying to be upfront enough to tell him where my head is. “She’s beautiful, passionate about her art, endearing in a way I find addicting. That doesn’t mean I can’t recognize that she has feelings for you. I get it. There are years of history.”

“Yeah.” Fitz waves at one of the VIP servers for another round. “She doesn’t take my interest seriously. Even after all the work I’ve put in. It kills me. Then you and Ramsey are always around, and it’s not helping anything.”

“There’s a benefit to having a team at your side. You had to know you’d have to share her one day.”

“God, it’s weird when you and Ramsey say the same things. I’ll tell you the same thing I told him. I’ve never had her. How am I supposed to catch her attention when she’s tripping over you assholes at every turn?”

I keep forgetting he’s a lot younger than us. He’s never even ridden out a full tour. I’m sure things aren’t going how he planned. “Touring will definitely cockblock you, if you let it.” I laugh at the glare he shoots my way. “I’m just saying, you learn real quick how to get over not having privacy when you’ve got five people crammed into one bus. We’re practically spoiled on this tour.”

“I want more from Tinsel than a quick fuck in a bar bathroom.”

“I know,” I agree. I want the same things out of life and a relationship. He actually reminds me a lot of myself at his age. “It’s her birthday. Sleep in the back bedroom with her tonight. She’s not going to make the first move. So, nut up. It’s time to make your intentions clear, or don’t bitch and complain when someone else does.”

Fitz nods, but his eyes stay glued across the room. “Is he trying to fuck her on the dance floor?”

My eyes scan our bandmates one by one, but I bark a laugh when I realize he’s talking about Ramsey.

There was a time when it wouldn't have been above him, but I can tell by the smile on his face that he's just trying to make sure she has a good time.

The beat changes and they get even closer.

I frown, watching my brother's hand slide up the side of Tinley's thigh before slipping around to her ass.

Huh, I guess he does want to die tonight.

Chapter Nine

Tinley

I'm sure Ramsey Malone has broken a lot of hearts. His scent is heavy in the air, but it's difficult to explain. It's sweet, like molasses with cinnamon. He kind of smells like gingerbread, but more manly and delicious.

His long blond hair is pulled up into a bun on the back of his head, and it bounces as we grind together. He stares at me with an intensity that sends a shiver down my spine.

He's got that primal, hungry vibe down pat as he licks his lower lip. His thigh is wedged between mine, but it's the proprietary grip on my ass that makes my knees feel wobbly.

"Fuck, you smell so sweet," he growls, bending low enough that the heat of his breath fans over my neck and chest. "I've never had a thing for pumpkin pie. Nothing against it. It's just not what I would have gone for if faced with a dessert spread. Now? I'd pry the last slice out of an old lady's hands with zero shame."

I laugh, shaking my head. He's playful and kind of silly sometimes, but I really like the way he makes me feel. I know my scent has hints of pumpkin and vanilla.

His giant hand palms my entire ass cheek. "Do you think I'm fucking with you, shortcake? Because I'm not."

"Your brother threatened me with both a birthday and punishment spanking earlier." My eyes dart away. I don't want to come off like I'm searching for compliments, but I don't want him to flirt with me out of pity, either. I finally settle for, "That's complicated enough."

“Tinley.” His fingers dig into the bottom of my butt cheek, very close to bumping against my pussy. “Not only am I affected by your scent on a level I’ve never experienced, but if you keep digging your teeth into that thick lower lip of yours, then I’m going to have to kiss it. And that’s not a threat, it’s a promise.”

I whine, burying my face in his chest. If I was doing that, I didn’t notice. Several low growls fill the air around us, and they aren’t familiar sounds. I shiver, clutching Ramsey even tighter because my impulses scream that sound could be dangerous. Alphas I know, and kind of trust, are one thing. Stranger growls are a completely different story.

“Ahh, fuck,” Ramsey mutters. “Sorry. We’ve got to bounce.” He lifts me using his hand on my ass and the other forearm. Before I know it, he’s stomping us toward the others.

“I never got to say goodbye.”

“You’ll see Ava again.” Ramsey nuzzles his cheek to mine.

“Okay.” I wiggle against him, focusing on how potent his scent is all of a sudden. “I’m hot and kind of achy. It came out of nowhere.”

“Yeah,” he growls. “I know, you’re perfuming like crazy.”

My jaw falls, but my insides light up at the thought.

Perfuming is one step toward an actual heat.

I want that more than almost anything.

Making it out of the club and into the SUV doesn’t take long, but I’m sweating and hot. Both Fitz and Warrick try to take me from Ramsey, but he lets out a snarl any alpha would be proud of and bundles us up in the very back seat.

“Are you okay?” Fitz asks, turning around from the middle row. He runs a hand down my hair.

“Yeah,” I groan, clutching my stomach. “It came on really quickly. I’m sorry I ruined our night out.”

“Jesus fucking Christ,” Warrick growls. It’s so loud that I jolt. I can’t see him, but his tone indicates he’s not pleased.

“Shh, I’ve got you.” Ramsey pulls my face to rest on his neck. My nose roots around, trying to find where his scent is strongest.

I’m not buckled in, but he’s holding me so tightly I’m not concerned. There’s loud music playing through the speakers of the SUV as we take off.

“You smell so good.” My tongue darts out, licking over his sweaty skin as I grind my panties over the front of his jeans. I can’t even manage to be embarrassed about it. Maybe I should be? No, I don’t think so, based on the way his pheromones flood the air in response to mine.

One of Ramsey’s forearms rests over the top of my ass, but his hand cups my hip, helping me grind over him. The growl he lets out says he’s enjoying it as much as I am. My core throbs, feeling achy and empty.

“You smell slick,” he whispers, tilting my head so he can get close to my ear. “I’m here. Take what you need.”

My face falls back to rest in the crook of his neck. He’s so potent, and I’m hypersensitive. My tits feel heavy and tender, my pussy throbs, and if everything wasn’t so hazy, then I might be less brazen about the way I roll my hips.

I don’t like to be in control. It’s so much easier when my partner takes the lead. A wave of cramping pain rolls through my abdomen, making me jolt.

“It’s not enough,” I whimper. I try to be quiet, but it’s a confined space, so I have no idea if it works.

Ramsey slides his free hand between us, and the pressure on my clit makes me moan. It’s nice, but it’s still not enough. I push up on my knees as my hands twine around his neck.

I should kiss him, right? Yeah, his thick lips are slightly parted. I don’t think he’d mind if I did. I don’t get to finish

debating with myself, because he shoves his mouth to mine first.

I moan as he licks the seam of my lips, applying pressure with the hand on my ass. It pushes me forward, shoving me against the palm he's got working my clit. He teases my lower lips with a thick finger at the same time as his tongue demands entry into my mouth. He kisses me with a frantic intensity that makes it feel like he's as desperate for me as I am for him.

My entire body pulses with heat.

I feel hot and hazy, like this is a dream, but if it is, then I'm totally here for it. I never get fun, sexy dreams.

Ramsey works his tongue into my mouth while long fingers yank my panties to the side. He pulls back from the kiss, and I try to follow him, but he speaks directly into my ear. "Is this okay?"

It takes a second to even process the words, and when I hesitate, he taps my now bare pussy with two fingers. I think it's a question to see if I'm okay with taking things up a notch.

I nod.

"You're sure?"

"So sure," I whisper, hungrily attacking his mouth. He grins into the kiss as two fingers slide up and down my lower lips while his palm teases over my clit.

The SUV bounces around a turn, and he chooses that exact moment to tease a fingertip inside me. It's not even the whole damn finger, and that doesn't work for me.

I work myself over his hand, forcing him deeper. He growls into the kiss as I gyrate my hips. The pad of his thumb feels amazing grazing my clit as our tongues clash.

Ramsey's arm holds me in place as that huge hand tightens on my butt. It pulls me closer to his front. I can feel his very hard cock bumping my pussy and ass as I work over him.

"More," I beg.

I don't know how he knows what I'm asking for, but he moves another thick digit inside of me. I focus on kissing the hell out of him to keep from sobbing out pleas for his knot. He crooks his fingers, brushing the front wall of my sex. It's so intense, and I know I'm leaking slick all over his hand. He rakes his teeth over my bottom lip before swirling his tongue over it. It doesn't break the skin, but the sting, combined with the way he works my sex, sends me over the edge.

“Come all over me.”

I don't know if he whispers the words or just mouths them against my lips, but my body doesn't need the command.

Locking down on his fingers, I dig my nails into the back of his neck. My hips swivel as I force his palm against my clit and moan way too loudly. Electric zips and zings shock their way through every nerve-ending I've got, making my whole body shake violently.

Holy shit. If this is what an orgasm is supposed to feel like, then I'd like a refund for every single one I've experienced up until this point.

Ramsey growls, and the sound makes my inner walls convulse. I've never had sex with an alpha, and I know this isn't even full-on sex, but I didn't expect it would be this intense. He keeps gently working his fingers in and out of me as a ragged purr starts in his chest. My face falls to listen, and it makes me feel warm and fuzzy in a way I can't explain.

My cheeks heat as I remember we're in a vehicle with not only Warrick and Fitz, but the driver and a security guy. My chest rises and falls as I try to catch my breath.

Ramsey tilts his head down, brushing his lips over mine, and murmurs, “I told you. I've got you, shortcake.”

I nod, cuddling closer to his purring chest. One hand is still around his neck, but the other moves to run over his pec. He's very comfortable for being so muscular.

I wake up as Ramsey puts me down on a bed. It's not one of the bunks, and it clicks that we're in the bedroom at the back of the bus. He helps me out of Ava's dress and tucks me under the covers in just my bra and panties.

I'm sleepy and kind of out of it, but I make a grab for his arm.

"Nah, I'm too riled. I need to paint the shower with my cum before I can sleep," he says, pecking a quick kiss on my lips. "Don't worry. If you need me, I'm only five feet away."

"Okay." What I want to say is that I'm not opposed to the idea of him painting *me* in his cum, but I snuggle into the pillow instead.

"Such a pouty little omega. Hey, by the way, happy birthday." He kisses my forehead, climbs off the bed, and the door closes behind him.

I huff, rolling over to face the wall. Before I can fall asleep, the door opens. I'm not sure who I want or expect it to be. I briefly consider pretending to be asleep. It would put off my problems until at least tomorrow.

Fitz crawls onto the bed and pulls the cover back before sliding up behind me. I blink repeatedly at the wall without the first clue what to do with myself. He plants a scratchy hand on my middle, yanking me back into his bare chest. *My* chest heaves as I suck in deep breaths, trying to figure out what the hell is going on.

"Do you remember that time in ninth grade when you had the flu?" Fitz buries his face in my hair, running his fingers over my stomach. "Mr. Johnson was an ass about making up tests, and you didn't want to risk it, so you went to school, anyway."

"Yeah, I remember."

Fitz signed himself out of class and drove me home rather than making me wait for one of my parents to come pick me up.

"And you finished the test, but when he went to collect it, you puked all over his shoes."

“Yeah.” That definitely happened too. It’s no wonder I got picked on mercilessly in high school.

“Sometimes it’s important to listen to what our bodies are trying to tell us.” He kisses the side of my head. “I’ve got you, Tinsel. I’m here if you need me.”

I scoot back even farther, because he’s warm and smells delicious, but more than that, I’ve had fantasies about being this close to Fitz for years.

This is dangerous territory for my heart.

I still can’t force myself to move away.

“I mean it. If you don’t know it by now, then…” Fitz exhales heavily, and I pick up the faint scent of beer on his breath. “Then I guess it’s time I do a better job of proving it to you.”

I’m fairly sure he falls asleep not long after the bus takes off. I, however, lie awake for quite some time. My mind won’t stop running through every second of the night and my interactions with all three men I’m currently sharing a tour bus with.

I wake up alone, fielding multiple calls and birthday texts from family and friends. I ignore the lengthy text from my most recent ex. It’s not worth opening. I think he needs to go through the stages of grief or something, but I’m not going to let him emotionally terrorize me while he’s on that ride.

Ride brings my brain to the trip back to the bus last night. The memories file through in the sexiest replay imaginable. The way Ramsey’s strong form felt pressing into mine. The warm heat of his skin. The delicious taste of his lips as he devoured me whole with kisses like I’ve never experienced.

My hands fly to cover my face as I smile like a total goofball.

Ramsey is gorgeous.

Am I supposed to be embarrassed about what happened?

He seemed into it.

Fitz and Warrick were only feet away during the whole exchange. Then Fitz's story about high school. It takes way too long to circle back around to tentative excitement, but when it hits, it hits hard.

My chances of ever presenting dropped dramatically today, *but* I had what felt like a full-blown wave of heat last night. My two older sisters have shared more details than I ever needed about what to expect.

Hope is a complicated emotion. Every time I've gotten excited or felt optimistic before, I ended up crushed when it didn't happen.

I can't tie alphas to me if I might never have a heat cycle. It wouldn't be fair.

I've had that talk with more than one doctor. My chances of having kids of my own plummet if I don't present. Without a heat to boost my fertility, it would be a slim chance I could conceive naturally.

Alphas and omegas are ruled by our impulses.

Alphas breed omegas.

Omegas love kids and want large families.

I'm sure there are exceptions to the rule, but I'm not one of them. It's not that I want to have kids tomorrow or anything. I'm still young, but I hate the thought of it never being an option.

It literally makes my heart ache when I think about it. I've always known that I'd like to have two or three children. Maybe more, if my partners were open to the idea of a big family and we could financially support everyone without a problem.

Adoption is an option I'm open to. But even then, I'd still love to experience being pregnant at least once in my life. I don't know why, but watching my older sisters, it just seems like such a special time in a person's life.

Don't do this. You'll drive yourself crazy.

The longer I'm in a confined space with three very compatible alphas, the more their presence seems to jump-start my system. Or maybe I'm grasping for straws because I'm desperate.

It's hard to tell.

It's my birthday. Sitting and wondering about things I can't change won't help anything. Also, I had a sexy moment with a really hot guy last night, and that seems like a better thing to focus on than my shortcomings.

Chapter Ten

Ramsey

I don't sleep for shit. I jerk off an embarrassing number of times, to get my cock to cooperate, and still spend half the night tossing and turning.

There's a bizarre energy that comes with being close to an omega. It's like hyperfocusing on her needs and how to keep her safe, but it also gives me a weird boost. Maybe it's that alpha pride everyone always talks about. I don't fucking know.

Being wired all damn night long leads to me bouncing off the bus as soon as we stop. I go shopping for Tinley's birthday gifts, but fuck knows if I get anything she actually wants.

I sigh, stretching back in the swivel chair. That's what courting is for. I don't have the benefit of having known her for years like Fitz, but I did the best I could under the circumstances. That fucker was completely *useless* when I asked for recommendations, but that's all right. I'll pay him back, plus interest, one day.

Tinley slides out of the bedroom at the back of the bus with an arm wrapped around her bra. Damn, maybe I should have been a gentleman and brought her a change of clothes?

I barely hold back the chuckle as she darts over to grab stuff out of her drawers and disappears into the bathroom. Nah, that was too cute to miss out on. I've never pretended to be a gentleman. It would probably be out of character to start now.

She pops out ten minutes later with wavy, wet hair.

“Good morning.” I give her my signature grin, but based on how miserable she looks, it might be the wrong call. “Happy birthday.” I lean forward, resting my elbows on my knees. “Fitz and War went out for breakfast. I’m sure they’ll bring us something back.” She still doesn’t say anything, so I stretch out in my chair, nodding to my lap. “I got you a little something. Sit with me?”

Are there other seats she could take?

Totally.

But I want to cuddle her and see where her head is at. Maybe figure out how to help her feel at ease with me.

The way her toes dig into the carpet as she considers my offer puts me on edge. After a few seconds, she gives a tentative nod that makes me grin. She crawls into my lap like a sweet little omega, and my hand flexes on her hip as she faces me.

“How are you feeling this morning?” I ask.

“Good. I didn’t drink enough last night to have a hangover or anything.”

“I wish I’d been that smart. I think I spent three days hungover or wasted when I turned twenty-one.” I grimace but exhale in relief when she lets out a light, tinkling laugh.

“Yeah, no thanks.”

I run through all the ways to approach the conversation we need to have. The pit in my stomach has only gotten worse the more hours I’ve had to obsess about everything.

“So, I’m kind of hoping you’ll tell me how you feel about what happened between us last night.” Fuck, I sound like a total loser.

War would growl something like, *spill everything you’re thinking and feeling*, and she’d magically comply.

I get a fucking shrug and my gut drops.

Tell me I wasn’t a predatory asshole.

“I didn’t mean to pressure you into anything—” I start.

She cuts me off by slapping my chest kind of hard. “Ohmigod, stop. You didn’t. Not in the least. I’m awkward on the best of days. I feel like this should be obvious.”

I swat her ass. “You’re cute. Don’t talk down about yourself.”

“I’m not. I just figure we should call a spade a spade.” Her fingers run over my clavicle in a similar way to how they did last night.

“I think you’re sexy. Don’t take that away from me. I dig it when you blush.” I laugh. “Your sweetness is addictive.”

“And you put me at ease, even when I’m mildly embarrassed.”

“Good, you don’t need to be self-conscious. I get that it’s hard because of the fame, but we’re just regular guys.”

“Ha, you think I’m intimidated because you play music? *Look at you.*”

“Thanks.” I chuckle, nuzzling my cheek to the top of her head. “But you’re ignoring that this goes both ways. Look at *you*. You rocked me to my foundations last night, shortcake.”

I don’t think I’ve ever been as real with anyone as I am about that. It was a literal battle all night long not to stomp down the hall and spear her on my cock—ideally while sinking my teeth in so that she’ll never be able to escape.

Alpha impulses are the real deal.

It’s no longer shocking to me that my parents bonded *for life* within three weeks of meeting. They’ve had a long and happy union. That leads me to believe Mother Nature knows what she’s doing.

I’ve been around unbonded omegas before and never once had the type of thoughts that are constantly running through my head since meeting Tinley. I’m not religious, but I do try to pay attention when the universe gives me a sign.

That’s why I intend to ask if she’s open to courting. It’s basically the equivalent of monogamous dating for betas. We buy her shit, she sees if she thinks she’ll be happy with us for

life, and we do the same. It's a pretty streamlined process for alphas and omegas.

Tinley sighs. "I feel like I have to be honest. I'm not technically an omega. I don't know if the doctors consider me a beta, now that I'm twenty-one and haven't presented, but I thought you should know."

I frown, remembering what Fitz said. She's never had a heat, but I guess I never thought through all the ramifications. To legally be an omega, the person has to have a heat cycle, no matter their anatomy. For male alphas, we have to pop a knot to present the same way female alphas develop a lock.

It's kind of bizarre when you think about it, but my instincts don't give a fuck that she's never had a heat. I'm fairly sure what she experienced last night was a wave of heat.

"My impulses are convinced you will," I say and immediately wish I'd kept my mouth shut. That sounded shitty, when all I was trying to do was reassure her. "Even if you don't, that's all right too."

"Yeah," she says weakly.

"Okay, so on to more uncomfortable subjects." I stretch forward, grabbing the printouts I grabbed from the tour doctor. "Might as well get them all out of the way at once, yeah?"

"What is this?" She takes the papers, scanning through them.

"It's mine, War's, and Fitz's pre-tour lab results. They test us before every trip. Likely to make sure we aren't..." Why don't I ever think before I speak? "Anyway, we're clean. They gave me the okay to show you their records."

"Okay." She flips through the pages. "I haven't had sex with anyone since my last relationship. I got tested after, but I don't have the results with me or anything. Maybe I could check the app? Or I could probably contact the doctor and ask ___"

My head shakes. "That's not necessary. Not for me, anyway."

Is it ridiculous that I'm strangely grateful she's not a virgin? It definitely makes me feel a fuckton less guilty. That's the complicated part when it comes to alphas and omegas. I physically couldn't stand the thought of leaving her in pain when she was perfuming, but once the fog slipped away, I had all sorts of opinions on what I could have done differently.

She hands me the papers back, chewing at her lip like she's thinking through something.

"Want to open your birthday gift?" I ask, clearing my throat and trying to figure out why I'm so awkward with her. I can flirt with almost anyone. It's kind of my gift.

"You really didn't have to get me anything." She smiles, patting my chest.

I toss the papers on the coffee table before picking up the gift bag.

"Oh, shortcake. I absolutely did." I put it between us, nodding.

She reaches into the bag, and her jaw falls as the expensive-as-fuck lens ricochets back into the bag, landing between us. "Holy shit, you got me the full-frame constant aperture telephoto master lens."

That was a mouthful, but I'm pretty sure that is what I bought. I nod, hoping it's still intact after that tumble. Oh well, if it's not, I'll buy a replacement.

"And the vertical grip in case you wanted it." I bite my lip as my heart beats faster.

God, I hope she likes it.

Let's just say that was a five-thousand-dollar trip to the camera store. It took four calls before I found a local spot that carries the model she has. The guy who sold me the accessories swore she'd love the grip since it has thumb controls. She has tiny hands, so it seemed like a good choice.

"Ramsey," she whispers, slapping me on the shoulder.

I chuckle. It's cute when she gets a little violent. "Do you like it? If you've got either of those already, then we can

exchange them for something else while we're in town."

"I love it, but I also know how much that stuff costs."

Shit, I didn't even think that might come off as a flex. "Can we not worry about the price tag and go based on how excited you are to get your hands on those killer accessories?"

She wiggles, pushing up on her knees. "Okay, but only because it feels really tacky and ungrateful to talk about the cost when it's an amazing gift." She brushes a quick kiss over my cheek. "But please know you don't need to spend that kind of money in the future."

"Noted." I capture her mouth as the bag crinkles between us. She's a naughty little thing, flicking her tongue against mine. The kiss turns from frantic to slow and intimately sweet. Not that I've had a lot of sweet moments with women. She pulls back, gasping for breath, and I bump my cheek against hers. "Consider this my notice that I want to court you if you're open to it."

She blinks at me, tilting her head, and I start to wonder what that look means. A slow smile breaks over her face, and I exhale in relief. "Yeah, I mean, if you're sure."

"I'm positive."

We grin at each other like total weirdos.

Damn. She's so beautiful, my heart tries to race out of my chest as she smiles.

We've got one final show tonight before we're off for three days. The label is putting us up in a hotel since it doesn't make sense for us to fly home for Thanksgiving, only to fly back on Black Friday. No fucking thank you.

The guys get back, and we eat a quick breakfast crammed together in the living room of the bus.

"I'm supposed to be doing candid interviews with everyone," Tinley says after we're all finished. She's fidgeting

in her seat, crossing and uncrossing her legs. She shrugs, picking at her fingernail. “I don’t know if I should put it off until after the holiday.”

“It’s your birthday.” War leans forward to study the food left in her takeout box. “You take the day off. That’s what you do.”

Tinley squirms, looking kind of uncomfortable. I cut my gaze to Fitz, but he’s watching her just as intently as I’ve been, so he doesn’t notice my stare.

“Yeah, but I already feel like I’m way behind on everything I have to tackle. It’s really important I don’t mess this up.” Her entire body bounces as she fidgets. “Then there’s the fact we’ll be off for days during Thanksgiving. Also—” She’s talking a mile a minute, but she freezes when Fitz leans over and squeezes her thigh.

“Did you take your meds this morning?” he asks in a tender tone.

Her head tilts as she blinks.

I recognize that look.

I note that face means she’s thinking something through.

“No, I think I forgot,” she finally says.

Fitz pats her leg and nods to the hallway. “You’re probably due for some hydration, anyway.”

“Yeah.” Tinley pushes herself up, heading for the bathroom.

“What was that about?” War asks once the door closes.

“She forgets to take her meds sometimes.” Fitz shrugs. “It’s always best to double check and give her a reminder. Also, if you haven’t seen her drink any water in four hours.”

I frown, shoving my take-out container on the overfull coffee table.

“Has anyone seen an orange bottle with my name on it?” Tinley asks, popping out of the bathroom. She heads to the kitchenette, grabbing a bottle of water out of the fridge before

taking some kind of medication that she has cupped in her hand. “I always leave them in the medicine cabinet, but one is there and the other isn’t. I don’t understand. I always put it back. I’m sure I did. If it’s in your way, then I can keep it in my drawer. It’s really not a big deal, but I just don’t get it. It was there yesterday morning.”

I blink. That was a whole lot of words all at once.

Warrick’s eyes meet mine as his jaw clenches. “What kind of medication?”

“My ADHD meds. I didn’t lose it.” Her tone is a little defensive. “My birth control is still there.” Her head shakes. “I’ll check my purse.”

“Yeah, you do that,” War says, shoving himself out of his chair. He stomps toward her, then runs his fingers over her cheek. “Don’t stress if you don’t find it.”

“I get super busy when I don’t take it on a schedule. I skipped my dose yesterday afternoon because I knew I might have a drink to celebrate my birthday.”

“Check around. I’m going to do the same.” He bends over, kisses her forehead, and heads for the door. The bus shakes as his big ass stomps down the steps.

Tinley jolts when the door slams behind him. “He seems upset.”

“Not at you,” I assure her.

“I’m going to look through my other stuff,” she says, spinning around and kind of skipping to the bunk area.

Fitz catches my gaze, quirking an eyebrow.

I give him a nod. “We were out for hours yesterday, looking for the two of you.”

“And you think someone on the tour came in and went through our shit?” Fitz growls, but it’s clear he’s trying to keep his voice down.

“I don’t think it’s impossible. War had a similar problem with his pain pills disappearing when he was healing.”

“Motherfucker,” Fitz says, turning so he can watch Tinley.

She’s busy tossing everything she owns out of the drawers under Fitz’s bunk. And suddenly her comment to Warrick makes more sense. She does seem a little hyper, but it’s also really freaking cute.

I frown, scratching my jaw.

Maybe I should offer to help.

I don’t want her to worry.

“Let her see if it’s there. If not, we can offer to help,” Fitz says, like he can read my mind. “If we get in her way right now, it’ll only make her more anxious.”

I give him a nod of understanding, but it’s really fucking hard not to follow Warrick to see what’s up.

I try to keep my nose out of other people’s business, but Tinley shouldn’t have to deal with this kind of garbage.

Warrick stomps back inside twenty minutes later. Tinley is curled up on the couch while Fitz runs his fingers through her hair. She sits up, and War tosses a bottle at her.

“Thank you,” she says with wide eyes as she studies the label. “I don’t understand. Where did I leave it?”

“You didn’t,” War growls, putting himself down on one of the swivel chairs. “Count them out and see what’s missing.”

“Seriously?” she whispers.

“Yeah, we’ll find a doctor to replace whatever is gone.” My twin looks like he’s about to bust a blood vessel.

“No, there are laws and stuff. They’re specific about what date I can even get them refilled. When I visited my grandparents one summer, I forgot them. My grandma had to go all covert drug dealer and mail them to my mom,” Tinley says, laughing. “I’ll check. Thank you.” She shoves herself up

and heads for the back bedroom, likely to give herself a flat surface to count them out on.

“Who?” I ask as soon as the door closes.

“Fuck if I know. They were on the bathroom counter in the other bus. That place is a fucking disaster. I had to climb over passed-out bodies to get to the bunks.” War sighs. “I’m so fucking over this shit.”

“Me too,” I agree, and I really am.

It’s hard to play every night with guys I no longer trust.

Chapter Eleven

Tinley

The guys head out for their afternoon practice, but I stay back to try to take a nap. I only got four or five hours of sleep last night based on my calculations, but it's hard to fall asleep. When I don't take my meds, I have trouble sleeping. I can usually fall asleep with no problem, but I only manage to get two or three hours of rest before waking up, and it always feels like I've slept an entire night. Eventually, the lack of sleep will make me irritable and it's a whole cycle.

I give up and head out to find my computer. I jump, taking a step back when I see Warrick lying on the couch. He's always so intense, but I'm not scared of him. I just wasn't expecting anyone to be around. "I thought you left to practice."

Warrick scoffs. "No, it's probably better if I interact with Carter and Xavier as little as possible until I cool off."

I meander closer. He looks unhappy, and my impulses ache to soothe that discomfort.

He leans up on a forearm, patting his chest. Even though I know it happened a while ago, the pink scar on his cheek still looks fresh. The skin is slightly puckered and red. He raises an eyebrow like he's waiting for me to do something.

I scramble forward and stretch out partially on the couch, but mostly on Warrick's chest.

"Happy birthday," he growls, kissing my forehead.

"Thank you." I barely keep myself from saying, *you too*. It's so random, but every year, I inevitably accidentally say it

to someone.

“I’m sorry about that bullshit with your medication.”

I shrug. “It’s not your fault. I’ve had the lecture before from my doctors about keeping it in a safe place. I’ll survive. I might be a little extra hyper and irritable until it’s time to refill it, but I can cut back and take half a dose instead.”

It’s mind-boggling how someone managed to go through over a week’s worth of medication in a night. I hope it wasn’t just one person, or their heart might explode. It’s a stimulant.

“You shouldn’t have to.” Warrick’s jaw is tight with tension, and my chest aches to soothe it. A warmth slips through my entire body as I run my fingers over his chest. “Jesus Christ, are you soothing me right now?”

I bite my lip, frowning.

My nose twitches.

I sit straight up, smacking his chest. “I think I *am* releasing soothing pheromones.”

“You don’t need to calm me, pretty girl. I’m okay.”

“Yeah, but I can,” I squeal. “I’ve never been able to before.”

Warrick smiles, and the sight is breathtaking. He’s definitely one of the hottest guys I’ve ever seen in person. The scars don’t distract from his looks in the least. If anything, it’s a reminder of his character. He’s the kind of man who goes out of his way to protect people.

“Let’s get your birthday gift.” He sits up and reaches between the couch and the wall. He grabs a box with a pretty pink ribbon. I realize I’m bouncing on my knees, vibrating with excitement. My eyes fly up to his because I was inadvertently grinding my pussy over his cock. “You’re too fucking cute.” He leans back on his forearm, nodding for me to open the gift. “It’s not as extravagant as Ram’s present.”

“That’s okay,” I assure him, pulling the lid off. “It’s actually better that way, because then…” I trail off as my fingers run over the super soft material. I pull it out, shaking it

to see what it is. It's a set of long-john pajamas in a reindeer print. They're red and green. The fabric is so soft that I pull it to my face to test it out. A stretchy headband goes flying, and I snatch it up. It's a pair of reindeer antlers. "I love this so much."

"Good, there's more." He cups my hips, giving them a squeeze.

I drop the pajamas between us and the back cushion of the couch and dig inside. There's a pink pajama dress. It has silver trim around the top and bottom, and tank top sleeves. It's the kind that's fitted up top and flared after the waist.

"This is just my style," I tell him with a grin. "You're really good at shopping for someone."

"This is just the beginning," he says. "There's one more thing for your birthday, and then we need to discuss courting."

"Really?" I whisper, studying his face. I've dreamed about a big growly alpha saying those words to me, but now that it's happening, it's a little hard to believe. I still feel obligated to tell him everything I mentioned to Ramsey earlier.

He palms the back of my head, teasing his fingers through my hair. "I'd like to court you if you're open to it." I swallow thickly, nodding my agreement. "Go ahead and open the last gift."

My eyes fall to the box, and there's a square wrapped with tissue paper. It's pretty big and takes up the entire bottom of the box. I pull it out, rip the paper away, and melt when I see the photo album.

My fingers run over the cover. "It's lovely."

"I know you have to work during this tour, but don't be afraid to take some pictures just for us." He smiles, encouraging me to open it. "You'll want to remember the courting process."

When I flip open the cover, there's a pocket lining the inside. My fingers run over the small rope closure. I bet this is for little cards or notes, maybe tags or tickets to shows or movies.

“I love it. It’s a perfect gift.” I carefully grab everything, shove it into the box, and put it on the coffee table. “Thank you.”

Warrick’s dark eyes stare into mine. His hand rests on my hip and the other on the back of my head. He’s so damn gruff and manly. My impulses scream to bare my neck to him.

I lick my lips, and he pulls me forward. He guides my hip, telling me to stretch up, and I do. He still has to bend low before his mouth can meet mine. I kind of attack him with little coordination, but he chuckles, sliding his tongue around mine in a sensual way that makes my thighs clench. He nips at my lower lip, tugging it with his teeth.

I freaking shiver in response.

Holy hell.

Warrick knows exactly how to drive me insane. His scent gets even more potent, and it makes my pussy throb. He’s so tall, I think I’m grinding over his pelvis just to be able to reach him for the kiss. His tongue teases mine as he holds me in a way that makes my impulses light up.

If I was a puppy, then my tail would be wagging.

We both pull back to catch our breaths, and he pecks a final kiss on my lips before marking each of my cheeks with his scent.

He squeezes my hip and laughs. “Don’t forget, pretty girl. I still owe you a birthday spanking.”

“A-Any time,” I stutter, my gaze falling to his lap. I used to get picked on a lot for it, but it’s gotten more manageable over the years. I really only stutter now when I’m overly excited or anxious.

“Let’s not rush things. I want to enjoy the slow buildup.” He bumps my cheek with his until I look up at him. There’s just enough raw sexual desire that my embarrassment melts away. My impulses settle as his massive hand runs up and down my spine.

The show tonight is an early call time. We'll be driving to the next city as soon as they're done with their responsibilities here. We get to spend a few days in a fancy hotel to celebrate Thanksgiving, then they'll have their show before we have to leave again.

It really is disorienting. All the cities are starting to blur together in a way I never expected. Before we left, I was sure I'd get the chance to view some landmarks or go sightseeing, but that was an unrealistic expectation.

A big security guy named Steve stands at my back as I test out my new lens and grip. He's kind of a mountain of *nope, find yourself somewhere else to stand*. I really appreciate it. I'm not getting tossed around like I did that first night.

Women and a few men with special backstage passes still crowd around, screaming and catcalling.

Ramsey is always at the back of the stage since he's on drums. I catch him looking over at me repeatedly during their last set. His tattooed forearms flex as he bounces between the drums and the cymbals. He's got his hair half up and half down, and it falls around his face as he moves.

I snap pictures, trying to catch *the one*. Sometimes it's luck, other times it's the dedication of taking a hundred pictures in three minutes, but I'll have to see what they look like when I clean them up. He's a gorgeous man; there's no doubt about his appeal.

I've always liked Northern Star's music, but I probably wouldn't have come to a concert without this opportunity presenting itself. Even I have to admit the energy is unreal. I'm not sure if I'm getting used to the chaos, or maybe I have a false sense of security since Steve is with me. I can't wait to see what this set of photos looks like.

Fitz flicks the long hair on the top of his head back while singing into the microphone, and my stomach flutters. He knows just how to play to the fans to make the women shriek.

I've never really gotten the whole rock star appeal, but Warrick steps up, and I officially get it. He and Carter end up back-to-back, both strumming their guitars, and all I can focus on are War's arms flexing as he plays the hell out of the song. His dark hair falls around his face as he focuses on his guitar.

It kind of makes me want to pounce on him and make him kiss me again, like he did earlier today.

They separate.

Warrick spins around on his boot, kicking out a leg as he tilts the guitar, and it makes my knees a little weak.

I am absolutely a convert to the Northern Star fan club.

Shit, I didn't get a picture. It's rare to see Carter and Warrick close enough to get them in one frame.

My nostrils flare, and it's like my body knows Warrick's sweaty scent is right there, just out of reach. I don't know what's going on. My hormones are out of control.

One of the women in the audience screams and flashes her breasts. My eyes widen. This is normal for rock stars. They see this kind of thing all the time. I wonder if they do that with married or bonded musicians.

My impulses feel very sure I should claw that woman's eyes out.

Has an omega ever successfully committed murder before? Probably. Unfortunately, I don't have that much faith in my skills, but it's tempting.

I wouldn't look good in a prison jumpsuit.

I shake my head, exhale heavily, and pull my camera up.

Everything is easier to handle through the lens.

I'm so beat following the show that I don't remember much of the meet and greet. I wake up alone in the bedroom on the bus, and it's moving. I frown, glancing around, but I'm still alone.

I don't know exactly what I was dreaming about, but I think it had something to do with my ex. I don't like thinking about it. I never intended to hurt him, but I guess that's just how life goes sometimes.

I rub my eyes. The room is dark, but there is some ambient lighting from the windows. Grabbing the blanket, I toss it aside and climb off the bed to go search for someone. I know the guys are planning to make up for my birthday tomorrow since we didn't do much on the actual day.

All three of them are in the living room. I stop dead in my tracks as I try to determine where I'm headed. Fitz sits up on the couch as Warrick and Ramsey swivel to face me.

"I had a bad dream," I whisper as my toes dance against the carpet. It's a little overwhelming with all three alphas staring at me.

"Come on," Fitz says, patting his bare chest. I scramble toward him. He immediately wraps his strong arms around me, pulling me into him. I nuzzle my nose to his skin, trying to find where his scent is strongest. A shaky breath shudders out as I cuddle deeper. His rich coffee scent floods my nose as someone yanks the blanket off the back of the couch and tucks it around us.

"Thank you," I mumble sleepily, rubbing my eyes.

"Anytime, baby girl." Warrick kisses the side of my head.

Oh, I like that even better than *pretty girl*.

Chapter Twelve

Fitz

I know what hell feels like from experience. We've done this twice before. Both times when Tinsel was stressed and needed comfort.

It's not her body pressed against mine that's the issue.

One second, I was brushing my fingers over her cheek, and maybe testing to see if the other occasions were a fluke, and the next, she latched on to my pointer and middle finger. Feeling her hot mouth suck on my thick digits has my cock uncomfortably hard. There's something that has always drawn me to her with a ferocity that would scare me if it was directed at anyone else.

She's absolutely precious.

Warrick grunts, and my eyes fly to the two of them.

"Don't say a fucking word," I growl softly. The last thing I want to do is wake her. Her sleep cycle gets thrown off when she doesn't take her meds. She can end up with insomnia for days.

"Yeah, I don't actually envy you anymore." Ramsey chuckles. "How hard is your dick right now?"

"Extremely," I grunt. Warrick glances between us and his phone. "What the hell are you doing?" I keep my voice as low as possible.

"Looking for options that are better on her teeth." Warrick shrugs, speaking just as softly.

“She’s not into age play. She’s not going to suck on a pacifier or wear diapers.” I give him a *fuck off* look to let him know I’m serious about that.

“Okay,” Warrick says. “I never said she was, but again, that’s *her* choice.”

One thing I’ve learned from filling in for bands is that they *all* haze each other. Secrets don’t stay buried for long. Northern Star is no exception. I’ve heard the others make comments about Warrick.

“So, you’re not a Dom?”

“I am,” Warrick easily agrees. “You are too. You might not have explored that side of yourself, because you’re young, but it’s practically impossible to be an alpha without needing that level of control.”

“I’m not saying that’s not true for you.” Ramsey chuckles. “But I think you’re stereotyping. I don’t need rules or to be called *Sir* to enjoy sex. I’m also totally fine with the woman taking the lead.”

I don’t say anything.

I’ve got no experience to compare.

It used to bother me when the guys I played football and baseball with would taunt me about it, but I’m really fucking grateful I get to tell her I waited for *her*. If we hadn’t met until later in life, then that would be one thing, but I’ve always known she’s it for me. The idea of fucking someone else not only felt slimy, but it felt disrespectful. I would have been using them to pass the time. I’ve always known that she’s my endgame. I’ve done everything in my power to not fuck that up.

“Okay,” Warrick says to his brother, but he looks directly at me. “You remind her to eat, take her medicine, use the bathroom before bed. You follow her with your eyes anytime she’s in a room. You’ll piss her off to keep her safe. Tell me what part of that says you haven’t been topping her long before we came on the scene.”

My jaw falls.

“Damn.” Ramsey chuckles softly. “He might be right.”

“And you.” Warrick looks at his brother. “You mistake having a woman be on top during sex for not being in control. You might be right—not all alphas are Doms—but I’m not the type of top who wants to be called Sir. I don’t want her deference in anything except matters of safety and her well-being. I’d never be with anyone I couldn’t trust to stick up for themselves or tell me if something was too much.”

I nod.

I’ve got a similar sentiment when it comes to Tinsel. Maybe I’ve never had the chance to explore those desires, but I do know I’ve got them. Her tongue flicks over my fingers as she sleeps.

My head falls back as I groan.

“She’s naturally submissive,” Warrick starts. “But I think part of that is because omegas crave stability. They want a foundation and someone to look after them. Does it mean they can’t make choices for themselves—”

“Fuck no,” Ramsey and I say at the same time. That was kind of loud, and all three of our gazes fall to the sleeping beauty, but she’s still out.

“Exactly,” Warrick says. “But they are more comfortable when they can pass off decisions they don’t want to have to make. Our domineering, protective impulses have someone to focus on, and it allows them to feel secure. Nature designed that compatibility perfectly.”

My free hand moves from her back up to palm her head. I’ve always done everything I can to keep her safe. I’m not afraid to make the calls that she finds overwhelming, but I in no way control her.

Nor would I ever want to.

The one exception to that was when she started dating.

I really didn’t want her with anyone but me.

I did everything I could to get her to take me seriously. I asked her to prom and somehow ended up bringing her and my

little sister. Which was awkward as fuck, but it kept her from going with any of the other assholes who would have inevitably asked—at least for that year.

Warrick can scowl and grunt and she flutters her lashes and finds it endearing. I don't know how to convince her to see me as an option.

“I hate you,” I say, looking at Warrick.

He snorts. “You'll get there. She cares about you too. It's plain to see.”

“She isn't interested in me like that.” At times, I've been convinced she is, but she always closes off shortly after we have a moment.

“You've got to make an actual move.” Ramsey leans forward like he's about to impart some secret wisdom. “She seemed surprised when I told her how into her I am, but she was receptive. You've got to give her a sign. Something that she can't write off as her misinterpreting it.”

“Women love to wake up to orgasms.” Warrick scratches his jaw. “Never mind. You need existing groundwork for that. I don't think you're quite at that level. Take her to bed, and when she wakes up, flat out tell her you want to court her.” He nods, agreeing with himself.

I study her face as she grunts in her sleep. What if I fuck everything up and she pushes me away completely?

“I think you've got to, bro,” Ramsey says. “It's been too long, and you got friend zoned.” He laughs. “Which is kind of wild, considering.”

“Watch it,” I growl.

“*Considering* it's clear you're head over dick in love with her. I don't get how she's missed it.” Ramsey jabs a tattooed finger at me. “And don't ever assume I'm about to say something shitty. Not cool, man.”

“Sorry.” I've gotten overly defensive about anything to do with her. I've had to cut people out of my life when they couldn't respect that she's it for me. I guess I do have some

traits of my designation because I'm stubborn as hell. I've never been one to fall in line just to fit in.

"It needs to be a team effort," Ramsey says. "All three of us as a united front. She gave me the talk about how she hasn't presented."

"Me too," Warrick says. "It seems like she's worried no one will want her if she doesn't have a heat."

"I know, and it kills me." I nuzzle my cheek to her head, marking her with my scent. "You do understand her chance of having biological children diminishes if she doesn't have a heat, right?"

I know she told them the basics, but I need to be sure they understand the full picture. I hadn't thought it through until my sister mentioned it, and if there's any chance they're going to back out, they need to do it now. And not because I don't share well. If they can't handle the possibility, then they need to make that clear before she gets attached to them.

"Damn," Ramsey whispers. "I hadn't thought about that."

"I had," Warrick replies. "But it doesn't bother me unless it's important to her. If it is, then we're financially stable enough to ensure she sees the best doctors money can buy. If that doesn't work, we'll go from there."

My eyes cut to Ramsey's.

"I mean, not that I've given it a whole lot of thought, but I'd be down for kids. It's a family decision when that time comes." He shrugs. "It's not a make-or-break thing for me. I could go either way."

"She does want children, but I think that's another big concern for her. You know how alphas and omegas are. When was the last time you saw a pack without kids?" I look between them.

"That makes more sense. I couldn't figure out why an actual heat would matter, considering how her pheromones affect me in general," Ramsey says.

“We’ll just have to prove that we’re here for her. Not heats or kids or anything outside of keeping her.” I’ve walked the line of testing the waters for too long. It’s time to lay it all out there and be blatantly clear how much she means to me.

I wake up with Tinley’s ass plastered to my pelvis. My cock is jammed between her thighs. She wiggles closer, and I growl. Her scent is so thick, I’m sure it qualifies as perfume.

“Fitz,” she moans as my hand tightens on her stomach.

“I’m here, Tinsel.” My hips grind against her ass, and the pressure on my cock feels amazing. “You smell extra ripe this morning.”

She nods. “I ache.”

She tries to curl up into the fetal position, but my hand tightens on her hip and stomach.

“Are you having a wave?” I pull on her earlobe with my teeth. The whine she releases rattles around the small bedroom. My hand slides up, turning her face to mine. “I’m going to kiss you.”

She surprises me by rolling over until she’s facing me. God, she’s so fucking beautiful, even with the crazy bedhead and sleepy eyes.

“I want that.” Her soft fingers caress my neck.

I growl, diving forward to capture her mouth. She tastes sweet, even first thing in the morning, but it might be the way her nails dig into my neck that sends the fog slipping in.

My baser instincts flare, demanding I mount, rut, and claim my omega.

Aww, fuck.

This might be a problem.

My alpha and omega dynamics teacher told us the caveman loop is the danger zone for alphas. It means we’re

teetering on the line of losing common sense.

Tinley shoves her chest against mine. I roll onto my back and she shimmies on top of me. My hand wraps around her lower back, pulling her pussy down hard on my cock.

She leans back, chest heaving. “Did I just maul you?”

I snort, rolling us until her back hits the mattress. She blinks up at me as my thighs cage her in.

“Hardly.” I swallow thickly. My heart wants me to confess that I’m hardcore in love with her. My head swears that would scare her. I’ve tried everything, from being blatantly obvious about my feelings, to subtly showing her how much she means to me. “I care about you.” A heavy breath escapes, and I grimace, wondering if I’ve got morning breath. Nah, I can’t back out again. I’ve got to be clear. “I’ve been attracted to you since the first time we met. I have feelings for you, Tinsel.”

“Seriously?”

“I’m so fucking serious,” I assure her.

“I do too,” she whispers as her eyes clench closed. I much prefer seeing her pretty blue eyes stare back at me. “I don’t want to lose you. I’m afraid—”

“You won’t.” I lower on my forearm slowly until my chest rests against hers, and when she doesn’t object, I push my mouth to hers. I’m pretty sure she can feel my heart trying to pound through my ribs. It’s thumping with the same pulse that radiates in my dick. She’s so short, my cock bumps around her thighs as we kiss. It’s not perfect at first, but once she settles down, she lets me take the lead, which only ramps up my obsession.

Her fingers slap against my abs, and I pull back, settling on my knees as she curves toward me. “Your pheromones are making me ache.”

“Let me take care of you?” I slide my hands up her sides.

“Yeah, I need you.”

“You never have to beg when I’m around.” I help her lean up by moving a hand between her and the bed. I caress her

spine before yanking the long pajama shirt off over her head. It was bunched around her hips while we made out. I toss it aside and my eyes instantly fly back to hers. She slept without a bra last night. Her tits heave as she pulls me in for a kiss.

I growl against her lips as her back falls to the mattress. Her legs are trapped between mine, but I want them wrapped around me. I tell her that, holding myself up in a plank with my toes and one forearm. I land back on top of her as her feet dig into my ass. Her hips roll to meet mine, making my cock leak all over the front of my sweats.

I pull her head to the side, licking and sucking from her neck to her tits. My tongue flicks over her pink nipple. I love the way she trembles and digs her nails into my back.

“Fitzy,” she snaps. “I am going to have to hurt you if you don’t make me come.”

I snort a laugh. Holding myself up on my forearm, I move to kiss her again. My free hand slips down her soft skin and into the band of her panties. I pull them off her with only a little difficulty. “I haven’t done this in a long fucking time. So, I’m going to need some direction.”

“What?”

“I fooled around with a few people before I met you, but I’ve never stuck my dick inside anyone—”

“Honestly?”

“I swear to God. I wouldn’t lie to you,” I tell her, brushing my lips over hers.

“That’s really hard to wrap my head around,” she whispers. “But I do trust you.”

My fingers tease down her slick pussy lips, and she’s so drenched, my head gets foggy. She uses her feet on my ass to push herself against my touch, and I grin.

I test her hole with a finger while flicking my thumb over her clit, and she claws at my back. My mouth seals to hers, and the feeling of her tongue teasing mine makes my cock

ache. She's so wet that I add another thick digit with little resistance.

She wiggles her toes into the top of my sweats and somehow manages to shove them down while I'm still lost to the kiss.

I pull back to cup her tit and move to yank my sweats down to my knees since they're strangling my cock.

Her eyes widen as her soft hand tries to wrap around my thick girth.

I smirk.

I can't help it.

I'm officially addicted to that look. I'd like to burn it into my retinas, so I never forget how enticingly beautiful she is at this very moment.

"You should get inside me," she says, nodding frantically.

Holy fuck, I want that too. I need to know what she'll feel like, but I've got plans for us today.

"Work your clit," I growl. My fingers finally slide free of her pussy, and I use her slick as lube. My thumb teases over my crown as she stares, mesmerized. "Now, Tinsel!" It comes out as a bark that surprises both of us.

Her hand falls to her pelvis as she glares up at me. "You barked at me."

"Sorry." I chuckle, thrusting up into my fist. "Work that pretty pussy for me."

Her eyelashes flutter as she teases her fingertips down to do exactly that. I'm utterly fucking transfixed. I need to see how she does it; that way, I'll know how to make her scream next time. She spreads herself open, using her ring and pointer finger, while her middle seems to circle her swollen nub.

Jesus Christ, my mouth waters as her pheromones flood the air.

It's intense. My peripheral vision goes hazy. Damn, I never knew it was an actual physical response to the fog.

I keep my fist wrapped around my shaft but loosen my grip. If I'm not careful, I'll come before she does, and I'd really like to make sure that happens at the same time. I'm not optimistic that I can hold off if I get to see the faces she makes.

I was jealous *as fuck* watching her with Ramsey, but the worst part was not being able to see her expressions. I use my core and knees to keep me steady as I dip my mouth to hers. My tip slides against her lower lips.

"Fitz," she whimpers into my mouth.

She's so wet that the first few inches of my length are fully coated in her slick. I don't know what the fuck to do with myself. I ache to slam balls deep inside her. My impulses scream that I've got a highly compatible omega under me. It's time to rut, claim, and breed. Her fingers brush over my crown as my tongue dances against hers.

"You're so fucking wet," I growl as she nips at my lower lip. "I'm so close to snapping, it's not even funny."

She feels so small in comparison to me that it gives me real pause. The fact that I notch at her hole spurs me on, but I freeze as my eyes meet hers. I've still got my fist wrapped around my knot, and my other forearm fell to the bed to hold me up at some point.

"Please," she whispers.

"It's practically impossible to deny you anything." My head shakes. "But I have a special date planned. I was hoping to wait until after that. I want the chance to court you properly."

"Fine, but shove your fingers back inside me. I need pressure, dammit," she grumbles, wiggling around.

Holy fucking shit, it's nearly impossible not to bust out *I love you*.

Chapter Thirteen

Tinley

The look on Fitz's face makes my chest feel tight. I'm already achy and hot all over, but I think it's that raw vulnerability that has me whining.

Fitz snarls, and the next thing I know, I'm hovering over him as his back lands against the mattress.

My pussy rests over the base of his shaft with my lower lips perfectly lining him. I give a roll of my hips and he curses under his breath.

"I'm trying to be a gentleman here." He slaps my backside. "It's really fucking tough when you keep putting my paper-thin self-control to the test."

I shiver as goosebumps break out down my arms. I want him to snap. I want the feral alpha, taking what he wants. I'm still rational enough to understand it's only hot because it's Fitz.

I shimmy down so I can get his cock in my mouth. I'm aching and want him inside me, but if he's not going to do the damn thing, then tasting him seems like the next best option.

My mouth latches on to his tip as he curves forward, growling, "Oh, fuck." My tits bounce against his thighs as I get settled with a hand wrapped around his thick length. "Tinsel..." It sounds like a warning slipping from his lips. I love the desperate, gravelly tone his voice turns into when he's turned on.

My tongue teases over the weeping slit as I hold myself up on my knees, wrapping both hands around his girth. He's

massive, and if I wasn't so turned on, I might find it intimidating. As it is, I'm so achy and desperate that I'm sure he'll fit. Not just fit, but he'll stretch my body perfectly.

"Nah, I need your cunt in my mouth," Fitz growls, pulling me up and off him. He lifts me, turning me to the side. My legs end up pointing toward his head as his cock bumps my cheek.

This was a much better plan. I lick my lips and dive back down. His length slides over my tongue much easier from this direction. I wobble, falling against his chest and stomach as he lifts my knee, moving it to the other side of his head.

Every nerve-ending in my body lights up with pleasure as he flicks his tongue over my clit. One arm wraps between us and around my middle as he shoves two fingers inside me.

Maybe I'm easy to please, or it could be that Fitz just gets me on some deep level, because he knows how to send me soaring. I whimper around him and focus on making sure he feels as good as I do. His sticky tip is dripping pre-cum all over my tongue. He tastes like coffee. I lick and suck like an omega lost to the fog.

"Fuck, maybe try not to embarrass me? I'm already way too close to blowing my load in your sweet mouth." His accent shines through so much thicker when he's aroused. I love it.

My impulses hum in delight, but it's nearly impossible to stay focused as he rakes some magical spot inside me. The same one Ramsey teased.

"Right there," I choke out.

He groans, thrusting deeper into my mouth, using his feet as leverage. I'm grateful. I'm uncoordinated as I grind over his face with enough force, my tits bounce against his stomach. His cock swells, growing even wider and thicker. I want to make sure he receives pleasure too, so I still my hips and focus completely on him.

"No, ride my face. Fuck, I'm there if you want to pull off," he groans. "I'm about to come a fucking river."

I shake my head. I need to taste him. My thumb rubs down the top of his shaft as he thrusts into my mouth. I make sure to cup his knot, and he growls. The first hot, sticky shots of his cum fill my mouth. I try to swallow it all, but it spills out around my lips as he just keeps coming. It's so sexy that it nearly sends me over the edge. Or that might be the way his snarl vibrates against my sex while he teases my G-spot.

I gasp, moaning around his length as he grinds me over his mouth. Pleasure coils tight as my pussy begins to contract around his fingers. Electricity zaps its way through me as heat pulses, and I come with a scream that's way too loud for such a confined space.

I shake and tremble, frantically grinding my core over his tongue. It gets to be too much as I start to come down, but Fitz continues tormenting my oversensitive clit as his arm holds me in place.

I groan, shakily trying to wiggle away. His cock falls against his stomach as I move to kneel next to him.

"Fucking hell," he growls, sitting up enough to pull my mouth to his. "That was so hot."

"It sure was," Ramsey says from the doorway as Fitz rakes his teeth over my bottom lip.

I jolt, letting out a squeak, but Fitz holds me in place with his hand on my ass.

"Out," he growls.

"We made it to Nashville." Ramsey chuckles. My nipples get even tighter as I squirm on my heels. We got up close and personal, but I wasn't naked for that. He gives me a solid once-over and winks, spinning around and walking out without another word.

"Come here." Fitz lifts me, laying me down with my head on his chest. I toss a leg over his thigh, but I'm drenched, and it makes my face flame. Fitz has unnaturally long arms, because he grabs my leg, pulling it back as we both catch our breaths. "You've been mine since the first time I laid eyes on

you. Now that I've had a taste, there's no way I can let you get away. I hope you're happy with that."

My heart flares as I nod against his skin. It's all I've dreamed of and more. Holy shit, I hope this isn't a dream. I pinch my forearm and blow out a breath of relief when it stings.

It's a little intimidating, but I trust Fitz more than pretty much anyone. "Yeah, definitely."

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, but the guys are insistent that we don't need to cook or make reservations. Not that I'm all that great at cooking, but I would try. I'm used to helping my mom and sisters during the holidays.

Today is *my* day to really celebrate my birthday, according to Fitz. We eat a small early lunch of sandwiches delivered by catering before we leave the bus.

I bring my camera with us, and Warrick swears my bag will make it to our suite with no trouble. It's not that I don't trust him. It's just a little stressful, considering what already happened with my medication, but I do my best to push that out of my mind.

Fitz has taunted me nonstop that I'm going to love everything he has planned. He's always been good at coordinating activities for us, and this feels extra special considering Ramsey and Warrick are coming too.

It's a real courting date, the same way my mom described how she got to know my dads.

We start out the afternoon at the various music statues in downtown Nashville. They're kind of cool. The guys pose for pictures, and even though I get a little anxious handing off my camera, I still do so I can be in a couple. The street is busy with vehicle traffic, making it easier for us to walk to the next attraction.

The entire area is incredible, and I get awesome pictures with the guys around the historic signs. Not to mention, there's a whole walking tour. We meander past the honky-tonk bars and the western theme is prevalent. It's chilly, but not so frigid that it's impossible to enjoy ourselves.

"You're looking a little tired," Warrick growls close to my ear as we continue down the sidewalk.

"Nah, this is awesome." I grin up at him, cupping my hand to block the afternoon sun from my eyes. Warrick immediately sidesteps. I laugh, shaking my head. "That's convenient."

"It's always nice when I can use my size for something good." He smiles, wrapping his hand in mine. "I'm going to guess your short, little legs are tired from all the walking."

"I'm okay." I give his hand a squeeze to let him know I appreciate it.

"Would you like a piggyback ride?"

I didn't know that was an option. My head shakes. "No, I'm too heavy for that."

Warrick has me lifted and wrapped around his back before I can blink. I freak out, patting around for my camera until I spot it in his hand. "Hold on tight, pretty girl."

He strides forward on long legs, and it takes practically no time to catch up to Ramsey and Fitz. They're surrounded by a small cluster of mostly women. My heart drops. I know not everything is about physical beauty, but it's a little hard not to compare myself to the women fluttering their lashes at *my guys*.

Ramsey pulls a permanent marker from his back pocket and winks in our direction. "Sorry, our girlfriend finally caught up. Can I sign something for you before we head off?"

"*That's* your girlfriend?" one of them asks. It's not the words, but the indignation, or possibly disbelief, lining her tone that makes my stomach drop.

I'm pretty sure this is something anyone who dates a celebrity or public figure will have to deal with from time to

time. It still bothers me a little.

Warrick's grip tightens on my calves.

Ramsey just laughs. "Yeah, it's hard to believe she puts up with me. I've got a plan to keep her so dick drunk she never realizes how big of a pain in the ass I really am." He smirks. "Sorry to run, but we've got a reservation to get to."

Warrick walks straight by them without a word as I bury my face in his back.

"Those little legs never stood a chance. Did they, shortcake?" Ramsey jogs to our side, slapping me on the butt.

Fitz appears on my left, but he looks anxious.

I give him a smile. "I really do love this. It's an awesome date."

Fitz nods as I try to figure out how to put him at ease.

No one else's opinion matters.

Not really.

Let them think what they will. If I let those women get to me, then that insecurity could cost me something really good. I've noticed there are some people who don't seem to appreciate the sanctity of other people's relationships. It's shitty because they definitely wouldn't like it if someone did the same to them.

My right hand tightens around Warrick's neck as I stretch out my left for Fitz. He wraps his fingers in mine, and my impulses hum in delight. He can't control how other people act, and they've done everything right to set me at ease. I'm going to have to toughen up, but in the meantime, there's no way I'm letting one snarky comment ruin my day.

We end up at a restaurant that's kind of fancy. I'm not completely convinced they'll let us inside, considering we're

all dressed pretty casually, but they usher us directly to a circular booth in a semi-private area.

Ramsey and Fitz have a shoving match when we take our seats.

Fitz scoots in at my side.

Ramsey glances at his brother.

“Not a fucking chance,” Warrick growls, sliding in on my other side.

I catch Ramsey’s gaze as he grumbles his way through sitting on the edge. “Next time.”

“I’ll hold you to that.” Ramsey grins as the hostess lays out menus.

Placing our orders goes smoothly enough, and the guys make easy conversation as I browse through pictures.

I have to buckle down. I need to start the interviews and private photo shoots soon.

“Damn.” Warrick leans close to see the small screen on my camera. “You’ve got incredible skills.”

I almost scoff. Pretty much anyone can get lucky and take an awesome picture. Half the job comes when I clean them up. Actually, maybe more than half.

I shove my hair back with my free hand. “Thank you. I’m not one-hundred-percent where I want to be, but I’m learning a lot as we go.”

“You’re still young.” Warrick tosses his arm around the back of the booth, and I’m drawn to snuggle into his side.

“Now that’s a chance for a perfect picture.” Ramsey holds out a hand for my camera. I carefully offer it to him, and he snaps a few pictures before Fitz makes sure he’s close enough to get in on the photo op. He kisses my cheek as I stare up at Warrick’s handsome face.

It definitely has been a birthday to remember.

Warrick and I have seriously opposing views on who is in charge of ensuring I eat a healthy and calorie-rich diet. His knees hit mine as he turns even farther into the booth.

“I’m saving room for dessert,” I tell him for the second time. “If I fill up on the meal, I won’t be able to try both options! I saw two that I want.” My arms cross over my chest as I stretch back against the booth. “Maybe three,” I mutter under my breath.

“Oh shit.” Ramsey chuckles. “I think we’re about to see who reigns supreme when it comes to being stubborn.”

“Sorry to burst your bubble, but it’s not you, pretty girl.” Warrick picks up my fork and knife and slices off a piece of my steak.

“I said I’m full.”

“Of room for actual food,” Warrick scoffs. “You barely had four bites of steak.”

Fitz shoves his empty plate away. “She never eats much meat.”

“And that would be fine if she were filling her diet with enough protein and fats.” Warrick moves the fork close to my mouth as his other hand falls to rest on my thigh. “Omegas, especially, have to make sure they’re eating enough nutrients. Otherwise, you’re more prone to bone disease, like osteoporosis, and even cavities can be an issue.”

“Maybe she should have milk with her meal next time instead of soda.” Ramsey scratches his jaw like he’s actually thinking that through.

“Are you sure you want to suggest that when you’ll be sitting next to me?” I ask. “I might be tempted to stab you with my fork. You forking traitor.”

“Forking?” Ramsey snorts.

“Open,” Warrick growls.

I spin to face him, intending to tell him I'm an adult who can make her own choices, but he plays dirty. His thick fingers slide up my skirt, dancing over my leggings right at the apex of my thighs. The contact makes me gasp. He unceremoniously shoves the steak in, and I'm so shocked, I chew and swallow without argument.

"I can't believe that worked," Fitz says, running his hand higher on my thigh on the other side. "Is that all I've had to do all these years to get you to eat a little more?"

Warrick gets close to my ear and says, "There are benefits to being an agreeable little omega." His hand pulls away, and he slaps my clit over the fabric with the back of his fingers. "Just like there are consequences if you don't behave."

I freaking tremble in response. My impulses want to be an *agreeable little omega*, so maybe he'll call me a *good girl*. And yet, I'm also fascinated by the prospects of being naughty and finding out what those consequences feel like.

Ramsey is right across from me, and my jaw falls when I see he's been taking pictures of this little exchange. At least what happened *over* the table.

I swallow thickly.

"How about a bite of broccoli?" Fitz suggests. "She didn't even touch that."

"The vegetable came with the meal," I say indignantly. "It seemed rude to ask them to leave it off."

Warrick's low chuckle vibrates in the air as he dips the broccoli in the sauce it came in. "A couple of bites of this, and you can have those desserts you're so desperate for." He gets so close, his warm breath hits my neck. "Or we can take a trip to the restroom to revisit the idea of not-so-fun spankings."

God, why is that so hot? My eyes flutter shut as my thighs clench. Unfortunately, both alphas' hands are still resting on my thighs. Their low laughter says they firmly understand the effect his words had on my body.

I open my mouth at the same time as my eyes. Ramsey leans forward, watching with rapt attention, as my lips wrap

around the tines of the fork.

Oh yeah, three alphas are absolutely a lot to handle.

Chapter Fourteen

Warrick

I've always had excellent self-control. My workout regime gets fucked up during tours, but I'm disciplined to the point some would call me rigid.

Okay, many have, but fuck them.

I got to where I am today through hard work and commitment. I'm sure some of landing a contract was pure luck, but that's just how life played out.

There are fifty bands who wanted it just as badly as we did, but we got lucky being scouted by Ruined. They treat their artists fairly and don't run us into the grave to make a buck.

That's why it baffled me that no one took me and Ram seriously when we brought up Carter's issues. We rarely get face-to-face meetings with Jamen Jacobs or any of the other higher-ups at the label. I'm starting to think our concerns are being squashed before they can make it up the ladder.

It is what it is. The industry is rampant with addiction. It still doesn't mean I'm letting my omega get a front-row seat to any of it.

Thinking of her seems to summon her closer.

Tinley somehow sweet-talked each of us into getting our own dessert, and she adorably tried every damn one of them. But she's a little miserable once all that food settles, so we aim for the hotel.

It's a difficult balance.

I've got no real authority to guide her or make decisions on her behalf.

Rationally, I know that.

My impulses don't give a shit.

That's my omega, and I'm going to do everything in my power to look out for her, even if it occasionally makes me come off as an asshole.

Weight means zero to me, outside of the fact I've seen she's not eating enough calories. Most omegas tend to have an affinity for sweets because their biology stores that fat to be used during a heat.

Unfortunately, they also need protein, complex carbs, and a whole fuckton of nutrients to ensure their body doesn't leach those vitamins out of their bones and teeth in an attempt to prepare for little baby alphas and omegas.

Whether it's possible for her to get pregnant without presenting is irrelevant. I'm sure the same is true for all women of childbearing age, whether or not they choose to try for kids. That means I need to help ensure she doesn't regret her eating choices when she gets older. Vitamin deficiencies and bone diseases aren't a joke.

They wouldn't have given us multiple tests on it when we were in school if it wasn't important. God, I hated that class. They forced me and Ram into it in high school, but I haven't had any omega education since then. It's actually a blessing, now that I think about it. I should do some more research and make sure I haven't forgotten anything important in the last ten or twelve years.

Fuck, I *am* an obsessive bastard. My impulses are focused on ensuring I do everything right when it comes to her.

My head falls back against the seat of the SUV. Tinley doesn't seem opposed to letting me take the lead.

Who knows why I need it, but I really do. Ramsey seems fine going with the flow. Maybe I'm just especially difficult to get along with? Not to mention, my physical scars are still

ugly as fuck. That plastic surgeon lied when he said I just have to give it time.

“Are you okay?” Tinley asks, leaning against my side.

“I’m good.”

She huffs. “Either I’m picking up on someone else’s discomfort, or all those desserts were a bad idea. They were delicious, but my tummy hurts.”

Damn, I always forget that omegas can tune in to the emotions of those around them. My right hand tightens on her hip as I pull my left over. She lets me slide it up under her dress until I’m touching her bare skin.

“Sorry, sweet girl. Let me help.” I run my hand over her stomach in soft touches. Just enough to give her that extra contact and let her know I’m here.

She nuzzles against my shirt, rolling her head up to face me. “You’re really good at taking care of people. You must have a lot of practice.”

I laugh.

“Not as much as you’d expect.” I kiss her forehead as my mind races. They say omegas are possessive of their alphas. Not that I have much experience with them firsthand, but I know how my mom is. She’s the sweetest lady you’ll ever meet until she thinks someone is flirting with one of my dads.

I chuckle at the thought. Damn, I am getting old. I want to settle down. Come home to the same beautiful face after a long day.

All the cheering fans don’t mean much when you crawl into an empty bunk at the end of every night.



The suite I rented is every bit what they described when I called. I made it clear to Gavin that we wouldn’t be staying next to the rest of the band. I know them well enough to know

that, holiday or not, they'll still be partying, and the noise will carry throughout the entire floor.

I need a break from all of it.

The label will still be catering our dinner tomorrow. It'll just be delivered to a different room. I don't mind footing the bill to have some space from everything.

For not feeling so great on the ride, Tinley sure perks up once we make it to the room. She bounds around, checking out each of the bedrooms. All of our stuff was delivered by the roadies and then the hotel staff, but it's piled by the door, waiting for us to put it wherever we end up.

"Holy shizz," she squeals. "This one has a Jacuzzi tub with jets. It's big enough it looks like a swimming pool *inside* the room!"

Ram chuckles, putting his hair up in a tie. "She makes everything feel new and exciting, or is that just true for me?" He watches me carefully.

Everyone who actually gives a shit about me has been worried since I was stabbed. I know I'm lucky. I've got a loving family, genuine people in my corner, and a solid head on my shoulders. I've known from the moment I woke up in that hospital room that I couldn't let it destroy me, but even I can admit I've been in a rut.

I've been surviving without really living.

"She does," I agree as she runs out of the room on the right. She slides across the tile floor and takes the turn into the next bedroom.

Fitz follows a few seconds later, laughing and shaking his head.

"*Fitzzy*, this one has a balcony! With a view of the fountain!" The excitement in her voice makes me smile.

The skin around the wound on my cheek pulls tight, which never feels great, but I ignore it. My feet propel me toward my omega. I need to see each expression on her pretty face firsthand.

We settle in, relaxing around the suite for a couple of hours. Fitz and Ram head out to grab dinner, despite the hotel having a full room-service menu.

I lounge on the couch for a little while, but I'm unnaturally drawn to see what the little omega is up to. Her door is open, and I don't knock before heading inside.

I do a double take when I spot her. She's got the pillows on the bed stacked in a square shape with the end closest to the open door. It means she's lying on the bed, facing me on her stomach. She's studying her laptop with her mouse on top of a notebook. The comforter is draped over the pillows, and it's pretty clear she built herself a makeshift nest.

I specifically asked for a suite without one. I know it's a tender subject for her, since she hasn't had a heat. I wanted to buffer her from that, but I'm fairly sure I made the wrong call.

"Whatcha doing?" I ask when she doesn't look up.

"Cleaning up pictures."

"Can I join you?"

She pushes up on her forearms, nodding her agreement. I lie down next to her, but it takes some effort, considering she's a lot shorter than I am. I end up curved around her in the fetal position so that my head doesn't hang off the end of the mattress.

"The guys went out to grab dinner." I study the picture on the screen, and it's not one for the tour. It's the three of us at lunch. My face breaks out into a grin. Fitz is kissing her cheek, but the look on Tinley's face as she stares up at me is what makes the picture. She's got her mouth parted, and her eyes are wide. She's stunning in a way that takes all the air from my lungs. "That's a good one. We're going to need to frame it."

"Yeah, it's my favorite of the shots I got today. I just wish Ramsey was in it."

“He’ll be in plenty more to come.” My fingers brush over her soft cheek.

I smile as she pushes up on her forearm, brushing her lips over mine. My hand slides around the back of her head. I take over, deepening the kiss, and she moans into my mouth.

I’m very fucking sure I’d commit heinous crimes if anyone tried to keep her from me.

Her tongue flicks against mine, making my cock harden against my thigh.

I smile as she crawls on top of me. “You’re a naughty little thing.”

She laughs. “Not usually, but you’re so handsome when you smile. Not that you aren’t when you’re all growly and stoic.”

“I was hoping you might let me give you a bath before they get back with dinner.” The words are out before I can stop them. I didn’t think that was why I came in here, but the thought of caring for her makes my stomach flip-flop in a way I’d almost forgotten exists. “Unless that’s too—”

“Will you be soaking in the tub with me?”

I groan at the thought of her nude body pressed against mine. It makes my hand tighten on her ass. “Yeah, pretty girl. We can definitely arrange that.”

“Okay.”

I’m a fucking idiot. I momentarily lost my damn mind. There’s no other reason I put myself in this situation when I’m trying to slowly show my interest and build trust.

The tub is huge, with more than enough space for three or four people. I’ve got the jets going, and steam rises from the water as I tie up her hair into a bun. I do the same to mine as Tinley yanks her dress off over her head. Her movements are

jerky, like she's kind of nervous, as she stretches an arm back to undo her bra.

Fuck me, this really was a terrible idea. My cock is like stone, but it jumps as she spins to face me in only her panties.

"I was planning to help you with all of that." My hand lands on her neck, pulling her flush with my front. "It's all part of the experience." Her skin trembles against mine. "Are you cold?"

"A little."

"We'll get you settled in the warm water."

She nods as my hands dance down her sides. My fingers catch in the band of her panties. I pull them off, squatting to help her out of them. Her nipples tighten as I stare up at her, making sure the skin of my bare chest brushes hers as I stand. The way her tits bounce with each ragged breath as they push into my stomach makes everything hazy.

She isn't shy about dipping her fingertips into the indents of my abs before shoving down my sweats. My cock bobs out, slapping against her abdomen.

Yeah, this was a terrible fucking idea.

She tries to squat down to help me out of them, but I pull her arms. If she ends up on her knees, my dick will definitely end up in her mouth. I kick out of the fabric instead.

"I'm going to climb in, and then I'll help you get settled." The tip of my shaft is sticky and leaking all over her stomach. It's sending the wrong kind of message, so I kiss her forehead and back her up a step. No matter how hard I try to keep my eyes on hers, I keep catching sight of her hips and tits. It's a battle to stay focused. I haven't been this desperately attracted to someone... Ever.

The nearly scalding water makes my balls ache as I climb in and stretch out. Omegas are resilient when it comes to hot temperatures. It's a little much for me, but she'll likely think it feels great. I offer a hand, and she takes it, making her way into the water.

Her cheeks are pink as she tries to settle into the seat on the opposite side of the tub, but I give her hand a gentle tug.

“I want you with me,” I growl.

She floats in the water, which makes it easier to spin her back to my chest. “What are you doing?”

“It’ll be easier for me to scrub you if you’re in my lap. Let me take care of you.” My hand moves to cup her middle.

My cock bounces around her ass as she wiggles back into me. Having solid self-control has never been a problem, but I ache to impale her on my length.

I settle for propping a knee up and pulling her leg to rest on it out of the water before grabbing the body wash.

“Tell me about your family?” she asks.

“I’m the oldest. I’m sure you never would have guessed.” I chuckle, soaping her skin. My long-ass arms sure are convenient at times like these. “Only by a few minutes, since Ram and I are obviously the same age, but I never let him forget it.” Tinley moans as I slide a soapy hand into the water to work her thigh. “How about you?”

“I have two older sisters. Both are mated to packs.”

“Ahh, the baby of the family.”

“Yeah,” she agrees shakily. My hand on her middle tightens as I lower my leg, lifting the other to repeat the process. “They both presented before eighteen.”

I bend to nuzzle my beard against her cheek from behind. “It’s not a race.”

Her fingers run over mine as she nods. “I know. Really, I do, and I’m happy for them. I guess I just feel a little left out because I want the same things in life. Everything always seems to be more complicated for me. Nothing falls into place as easily as it did for them.”

“The harder you work to achieve something, the more it’ll mean when you do.” I kiss her temple and lower the leg I’m done with back into the water.

She shivers against my chest. “Yeah, I know.”

“Did you go to school for photography?” I grab her right hand and the soap, pumping out more. I run my fingers through hers, relishing the feel of her skin pressed against mine.

“I did. I had most of my core college classes done before graduating high school, so it only took a little over two years.” Her head rolls around my chest as I work higher on her arm. I cup the water, pulling it up to rinse off her skin.

“I never got a college degree.” My head shakes as I move to the other arm. “I never did well trapped in a classroom.”

“No, but you were signed to a contract before you turned nineteen. You took a different path, and that’s okay. You’ve built a solid career for yourself.”

I tilt my face down to study her. “Are you a Northern Star fan, baby girl?”

“Maybe not as obsessed as some of your hardcore fans. But yeah, definitely. I’ve loved your music for years.” Her wet hand that I already washed flies to cover her face.

I chuckle. “There’s nothing to be embarrassed about. I’m a big fan of yours too.”

“Ohmigod, stop.” She laughs.

“I’m very serious about that.” I let her other arm fall into the water and use that hand to tilt her face to mine. Her wet fingers caress my cheek as I fight the urge to turn away. I wouldn’t say I’m overly self-conscious, but it’s hard. I want her to be attracted to me. If I was paying more attention, I could have planned it so she was looking at my good side. Her touch is so damn tender as she brushes over the jagged mark that I focus on the sensation instead of my insecurities.

“Please don’t hide your scars from me,” she says softly. “They remind me of what kind of man you are, and that’s nothing to be ashamed of.” She scoots up on my lap as her back slides against my chest.

My head shakes. “I was cocky. I thought my size meant I was safe enough. That was not the case.”

“But the woman was able to get away, right?” she asks, running her fingers over my arm that’s wrapped around her.

“She did, but I should have been humble in how I approached the entire situation.”

“From what I read, it was chaotic. There was no time to think things through. It was more of a gut reaction.”

“It was,” I agree as she wiggles against me.

I’m not sure if she’s still staring at my scars because, as I glance at the wall, the memories file through my mind over and over again. We were performing at a benefit show to support the pro-pack movement. It started out fine. There were some assholes protesting against the laws that were up for vote at the time, but nothing major. Most of the new legislation focused on giving family packs more rights and additional protection, which the conservative side didn’t like. It devolved into a full-blown riot along the way. The stage we were on was in a different building from the convention center, and a couple of the guys from Matted Whine needed to get over there because their girlfriend was in labor.

Ramsey and I went with them, but we ran into one of the rioters along the way. The guy was dragging a woman by her hair...

The pain in my cheek was inconvenient, but the amount of blood was alarming. I barely had time to process that before he was stabbing me again in the neck.

Honest to God, I thought I was going to die. I believed, without a doubt, that was the end of my time on this earth. If the other guys we were with hadn’t intervened and carried me to an ambulance, then I would be dead. No doubt about it.

“Do you regret it?”

“I regret not being more prepared, but no. Even knowing the outcome, I couldn’t just stand by.”

She nods. “Those scars are a physical reminder of your character. That’s not something to hide.”

She stretches up toward me. I bend lower, making it easy for her to press her mouth to mine. I use my fingers to tilt her chin, bringing her neck up a little farther. Nipping at her thick lower lip makes her moan into my mouth. The steamy water makes every sensation seem more intense.

Kissing can be even more intimate than straight up fucking under the right circumstances. Tinley floats up in the water, and my shaft slides from behind her to be perfectly framed by her pussy as she grinds it against my thighs.

She keeps rubbing my cheek, but her other hand dips into the water and caresses my dick. She wiggles back on my pelvis and pulls my cock up until the top of my shaft perfectly glides through her cunt as she pushes it against her with her hand lining the bottom.

Fuck me.

All I want is to buck up inside her, but she pulls back for air.

Her grip tightens around my length and her mouth makes an adorable “O” as she runs her thumb over my crown. “Holy crap, apparently you should be smug, Mr. Malone.”

I chuckle. “Oh, pretty girl. Let there be no confusion. If you’d like to call me an honorific, then I’ve got a solid preference.”

“W-Which one is that?”

Chapter Fifteen

Tinley

“Daddy,” Warrick growls, capturing my mouth. The way his huge hand cradles my neck is helpful since the angle is awkward. He expertly nips at my lower lip as I groan.

I’ve never used that word for a sexual partner, but the idea doesn’t turn me off. Warrick has undeniable Daddy energy. He’s commanding and dominant, and I love it.

I lost all modesty somewhere around the time we climbed into the tub. The hot water laps at my skin as I work his crown against my throbbing clit.

I want to demand he shove every inch of his length inside me, but his arm wrapped around my middle makes it feel like he’s in charge.

“Are you open to that, pretty girl?” he asks between sensual kisses that have my core leaking.

I was really fond of him calling me *baby girl* a few minutes ago. *Pretty girl* is okay too, but I’d really love it if we could find a way to circle around to *good girl*.

“Um, yep.” I nod my agreement, pushing up on my knees. It’s a covert mission as I maneuver his tip to my hole. It takes a little pushing up on my knees and then I’m sinking down on him.

“Tinley,” Warrick growls.

“Yes, Daddy?” My hips swivel as I try to force more of him inside me. The water helps mute some of the discomfort,

but he really is massive, and the stretch is like nothing I've ever felt.

"I'm going to spank your ass for that later."

"Okay," I whisper, my back falling to his chest again.

"Are you okay?" He brushes his thumb over my clit as his other hand cups my tit.

"Yeah, but this isn't as easy as it's supposed to be."

"That's because you're a naughty little thing. You didn't give me the chance to prep you. This was only supposed to be a sweet bath."

I groan as his forearm on my hip helps shove me farther down his length. "I think I like getting dirty better."

Warrick curses under his breath, working my clit in tapping strokes that I love. "Kiss me."

My head snaps to the side to do exactly that. He growls against my lips as I bounce on my knees.

He's right. I wasn't prepared for how extreme the stretch would be. My hand brushes his as he teases my pussy. I try to covertly check how much of his length is left. My eyes widen as my fingers brush his knot. They're always visible on a male alpha, but that thing will swell even larger when it's locked inside me. Maybe it's the position or something, but it feels huge.

I changed my mind...

"I don't think this is going to work," I say, but the last few words come out as a moan when he applies firmer pressure on my swollen clit.

"You're too fucking cute." Warrick isn't just a giant; he's strong as hell. He manages to wrap my feet around his lower back and stand up with his cock still inside me. "I can assure you, we'll fit together perfectly."

"Oh crap," I squeak as he climbs completely out of the tub with me wrapped backward around his front. "Damn, the world looks different from up here."

Warrick chuckles.

The tub has a nice thick edge surrounding it. It's wide enough on one side to hold both of our towels next to each other. I think he might be about to grab one to dry us off until he kneels next to the tub, placing my knees on the fabric. I don't know how he manages it while keeping his length inside me, but he does.

I wobble, but he holds me in a way that I'm not worried I'm going to face-plant into the tub. It's still filled with water. That might hurt. I'm clumsy by nature.

There's a thinner lip that follows the curve back to the left where I could put my hands, but they might slide around.

That's not what he has planned.

He pulls me until my back hits his front, and his other hand directs my gaze to the mirror lining the wall behind the tub.

"Do you see how fucking beautiful you are?" He nudges my face with his from behind as his hand slides down my middle, pulling me farther apart. "Look at your pretty pussy stretched around me. You've still got quite a few inches to go." He bites the side of my neck and starts to buck up into me in punishing strokes. My hand squeezes his wrist on the arm he's holding me up with, and my eyes fall shut. He feels so deep, and it's possible I moan that. "I wasn't going to fuck you." His teeth scrape over my shoulder. "But since you slid right down my cock, you're going to take as much as you can. Then you're going to soak up my cum like a good girl."

"Yes," I beg as my entire body pulses with heat. "I need..." I don't even know what. I finally settle for, "More."

"I don't think you can handle much more," he says, sounding cocky as hell. "I'm bumping the bottom, baby girl. You were too optimistic for your own good. I'm going to have to prep you better next time. Spend a while working your tight little hole out on my fingers and finally work up to this." He pulls out and grinds back inside.

I moan, shoving my hips into his pelvis. I don't like the thought that I might not be meeting his needs. "Try harder. I

can handle you just fine.” A wet hand slaps against my outer ass cheek, making me whine. “More, please.”

He rakes some spot inside me that makes my nipples tighten as my pussy leaks around him. “More what?”

“More, please, Daddy!” I beg without any idea if that’s what he wants to hear. His hand around my middle moves to grip my hair. He stretches me out over the tub. I’m without anything to hold on to, but Warrick lands his palm against my ass and all thought bleeds away.

My hands fall to rest on my thighs as he tightens his grip in my hair.

“Rub your clit!” he barks. “Fuck, Tinley. Your slick little cunt is about to embarrass me real fucking quick.” My right hand moves to do exactly that as I catch sight of Warrick in the mirror. He’s staring at where he disappears inside me, and that look alone makes my core start to tighten. He holds my hair and now my hip, sliding me back and forth on his throbbing length. “My impulses are screaming to pin you to the floor and rut into you like a goddamn beast.”

An embarrassing moan escapes, turning into a string of begging as he hits my G-spot. I think that’s what that is, anyway. It feels like he’s trying to slam into my stomach, but after a few vicious thrusts, pleasure sits heavy in my lower belly.

I squirm, trying to chase my orgasm.

“Come all over my cock. You can do it. Be a good girl for me,” Warrick snarls, pulling me up until he’s framing my back. He gets so hard, it’s difficult for him to move, or maybe that’s the way my pussy locks down. It’s like my body is trying to latch on to his knot, but without it, it just ripples. He uses his hold in my hair to yank my head to the side and bites the side of my throat without breaking the skin. I come, convulsing so violently, I’m afraid the towels will slide around under my knees, but Warrick keeps me in place as he slams deep one more time. His tongue dances over my skin as my tits bounce. He growls a low, dangerous sound. “Fuck, baby girl. I’m going to make that pretty pussy all messy with my

cum, watch it drip out of you, then shove it all back inside so everyone knows *you're mine.*”

His words make my core throb. I nod, begging for exactly that. I'm so wet, but I do try to grind on his length. He just flipped my world upside down, and I'd really like to do the same.

“War,” I moan as he swells so much thicker. The ache comes back full force, but the look on his face makes it all worth it. God, who knew mirror sex could make everything so much hotter? Okay, realistically, that's Warrick, not the mirror.

“Do you want that, baby girl?” Warrick asks against my neck. “Want Daddy to fill your sweet pussy up?”

I nod, slamming my ass back even harder. “Yes, Daddy, please!”

Warrick growls, and the sound gives me goosebumps. My nipples get so hard, they tingle. Alpha and omega biology is kind of crazy. He thrusts as deep as he can go as his cock jumps.

I'm not sure if he's pushing on my cervix, or maybe my intestines from the inside out, but either way, it sends me into an unexpected orgasm.

“That's it. Milk my cock.” He bucks up into me as I try to grind out every drop of his pleasure while convulsing. My eyes squeeze shut as I breathe in his pheromones and ride out the bonus orgasm. It doesn't last as long as the first, but it's just as intense.

My eyes pop open.

I jolt, catching sight of Ramsey in the mirror.

He stands, leaning against the doorjamb. He looks like sex personified with the blond bun and tight band T-shirt. He bites his lip, gives me a once-over in the mirror, and winks. “Dinner has arrived, but I think my appetites have changed.”

“Get the fuck out,” Warrick growls, still licking and kissing my neck.

“See you soon, shortcake.” Ramsey grins mischievously, spins around, and heads out.

“It’s a hell of a time to ask.” Warrick meets my eyes in the mirror as his hand caresses my stomach. “But we should’ve discussed if you’ve been taking your birth control—”

My chest rises and falls as I struggle to catch my breath, but I nod. “Yeah, I have. I also had the safe sex talk with Ramsey—”

Warrick smacks my hip, but not hard. “I’m still feeling a little feral. It’s probably better if you don’t say my brother’s name while I’m inside you.” My head tilts, and I study him in the mirror. The twins are very close. It’s hard to believe there might be competition between them. “I love my little brother, but my instincts still view him as a threat, since we don’t have a bond.” He smiles dangerously. “Yet.”

My heart races as my impulses hum in delight. I’d like to lock him down forever too. He pulls out and thrusts back in.

“Whoa,” I groan.

“It’s insanely hot watching my cum drip out around my bare cock.” He gets close to my ear before continuing. “I’ve never been inside someone without a condom. I hope you understand this isn’t something I take lightly.”

His eyes meet mine in the mirror, and I nod. He’s so devastatingly handsome all the time, but he’s still inside me, and talking seems like a lot of pressure. I could say the wrong thing or ramble something ridiculous.

“M-Me too,” I finally manage when he raises an eyebrow.

“I’ve got you, pretty girl. Let’s get cleaned up and check on dinner.”

The four of us cuddle in the living room to eat delicious Chinese takeout that makes me a very happy little omega. The electric fireplace is a beautiful backdrop.

Fitz spoiled me with all my favorite foods, but he's always been great about remembering my order and knowing what things I don't really eat.

I'm leaning close to his side, but his jaw is tense, and it's throwing me off. I don't like it one bit. My fingers tease down his stomach over the fabric of his shirt.

Is he upset about what happened between me and Warrick? I don't like the idea that could be it.

Fitz means the world to me, but Warrick and Ramsey are quickly becoming equally important. They all balance me out in some way that makes me feel content. I've heard omegas talk about how each member of their pack fits a different piece of their soul. They say we'll know when our group is complete because of the feelings of contentment and completion.

It's complicated, because it feels a bit unfair to expect them to only be with me.

My hands shake as I start to panic. They wouldn't make me choose between them, right? They know this is a closed unit... I mean, I think they do. Is that a talk we're supposed to have? Do I need to clarify that? Is that why Fitz seems so off? I thought he was okay with things progressing between the four of us.

My eyes dart around.

Warrick is only a seat away in one of the club chairs. He's got his bare feet kicked up on the coffee table.

Ramsey is on my other side, but he's still nibbling at his fried rice.

"I'm picking up a weird vibe. Are you okay?" I ask close to Fitz's ear. I smile, patting his stomach to offset the question, or maybe to comfort and reassure myself that he's still here and letting me touch him.

"Yeah, we've ah..." Fitz slides his hand into my hair. "We've got something for you, but I'm a little nervous."

My brow furrows, but I lean up and kiss his cheek. "You've got something for me?"

“Yeah,” Fitz says, but he still looks uncomfortable.

“Please don’t stress. I love everything you pick out,” I assure him, rubbing my nose against his.

“It’s our first group courting gift,” Fitz says, capturing my mouth in a slow and extremely arousing kiss. My heart pounds, because thank goodness. I was psyching myself out for no reason. I’m not sure how it happens, but he moves me into his lap as our tongues slide around each other’s. We make out as my hips roll over his, and his length hardens under my bottom. By the time we pull back, Ramsey and Warrick have cleaned the food off the coffee table, and in its place are a ton of fancy shopping bags.

Fitz spins me until my back rests against his chest. “Let’s do this.” He sounds so anxious that I pat his thigh, smiling up at him over my shoulder.

Warrick hands me a bag from the same store Fitz and I shopped at the other day. “Go on, pretty girl. Check out your first courting gift.”

“Thank you.” I glance around between the three of them so they know they’re all included.

“Get to it. Otherwise, I might demand that fashion show you owe me,” Ramsey says, holding his phone like he’s about to snap pictures.

I dig inside the bag and gasp as the items pile up on the couch next to us. It takes several clothing items, but it dawns on me. “This is all the stuff I tried on but didn’t get.”

“I asked the sales associates to round up everything you touched that day,” Fitz says against my ear. “Do you like it?”

“I fluffing love it.” I slap his thigh, twisting to kiss his chin.

“Forking? Fluffing?” Ramsey laughs. “That’s cute, but I swear I’ve heard you say *fuck* before.”

“Yeah, I’m just trying to cut back. You’re bad influences when it comes to cursing.” I laugh. “I’m only joking.”

“Grab her the next one,” Fitz instructs as he pulls me deeper into his chest.

Ramsey grabs a super fancy gift box from a lingerie store and sets it in my lap. My jaw falls, because I’ve seen videos on social media about this place. “Uh-oh, the look of terror officially crossed her face.”

“Go on, Tinsel. Check out your goodies.” Fitz’s warm breath fans over my neck as he speaks. His arm tightens around me as he kisses my throat. “I wouldn’t mind a private show, either.”

I shiver, pulling the silvery blue ribbon. The top is lined with tissue paper, which I carelessly toss aside.

“Oh, wow,” I whisper as my fingers run over the silky baby blue and silver babydoll dress. “It’s so soft.” I pull it out, bringing it to my cheek. “Holy crap, Fitz. Is it long enough to cover my vagina?”

“I hope not,” Ramsey and Fitz say in unison.

“Agreed,” Warrick growls.

My gaze slides to him, and he’s got his hands wrapped around the arms of the chair, like he’s desperately trying to hold himself back from pouncing. I lick my lips, dropping the lingerie to the side before digging in for the next item.

“Look at me, shortcake,” Ramsey says as I pull out a pretty cream slip dress that I think might also be lingerie. I know some women could wear it in public and totally pull it off with style and grace. But unfortunately, I don’t have the skills necessary to manage that without showing off my entire butt. Not just the cute bottom cheek part, either. “We’re getting to the good stuff.”

The gifts continue with matching bra and panties sets, thongs—that I’ll probably never wear—and a couple of bodysuits that are really freaking soft and stretchy but made out of a material similar to a jersey T-shirt.

“Fitzy,” I whisper, shoving everything aside as I spin around to face him. “You know how much I appreciate you, right?”

“Yeah, Tinsel. Do you like it?”

“I love it. You picked all of this out?” I ask, nuzzling my cheek to his as my fingers dance through his scruff.

“I did, but we split the cost. That way, you wouldn’t be upset it was too much,” Fitz says, catching my bottom lip with his teeth. He swirls his tongue around it.

I moan, grinding over his lap.

“Now these are the *really* good pictures.” Ramsey laughs from behind us. “Video would be significantly hotter.”

Fitz groans as we pull back, and my weight falls onto his cock. The way his hands tighten on my hips, helping me give a final roll, says he likes the extra friction.

“Not a fucking chance,” Warrick scoffs. It takes me way too long to put it together that he’s replying to Ramsey. “We’re far too famous to risk a sex tape.”

I grin over my shoulder at Ram. “Maybe one day, but it would have to be deleted right after.”

“Aww, shortcake. Where’s the fun in that?”

“Maybe not fun, but safe,” Fitz says, his voice thick with his arousal.

“Exactly,” Warrick grunts.

Ramsey’s eyes sparkle. “They’re so boring. We’ll have to get into enough trouble to keep things interesting.”

I laugh, burying my face in Fitz’s shoulder. They’re all important to me for different reasons.

Chapter Sixteen

Ramsey

The final gift Tinley opens is a hot cocoa set with all the stuff to make s'mores. Unfortunately, the electric fireplace doesn't allow for that, but the adorable little omega seems quite content with her hot chocolate and marshmallows.

It's a blessing Fitz knows her so well. She lights up like a Christmas tree when she spots the mini-marshmallow shaker.

We spend a few hours watching a Christmas movie. I'm fully expecting War to make a scene when Fitz carries her to her room, but I exhale in relief when he simply grunts, shuts off the television, and heads for his room. I've got the strong urge to cuddle, which is in no way my normal style. I spot Tinley passed out on Fitz's chest as he watches her like a total creep factory.

I don't ask for permission. It's a queen-size bed, and with her all up on his chest, I figure he'll hardly notice me.

I chuckle, shaking my head when his hand leaves her ass to flip me off. It doesn't stop me from sliding under the covers behind her and making sure I'm plastered to her back.

A low, ragged purr starts in my chest. I keep my eyes closed so I don't have to see Fitz and whatever look he's giving me. Tinley's hair is still a little damp as I bury my face in it, breathing in her sweet pumpkin pie scent.

I wake up in the middle of the night and roll over to locate my omega. Fitz is spread out wide on the other side, but Tinley is missing.

I frown, glancing around and wondering if War came and snatched her up in the middle of the night.

I don't see my brother ever sharing a pack bed like our fathers do.

The light in the attached bathroom is on, and I fall back against my pillows. That makes sense. Maybe she had to pee.

I lie awake for a few minutes, but as I become more coherent, I catch on to a faint sound. I shove myself off the bed and aim for the door. I get close and pick up the sound of sniffing or maybe crying.

My head tilts, and the longer I listen, the tighter my chest feels. What the hell happened? Is she upset about the gifts? Does she feel unwell?

My fists clench at my side as I try to figure out what the hell I'm supposed to do now. Fitz is drooling against his pillow. War is an option, but I feel like that would be shitty.

If I want to be her alpha, then I need to be around for all the things.

Not just the good times.

I've spent a lot of my life bouncing when things get complicated.

I knock gently and don't get a reply. I try a second time, and when she doesn't respond, I turn the handle. She's sitting on the closed toilet lid with a towel in her hands, and she's crying into it.

My stomach aches, and my impulses urge me forward.

"Hey, what's the matter?" I try to keep my voice low and soothing, but it's gravelly from sleep.

She jumps, and her red eyes meet mine. "I'm okay. I didn't mean to wake you."

I squat down in front of her. "What's wrong?"

“Nothing,” she says weakly, glancing away.

“Don’t lie to me.”

“I-I…” Her head shakes and a sob rattles out.

I pull her into my lap and scoot back until my ass hits the wall. She cries against my chest. I yank the towel out and toss it aside. That’s when I catch sight of the pile of clothing in the corner. I’m still baffled, but I run my hand down her back as the other cradles her head.

“Just tell me this—are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” she chokes out. “Nothing is wrong with me, except I got my hopes up.”

“I’m lost here, shortcake. I’m feeling like the dumbass everyone always accuses me of being.”

“Omegas still have a period until we present.” She clutches at me even tighter. “Once our heat cycle starts, then instead of it being monthly, it changes to the week following the heat if conception doesn’t occur.”

I nod, holding her while trying to force myself to purr. I managed to do it earlier. It shouldn’t be this goddamn hard, but knowing she’s upset makes me feel like I could claw out of my skin.

I know how shitty it felt when War popped a knot six months before I did. Despite everyone assuring me I would present, I felt like a failure—like I didn’t measure up to my *twin’s* alphaness.

I get why she’s upset. She’s been having symptoms that led her to think she’d start her heat soon.

“It’s stupid,” she whispers, shaking her head.

“It’s not.” I go on to tell her how I felt when Warrick presented first. “I understand. It feels like a giant piece of you is missing, but you’ve never had that part to begin with.” I frown, because a heat isn’t exactly like a knot, but hopefully the analogy translates.

“Exactly. I know my designation shouldn’t define me as a person, but I have a whole lot of the traits that make up being an omega. It’s hard to fail at something I can’t control,” she says weakly.

“You’re not failing at anything,” I assure her, nuzzling my cheek to the top of her head. “Tell me how to make you feel better.”

“I’m okay, really, I am. It’s just…” She exhales heavily. “It’s disappointing. Only a small percentage of omegas can conceive outside of a heat. I know I’m young. Everyone says there’s plenty of time, but the doctors were so negative about it. Not negative, I guess, they’re just used to laying out the facts. And the fact is there’s no guarantee. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to spew all of this at you.”

“You’re not. I want to be here for you. Would you be open to adoption?”

“Yeah,” she agrees. “I guess it’s silly, but I’ve always wanted to know what it felt like to feel the baby kick and see them on the ultrasound scan.” My heart races because all those things sound pretty fucking amazing to me too. I keep my mouth shut for once. Thank God. I would never forgive myself if I said something to unintentionally hurt her. She finally goes on. “Do you know what I mean? If I had a heat, at least I’d feel confident that it would one day be a possibility.”

“I do,” I tell her. I really do. Omegas are guided by their impulses as much as alphas are. “If ninety-eight percent of omegas present before age twenty-one, then that still means two percent present a little later. I know you’re tired of hearing that, but just don’t give up hope, okay?”

“Yeah,” she says, but it’s unconvincing.

“Are you ready to head back to bed?”

She nods. “Okay, thank you for checking on me.”

“Always, shortcake.”

The next morning, Tinley is miserable. She's crabby and obviously in pain.

Which makes sense.

Mother Nature is kind of a dick to women. Sure, guys have to deal with random hard-ons, but I'd still choose that any day of the week.

She scrawls out a frantic list that Warrick assures her the hotel concierge can deliver, but Tinley gives him a look that indicates that's not going to fly.

Fitz kisses her on the forehead before War does the same. I think it's a dumb idea for the press to catch wind of my brother purchasing feminine care products, but I'm also intelligent enough to keep my mouth shut about that.

Huh, I guess I am growing and evolving.

They leave, and the little omega bolts back to her room without a word. I don't let it hurt my feelings. Instead, I follow like any good alpha predator should. When I yank back the covers, she's curled up in a ball, rubbing her lower stomach.

"I'm gross," she says, frowning. "Are you sure you want to cuddle with me? Gah, doesn't it feel like they're taking forever? I need those heating pads and the cramp medicine."

"You're not gross. It's a part of life. Nature is all *yay, you're not pregnant.*" I grimace, because holy fucking shit, I never think before I speak. I would bang my own head against the wall right now if I didn't need to find a way to make this better. "Are you in lots of pain?" I crawl under the blanket, facing her, and her cold little feet barely land halfway down my shins. She really is short.

"I'm okay. It doesn't feel great, but I'll live." Her thick lower lip pokes out.

"Roll over." I frown. "Unless it's your lower back that's bothering you."

"Everything kind of aches," she grunts, giving me her back. I pull her ass to rest on my pelvis and slide my hand into the long shirt of Fitz's that she's wearing. She's got on tiny

little booty shorts that I'd really like to negotiate she wear more often. My hand works her stomach, but she cups my fingers, moving them lower. I'm a little surprised by the level of pressure she indicates she wants.

"So, tell me about you," I say, working my hand against her skin. "You and Fitz go way back, huh?"

"Yeah, I was a freshman in high school when we met."

"Damn, I feel old." I laugh, shaking my head. "I keep forgetting how much younger you are than me."

"Yeah, but Fitz is two and a half years older than I am. He's a great guy. He's always looked out for me."

"How the hell did you end up dating? I can't imagine he liked that very much." I snort. "He's a pretty big dude." I realize I probably should have kept my mouth shut when she doesn't say anything for what feels like *forever*.

Man, I wonder if she knows Fitz is a virgin. I straight-up called him a liar when he let it slip one night when we were drinking a beer after a long practice. It took until I saw him with Tinley that it finally clicked that he wasn't talking shit.

"I don't know. I had a boyfriend my senior year of high school, but we ended up going to different colleges. Then I had a couple of shorter things. Just a few months, where you're getting to know someone and kind of hanging out. Then another longer relationship that ended after I graduated recently. He wanted me to move in with him, but we'd only been together for six months. He's also a beta." Her head shakes. "Me too, I guess."

"Stop," I bark. We both jolt. "Shit, sorry. Who gives a fuck if you have a heat? Not me. You're still an omega. That law is stupid as fuck." I go stiff when I realize it's about so much more for her than that. "Think of it this way—maybe you've got the anatomy of omega, but the biological makeup of both an omega and a beta. You spit out pheromones like you're an omega, but you have a period like a beta. I don't know. Maybe your system is set up differently and falls more in line with a

beta for that. I'm just saying, either way, you're perfect the way you are."

She groans when I run my hand to the other ovary. "God, cramps suck so bad."

"I can only imagine." My fingers dance lower, sliding into the band of her panties. "You know, I've heard orgasms are a great way to offset cramps."

"Ramsey," she gasps. Her back slams into my chest as she tries to push my arm away.

I shrug. "It's just an idea. What do you plan to do after the tour?"

"You're still shoving your fingers lower." She wiggles against me, and it grinds her ass over my dick.

"Yeah, I'm just trying to distract you long enough to get you interested in some all-natural pain relief." I laugh and use the hand of the bicep her head is lying on to tilt her mouth to mine. "Kiss me, shortcake."

Her tongue flicks around mine, and each swivel of her hips pushes her ass over my thickening cock.

Now isn't the time for all that, but my dick doesn't give a fuck.

I tease my way lower until I can circle her clit. I love the way she gets into the kiss and follows my mouth as I move to nip at her ear.

"See, isn't this a perfect distraction?" I taunt, gently biting her ear and giving it a little tug.

She moans, thrusting her ass perfectly over my shaft. "Yeah, but I don't want to bl—"

"I don't care," I assure her, moving to kiss her puffy pink lips again. I relocate my free hand to cup her tit. She doesn't have a bra on, and her nipple pokes through the fabric. I make sure to tease my thumb over it as I work her clit in firmer strokes.

“Ramsey,” she moans, thrashing against my chest. She’s slick against my fingers. It has me desperate to dip them inside her, but I think that might be pushing her a little too far. Her sweet pumpkin pie scent floods the air, and it makes me hazy. Her pheromones get so thick, it’s difficult to form a rational thought.

Her soft hand slides down my bare stomach and dips into my sweats.

I’m the one moaning when her fist wraps around my dick. She’s got her arm all twisted behind her, but it doesn’t affect her performance. Both of our pheromones seem to feed off each other. She smells so sweet, it’s hard to understand how she hasn’t had a heat. Her hormones definitely influence my system like she’s in need of an alpha.

Her mouth falls open as she squeezes the hell out of my cock.

I give her firmer pressure in return, and she gasps.

“Are you going to come all over my hand?” I ask against the shell of her ear.

She moans, nodding as her legs jerk.

I lean up and curve around her, so I can watch her face. Her legs shake as she quakes, and she runs her thumb over the slit on the head of my dick before jerking me just right.

“Fuck, shortcake,” I growl, thrusting into her hand. I’m not sure what sends me over the edge, but I come in my sweats as her body trembles against mine. I growl, working my hips as my cock jumps. She turns enough that she can kiss me as I tap her clit to see if she’s finished. She jolts, arching away from my touch. I groan as she digs her teeth into my lower lip. “Careful, that makes me ache to bite you back.”

Chapter Seventeen

Tinley

I stretch out on the couch with my laptop while Ramsey heads to his room to get dressed. My cheeks feel hot. Maybe I'm sheltered, but yeah, it was still hot. The shower we shared could also be to thank for the fact my cramps have died down—at least for the moment.

It was stressful but strangely sweet. I don't know. I've never had a boyfriend who didn't keep his distance during that time of the month, but Ramsey always manages to put me at ease in a way I can't explain.

It's like nothing fazes him, and no matter what comes up, he just rolls with it. It calms me down, even when I'm a little hyper or frantic.

The echoing knock on the door to the suite surprises me, but the guys might have their hands full, or maybe they forgot their room keys. I shove my laptop onto the coffee table, push myself up, and aim for the door. I pull it open without even checking the peephole.

I take a step back when Carter is the one leaning in the doorway. I glance around, but my guys are nowhere to be seen.

“Hey, sugar,” he says in his thick country accent. Northern Star is Southern rock, I guess, but neither Fitz nor Warrick are from the South. They just sound gravelly when they sing.

“Ramsey is getting dressed.” I toss a thumb back toward the suite. “Want me to grab him for you?”

“Nah, I came to see you.” He shoves his hands into his front pockets, but something in my system screams that I should remove myself from this situation. “It’s a holiday.”

“Yeah, happy Thanksgiving.” I nod awkwardly, probably looking a little like a chicken.

“Right, see, here’s the problem. I can’t reach any of my connections in the city, and the tour guys I deal with are off.”

I blink repeatedly. “Okay.”

“I need you to hook me up with what you’ve got.” He rocks on his toes, and I step back another step. “I’ll buy them off you right now, or once we take off, I’ll replace them, but we need to be quick.”

I bite my lip to keep from asking if he plans to replace the rest that he took. No, honestly, I wouldn’t take any medication that made its way through his hands. He’s got this frantic energy that I get sometimes when I don’t take my medication, but that’s also not my problem. It would be illegal to give him mine, even if he has his own prescription, which I don’t know if he does.

“Did you hear me?” he growls, taking a step forward.

“Yeah, but I don’t know where they are,” I lie through my teeth. My mind files through excuses. “Warrick took them. He’s only handing them out when I’m supposed to take them. I’m actually going to be short this month—”

“That fucking asshole. I don’t know how anyone puts up with his self-righteous ass. Fine, show me where his room is.” Carter moves past me and takes several steps into the suite. “I’ll find them for you.”

For me?

Commotion comes our way from deeper in the suite.

I shove myself against the wall as Ramsey jogs toward us. He has the most intimidating look on his face that I’ve ever seen him wear. His palms connect with Carter’s chest. He shoves him out the door while I’m still frozen like a statue.

There's some arguing from the hallway, but Ramsey comes back in, finally removing my hold on the door. It slams shut as Carter growls, "Motherfucker!"

"Are you okay?" Ramsey scoops me up, wrapping me around his front and aiming for the couch.

"Yeah, that was weird, though," I admit. "I don't think he's doing very well. He looked..."

"Strung out? Yeah." Ramsey runs his hands over my cheeks and pulls me to his chest. "I just need to snuggle the fuck out of you right now. He never should've been anywhere near you. How fucking dare he," he scoffs. "I've never had visions of murdering someone with my bare hands. Okay, maybe the guy who stabbed War, but..." He exhales heavily. "I didn't like the way he was looking at you."

"I don't think it was me at all. I think he wanted the rest of my meds. They're a stimulant, but they have the opposite effect on me. They help me focus and balance my system." I sound defensive to my own ears, but I've had people make rude comments before. I tend to overexplain, even though I know I don't need to justify myself to anyone.

"Yeah," Ramsey grunts, but it's clear his mind is still on Carter. I do everything I can to figure out how to spit out soothing pheromones. I exhale in relief when the strange warm feeling slides through my body. He's still kind of vibrating with tension, but here's hoping my pheromones help.

The guys make it back not long after.

It's pretty clear when Ramsey yanks them away to inform them of what happened with their bandmate.

Warrick stomps back into the living room, scoops me into his lap, and doesn't let me go for quite a while. He's got that growly, protective alpha vibe down.

I do my best to soothe him, but he's so riled, I don't think it's working.

Ramsey and Fitz unpack the food on the coffee table. My stomach rumbles as I catch the scent of the food.

“Here, let me scoot over. I’m actually starving.” I pat Warrick’s arm and try to climb out of his lap.

“No,” Warrick grunts, pulling me closer. “Let me feed you by hand.”

My eyes widen, but I nod my agreement. “Yeah, if you want to.”

“I don’t just want to.” His jaw clenches. “I need to. Give me this.”

“I won’t complain about you pampering me.” I lean up and kiss his scruffy jaw.

I hate seeing him so upset. I’ve never been so well taken care of as I have since meeting them, and I want to give him the same level of care. I just don’t know how to fix this.

I feel like they’re trying to insulate me from some of the darker truths of touring, but I get the picture.

I’m not completely naive to the realities of the world. It does make me sad, though. I can tell it’s weighing on all three of them.



My family and Fitz’s family are having Thanksgiving dinner together. It’s not unusual, but everything seems more monumental now.

They video call, and we officially introduce them to Warrick and Ramsey, but we leave out any personal details. That’s probably best done when there’s no extended family around.

We have to cut the call short when our Thanksgiving meal is delivered. There’s a small dining area that has a table and four chairs. It’s the perfect size for our pack.

“What’s your favorite part?” Ramsey asks as we settle in to eat.

“It hasn’t made its way to me yet, but it’s definitely going to be found on that tray of dessert.” I grin, stretching a hand over to squeeze Fitz’s thigh. “How about you?”

“The honey ham is delicious, but the turkey is cooked to perfection.” Fitz scoops up a bite of cranberry sauce and offers it to me.

I grimace but force myself to take it. “Mmm, so good.”

“You’re a terrible liar, baby girl,” Warrick says, chuckling.

“She’s probably still traumatized from that spinach salad you fed her at lunch.” Ramsey laughs, shaking his head. “She’s settling for the lesser of two evils.”

Warrick grins. “Is that right?”

It’s very clear there’s no choice here but to lie my ass off. “No, I just didn’t want Fitzy to feel left out.”

Fitz laughs. “You really are bad at fibbing, but you’re still cute.”

My heart races as he scoots his chair closer to mine, giving me a quick kiss. My parents’ pack is openly affectionate, but I’ve only had relationships with one person at a time.

Affection in front of other guys I’m also intimate with is taking some getting used to, but I love having all of them this close.

“This is my favorite Thanksgiving so far,” I mumble as we pull back. “It makes me all warm and fuzzy inside having us all together in one place.” My gaze falls to my lap as my cheeks heat.

“Me too,” they chorus.

“Eat a few more bites, and you can check out what’s under the lids on the dessert tray,” Warrick says.

“That sounds like a very reasonable agreement,” I say, smiling.

“You’re with me tonight,” Warrick says as we discuss sleeping arrangements later the same night.

I open my mouth to agree, as long as it’s okay with the others, but he scoops me up like it’s a done deal and heads off toward the room he slept in last night.

“That was not an example of a cohesive team decision,” Fitz mutters as Warrick carries me away without another word.

“We should probably let him have this one,” Ramsey says. “We had her between us last night.”

“Do you need the restroom?” Warrick sets me on my feet.

I nod. “Yeah, I have to run back to the bathroom in my room for supplies.”

“Go on,” he agrees. “I promise not to chase you down and drag you back.” He grins. “Unless they try to keep you.”

I laugh, heading back down the hallway.

“Oh shit,” Ramsey says. “Did he scare you away already?”

“Don’t be silly. I just needed a goodnight kiss.” I lean over the arm of the couch, where he’s stretched out, and push my mouth to his. He rolls his tongue around mine, and I pull back. His gingerbread and molasses scent makes my nostrils flare.

“Don’t forget the pouty alpha,” Ramsey says, nodding to Fitz.

“I could never.” I head over, climbing into his lap.

Fitz nuzzles his cheek to mine, running his hand over the back of my head.

I give him a quick kiss, which he deepens the same way Ramsey did. “I’ll miss you, but I do think Warrick needs me tonight.”

“I get it,” he assures me, but he marks my other cheek like an alpha stating their claim.

I climb out of his lap and head for the bathroom in the room I stayed in last night. I technically don't know which of us it belongs to. I use the restroom and grab supplies in case I need them in the middle of the night before heading back to Warrick's room.

He's shirtless, lounging with the covers pulled back. My eyes are greedy for every inch of muscular skin on display. I finally pry my eyes away, aiming for the bathroom. I drop off my stuff and make it to the side of the bed.

"Is that my side?" I nod.

"Unless you'd like to sleep directly on my chest, which I'm not opposed to." He chuckles, patting the bed.

I scramble onto the mattress and try to climb over Warrick, since I need to get to my side. He pulls me down directly on top of him and leans up, giving me a soft kiss before helping me slide onto the bed.

I lie on his arm and he starts to purr.

"Good night, sweet girl." His huge hand spans from my hip to my lower back, and he uses it to pull me even closer.

"You too." My knees dig into his thigh, so I toss my top leg over his pelvis. His scratchy fingers run over my back, and it's soothing, but not as much as that ragged purr. I could get addicted to this.

He's got a smattering of dark hair on his chest, and my fingers seem to be drawn to it. My cramps are a little better with the meds, but the fact my period started *again* is kind of killing me. It could really bring me down if I let it, so I do everything I can to focus on the good.

Warrick, Ramsey, and Fitz are more than I ever dreamed possible. It's a little stressful to think about what happens when this tour is over. If I focus on the bad and all the what-ifs, then I could drown in them. I exhale heavily, snuggling farther into Warrick, and pray for sleep.

We have an extra day to chill in the hotel, and on Saturday, we head to the venue to check it out. The guys will be performing tonight, and we'll be back on the bus after.

“What’s that frown about?” Fitz tosses an arm around my shoulders as we head into their practice.

“I got lazy and used to being in one place.” The words pop out before I can stop them.

“You’re a sweet little omega, and I never should have pressured you into coming with me,” Fitz says with a heavy sigh.

My hand smacks against his stomach. “Don’t even try me right now, Mr. Fitzpatrick. I love that you want to protect me, but I’m dealing with the stress, and it *is* worth it.”

He tilts his head, studying me, and then he shoves his mouth to mine. The kiss is quick and playful, but we both tense when a voice breaks the silence.

“Fitz,” a member of the press calls out. “Is that the tour photographer? Are the two of you romantically involved?”

“Did they get it wrong?” another asks. “Was War shopping with you for *your* girlfriend?”

I have no idea what they’re talking about, but I want no part of being in the press’s line of sight. I prefer to be on the other side of the camera, thank you very much.

Fitz grunts, ushering me inside the building. Once the doors close behind us, he curses under his breath.

“Do you know what they meant?” I ask.

“Not exactly, but they painted a picture, didn’t they?” His head shakes. “I’ll ask Gavin to look into it.”

“Okay,” I agree, giving him a reassuring smile. He’s been anxious lately, but I really don’t want him to regret bringing me along. Without this trip, I never would’ve met Ramsey and Warrick.

I promise myself I won't internet search Northern Star, but that fails about five minutes into their practice. It's clear the paparazzi got pictures of Warrick and Fitz when they were leaving the pharmacy. Although, I'm extremely thankful the report only mentions they were shopping for someone *under the weather*.

That keeps me from melting into an actual human puddle of mortification. I've never given it much thought, but I do think the press pushes a little too hard into the private lives of celebrities.

My phone buzzes across the table. It's Shanna. I talked to her on Thanksgiving, but her mom and dad were around, and it was more of a chance for Fitz to say hello to his family.

I snatch it up and aim for the hallway. Once I make it out of the practice room, it's considerably quieter.

I answer the call and Shanna squeals in my ear.

"Would you like to tell me anything?" she asks, sounding exasperated.

"Oh, crap." I don't know what she's asking about, but I do know my best friend is like a dog with a bone. She's not going to let it go.

"Is there some other woman on the tour that Warrick freaking Malone may have been shopping for?" she asks.

I'm sure there could be, but I know that's not what she's asking, so I fill her in on the debacle at Thanksgiving. "...it's hard because I always seem to get my hopes up."

"Okay, I don't know if you were purposely trying to distract me, but you don't send rock stars out to buy tampons unless there's something going on there. I mean, I guess I'd send my brother, but that's because it's Fitz." She snorts a laugh. "I still can't believe he's famous. It's weird."

“You should see him. He knows just how to play to the crowd. He’s doing an amazing job filling in for Warrick.”

“Right, and how do you feel about his screaming female fans?” Shanna asks conspiratorially.

“It’s...” I briefly consider lying, but it doesn’t feel right. “I know it’s the nature of the industry, but it also kind of makes me want to claw their eyes out.”

“Tinley, are you into my brother?”

“Would it bother you if I was?”

“Stop, you should know better,” she says, laughing. “I think he’s been half in love with you for years.” My heart races. “Okay, but are the two of you together? Where does Warrick fit into all of this?”

“It’s complicated. I’m not even an omega.”

“Please don’t get stuck on that. Some omegas present later than others. It’s coming.” Her tone is gentle, but we’ve had this particular talk a ton of times. “So, are you officially courting?”

“Yeah, they asked. Don’t tell anyone, though,” I say, and I mostly mean her family. She’s really close with her mom, and I’m not sure Fitz is ready for everyone to be all up in our business.

“Not even Mom?” Shanna asks. “I feel like you’re underestimating exactly how excited my entire family is going to be.”

“Remember those pictures I have of you in the green alien costume from last year? The ones with the peel-off face mask?”

“Sorry,” she grumbles. “I’ll keep my mouth shut. I love you.”

“I love you too,” I assure her. “We’ll talk soon.”

“Huh,” a voice says from behind me. I jolt, shoving my phone into the pocket of my sweater. “I thought you were fucking the other bus. A collective gangbang on the road. You

got a boyfriend they don't know about?" It's Xavier. The cocky smirk he shoots my way rubs me the wrong way. Or maybe it's his condescending words.

I've spent the least amount of time with him and Carter, but I know why my guys want me to stay away from them.

"Girlfriend," I say, rolling my eyes as I step around him to head back into the guys' practice. It takes me until I'm seated in my chair to realize how that might have sounded.

I wonder if that rumor will make it back to the guys or maybe the press.

Chapter Eighteen

Fitz

The pure insanity of being on the road ramps up over the next week. The press is onto the fact that Tinley exists, and it's reaching the point where nothing is easy. The bus needs repairs while we're in Charleston. At least we get to stick around in a hotel for a night or two after the show tonight, but if it takes too long, we'll have to take a flight to make our next concert.

I roll my eyes at Ramsey. I've never seen such a big guy do yoga, let alone in such a confined space. I'm half convinced I'm going to take a foot to the face as he switches into each new position.

My nerves are frayed. I'm normally pretty laid back. I've never had such a rough tour, but it's not just myself I have to look out for anymore.

Tinley pops out, grabs her computer, and goes back to the bedroom without a word.

"I think she's upset." I stare at the door to the room she disappeared into.

"She's cuddling with War. She's fine." Ramsey stretches out into some position I don't know the name for. His head rests on the mat between his forearms, but his feet are out like he's doing a plank and his ass is shoved toward the ceiling. "You're all jacked up." He chuckles. "You need to get laid."

I give him a dubious look, but he switches into some forearm stand position as he stares in the other direction. Maybe I just suck at sharing. I want to be in there, rubbing her

back or just keeping her company. How long do periods last? It has to be over by now, right? It feels like it's been forever. Fuck, I mostly did my best to pretend all that girly shit didn't exist when my sister was going through it.

But I want to be here for my omega.

"You look ridiculous," I say as Ramsey flips over, landing on his feet.

He flips me off with both hands now that he's upright again. "You're on edge. I'm going to take War to that axe-throwing place tonight after our show, since it's an early call time. He owes me a rematch, anyway. It'll give the two of you a little alone time in the hotel. I highly recommend you soak up some pheromones directly from our little omega. Bro, you've been half-feral since Thanksgiving."

It would be shady to sucker punch him in the gut while he's stretching, but he's right. I am feral as fuck lately. I blow out a breath and give him a nod of appreciation. "Thank you."

"No problem, man. That's what we're here for, but you've got to communicate. No one can read your mind." He smirks, wiggling his eyebrows. "Not until we sink our teeth into Tinley. Then we'll be up in each other's thoughts all the time."

I laugh, shaking my head as he does a backbend. I don't think those are actual yoga poses, but whatever. I need one-on-one time with my omega. I'm pretty sure I'm close to slipping into full-on rabid, and alphas like that end up heavily medicated or locked up when they do something truly terrible.

Tinsel is on stage tonight, taking pictures while we perform. Her dress has silvery trim that lines the bottom of the knee-length puffy dress and also frames the bottom of her tits. It glitters in the stage lights. It's not the Christmas dress she picked out for her birthday, but it's equally as beautiful.

We've got a big security guy walking the stage at ground level in case she tumbles off. Thank fucking God Warrick

handled that because it was a major concern of mine. I wasn't sure how to bring it up without hurting her feelings, but I would have if Warrick hadn't already found a solution.

Ramsey, of all people, helped French braid her hair. He regularly looks like a Viking, but I hadn't given who did it for him a second thought. Tinley has two thick braids lining each side of her head. They sway and bounce as she snaps pictures.

My gaze flies to the assholes in the front row. Can they see up her dress when she squats down? They better be filming our performance and not my omega.

I glare, raking my eyes over the crowd. I'm supposed to be focusing on putting on a good show, but she's all my impulses care about.

I need to finish this performance, knock out the meet and greet, and finally get some time alone with my sweet little omega.

Warrick and Ramsey leave as soon as Gavin gives them the green light. I've got plans to do the same as soon as this print interview is done.

"Do you think you'll sign on for another contract?" the reporter asks, shoving his mini microphone in my face.

"I never say never." I laugh. "That's my philosophy. I'd be lucky to be asked back, but, at this point, I'm just playing it by ear." I give him a plastic smile as I search for Tinley.

She was right there a minute ago.

Carter and Xavier are standing near the door with a group of people. That helps a little, but I shove myself out of my chair.

"Sorry, it was a pleasure to meet you, but I've got to find my..." I barely hold back from saying *omega*. "Tour manager."

The guy tries to ask one last question, but I jog for the hallway that leads to the bathrooms and the greenrooms.

Jack stands with Tinley. They seem to be chatting. She smiles, holding out something, and my brain somehow convinces me that Jack is a threat. He's obviously doing Carter's bidding.

"Tinsel," I growl, stomping to her side.

"Hey." She shoves the small box at Jack and waves. "How was the interview?"

"What's that?" I nod to Jack, pulling my omega to my side with a hand on her hip.

"Shh, keep your voice down. I don't want to get in trouble," she says.

I glance between them, and Jack holds up a small clear box with a memory disk in it.

"Your girl was kind enough to offer me some pictures. Ava is graduating at the end of the fall semester. I'll probably miss the ceremony because of our schedule, but I thought maybe I could send her a couple pictures of us to remind her..." Jack laughs, shrugging a shoulder.

"Just don't rat me out. I'm fairly sure those are supposed to belong to the label." She gives *him* a bright smile. "But they're all of the two of you. I don't think they could've used them, anyway."

"Thanks again," he says, heading back toward the room we came out of.

"What have I told you about disappearing when I'm busy?" I growl, backing her against the wall.

"I had to pee," she huffs. "Jack caught me before I even made it into the hallway and waited for me. I think he was trying to be a decent friend." Her hands land on my chest, giving me a little shove. "You're in a bad mood."

"I don't think you've got the first clue how close I am to snapping." Maybe it's the defiant look on her face, but the next

thing I know, I'm dragging her toward the bathroom. "You used it?"

"Yeah."

We continue back to the greenroom we were in earlier. I shove her inside before flicking the lock. "How the hell am I supposed to keep you safe with all of my responsibilities if you don't listen to me?"

"My safety is never just on your shoulders. Are you okay?" she asks.

I spin her around, shoving her palms to rest on the wall. I bring her wrists together, holding them with one of my hands. My head shakes as I growl. The haze is too deep. Maybe I've finally gone off the deep end. Six years is a lot of fucking waiting.

I flip up the back of her dress, and she's in a pair of panties I picked out. That definitely doesn't help the fog. "I know Warrick loves to taunt you with spanking your ass, but I'm not sure you understand how serious *my* drive is to keep you safe. I walked out of the remainder of my interview."

"I'm sorry," she gasps as I slide my hand over her ass. "You're right. I'll be more careful. Thank you for always looking after me."

"Oh, sweetheart. Do you think that's going to get you out of my palm on your ass?" I nip at her ear, licking down her neck.

"Fitzy," she moans long and loud.

"Yeah, Tinsel?"

She slams her ass back into my cock, wiggling her hips. "Let me show you how sorry I am. I didn't mean to worry you."

Aww, fuck. The fog gets so thick that I rake my teeth over the top of her shoulder with little care. I run into the sleeve of her dress and move to kiss her cheek. "Panties off?"

She nods.

“Keep them here.” I pat her wrists before releasing them. My hands fall to her sides as I pull her panties down and off over her flats. I shove them in my back pocket and groan when I realize I can see a peek of her pussy with her all bent over. I grind my jeans against her ass as I turn her face enough that I can shove my mouth to hers. “If it gets too much, then tell me.”

“I will,” she agrees as her chest heaves. “Now, spank me.”

She doesn’t get how worried I’ve been lately. It’s clear by the look on her face, but I don’t want to hurt her. I land my hand against her and watch every nuance on her face as she yelps.

“That’s a good girl,” I coo into her ear. “Let’s just handle your punishment, so we can move on. Okay?”

“I’m not afraid of you.” She smiles at me over her shoulder. “Do your worst.” She’s entirely too sassy when she gets comfortable with someone.

I may have held off on sex, but I’m not a fucking saint. I’ve watched more porn than it’s probably healthy to admit. A fair amount of that was designed for women, which I’m surprisingly thankful I came across. My left hand slides around her hip, yanking her farther back while I slide to the side. “You say *red* if it’s too much or you want me to stop.”

“Yes, Sir,” she whispers.

Her dress is still trapped around her hips. The way she’s shaking betrays her anxiety or anticipation.

Get to it, asshole. Talking a big game doesn’t mean much if you’re unwilling to follow through.

I exhale and bounce my palm against her backside repeatedly. I don’t use a lot of pressure, not yet. I need to see how she responds. Her mouth parts and she gasps. I take a step to make it easier to work the other cheek and watch her face as I give a few introductory smacks on that side too. I don’t want to land too many in one place. I truly don’t want to hurt her. Well, not in any way she doesn’t enjoy.

She grunts, trying to wiggle away, but my hold on her hip keeps her in place. Her pheromones get thick in the air, and it doesn't help me to stay clear at all.

It takes pure determination on my part not to yank my dick out and shove every inch inside her. "Does it sting, sweetheart?"

"Yes," she agrees, nodding. Her braids bounce, and it makes me ache to pull on them as I fuck her from behind. Her ass is red, but I still count out five more on the left cheek. After number three, she starts dancing around on her toes. The moans that escape her lips could be pain or pleasure. It's hard to tell. "Really, I didn't mean to upset you."

I growl, "It's not about me, Tinley. You're a fucking omega."

"But I'm *not*." Her head shakes.

"Do you think that rationale will work on a half-feral alpha?" I switch back to her right ass cheek and amp it up a notch, peppering her with a bit more pressure. "Some assholes can't be trusted, and that's not just on tour. You know how it goes. Alphas are supposed to protect our omega. If you keep making that impossible, then you better get used to sleeping on your belly. I'm sure, after a few nights, it'll finally sink in."

"I'm sorry, but that hurts."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yes," she hisses, trying to wiggle away.

"Too bad."

"Fitz..." Her hips wiggle as she bends a little lower. I catch sight of her pussy at the same time her scent floods my nostrils. Oh, fuck me. Having some backup might not have been a bad plan.

Chapter Nineteen

Tinley

“Fitz,” I moan as warmth pulses through my entire body. “I’m sorry. Really, I am. I’ll find you anytime I need to leave the room.”

At least on tour, I add to myself.

“I’m not trying to be a controlling asshole.” He slaps my ass, and it aches with a throb that echoes in my extremely empty pussy. I grind my hips back into his cock, desperate for some friction. “I trust you with Ramsey and Warrick. Jack—who fucking knows? Tinsel, I’m losing my mind here.” He sounds so miserable, my stomach drops.

“Red,” I whisper.

Fitz blows out a heavy breath that fans over my neck as he immediately releases me. “I’m sorry.”

“Enough, I didn’t hit my limit. My ass hurts, but I definitely didn’t safe word for me.” My dress falls as I spin to face him. “I’m here. I’m safe. I’m also completely yours. I didn’t mean to be stubborn. I trust you enough to give you this.” My hands dig into his hips as I push up on my tiptoes to kiss him.

He growls, slamming my back against the wall. His forearm wraps around my ass, and then I’m being lifted into him. I dig my feet into his rear end as he slides his hand up my neck, brushing his thumb over my cheek as we kiss. The wall helps hold me up as he works the front of his jeans against my slick core. The way he devours my mouth makes it clear he’s not screwing around.

Trusting him to keep me upright, I focus on getting his belt and jeans open.

“Tinsel,” he growls in warning.

“Yeah, Fitzzy?” I grin when I finally get his belt figured out.

“Are you sure you trust me right now?” he asks between frantic kisses. “I don’t trust myself. My impulses are telling me to rut you, claim you, and never let you get away.”

A shiver runs down my spine as my head falls to the side, and I whine. That sounds pretty amazing to me too.

“Jesus Christ.” Fitz yanks me off the wall and walks us to the couch. He pulls me down on top of him as I get back to working on his belt. It’s a tangle of bumping arms and teeth as I try to kiss him. He laughs against my lips as he slides two fingers through my dripping core. “Oh, sweetheart.”

“I told you I was into it, but I don’t want you to spend any time feeling guilty later on.” I pull back enough to stare into his eyes as I speak. “We’ll try again when you’re in a better headspace. Not only is it a huge turn-on that you’re all growly and protective.” I finally get his zipper down and work my way into his boxers. “But I also really liked the bite of pain and seeing you go all dominant alpha on me.” The fingers of my free hand dig into the short hair on the back of his head as I stretch to kiss him.

Fitz gets a little bolder and shoves his thick digits inside me. We both groan as my hips grind over his lap. I’m still working his cock with my hand, and the gyrating motion brushes his crown through my slickness. The problem is, his boxer briefs and jeans are still on.

“I’m fairly sure you should run while you still have the chance. What the fuck am I saying? If you ran right now, I’d hunt you.”

I grin, shaking my head. He doesn’t scare me in the least.

“Let’s get these off you.” I drop his cock, slide my hand out of the hole in his boxers, and pull them and his jeans down while holding myself up on my knees. “Are you okay with

this?” Apparently, he is because his cock jabs against my thigh before Fitz moves me and his tip slides from my clit to my hole. He finally gets around to pulling my dress off over my head and then moves on to his shirt. My tits heave in the sexy bra he bought. It’s got incredible push-up power because they look great. “If you want to wait—” My head falls back as he uses his hand on my ass to push me down onto his throbbing length.

Fitz curses.

I’m pretty sure he’s leaving bruises, based on how tightly he’s gripping me. It’s majorly sexy. I like the idea of wearing his marks. He sucks on his lower lip as his hair falls over his forehead. It makes me ache to bite him, even though omegas can’t form a link. I want to show him that I need him just as much as he needs me.

“I don’t even know what to do with myself right now,” he whispers, watching where we’re joined together.

“Let me love you,” I groan, rising and falling on my knees. I take him deeper with every stroke. He yanks the cups on my bra down and tongues my nipple as I wait for my body to stretch. It’s still super intense, but in a way I can’t seem to get enough of. He switches to the other breast while I swivel and grind, trying to figure out the best way to shove all of him inside me.

“I should lie down, and you should fuck me.” I give his hair a tug, and he looks up at me with his chest heaving. “It’ll make it easier for you to get deeper. I want to feel your weight caging me in.”

Fitz’s forearm tightens on my back as he palms my ass. He turns and lowers me until I hit the couch, managing to stay inside me during the transition. My toes dig into his jeans, shoving them farther down. I need all of his warm skin pressing into mine. The height difference is problematic in this position, but we both stretch to reach the other.

His chest vibrates against my nipples as he growls into the kiss. He sounds like a feral alpha. It makes me feel warm and fuzzy inside that I’m affecting him so strongly. My hands dig

into his lower back as he holds himself up with a hand on the arm of the couch.

“You’ve got to actually move now.” I give him a silly smile, but truthfully, the look on his face is so intense, it’s a little intimidating.

“Let me love you,” he says, repeating what I said earlier. Hearing those words from his lips with his accent even thicker than normal makes me shiver. I move a hand up to cradle his head, pushing my mouth to his as he practices rolling his hips. I’m so slick, I’m dripping. Simple quickies don’t seem to be a thing when alphas and omegas are involved. “I’m foggy as fuck. Don’t let me hurt you. Tell me if it’s too much.”

“Rut!” I beg as his tip pushes into me *deep*. “Fitz, dammit. I’m not going to break.”

“I’d never forgive myself if I hurt you. Tell me you’ll let me know if it’s too much.” He bumps his cheek against mine.

“I will.” I slide a hand between us and work my clit as he thrusts in and out. My eyes get wide when I realize he’s got a solid few inches *and* his knot left to fit inside me. I dig my toes into his ass and try to force him deeper on the next thrust. It takes all the breath from my lungs as I moan against his cheek, but the sounds he’s making ensure it’s totally worth it.

Fitz pushes himself up until he’s kneeling and wraps his hands around my hips. He yanks me to him, spearing me so deeply, my body spasms as I process the pain. He’s definitely using me, and the slight ache only makes it feel more passionate.

I tease my clit and brush his knot when it’s within reach.

“Your perfume is all I can smell,” he growls, staring straight at my sex. “I’m finally fucking inside you. It’s surreal. God, oh no. Don’t clench.”

I can’t help it. The desperation on his face makes my nipples throb, and heat pulses through me, starting in my core. Pleasure radiates from my lower stomach to every nerve-ending in my body. I tremble, curling toward him as he falls on top of me again. His cock swells, and my pussy tries to lock

him in place. His tongue brushes mine as he groans into the kiss.

I'm still shivering and trying to grind the last jolts of pleasure out of my orgasm when his entire body freezes. Everything is hard to process, but I gyrate, using my feet as leverage.

"Fuck me. Goddamn, holy shit..." he continues rambling into my mouth, but other than his cock kicking, he barely moves. It takes a few seconds before he starts to roll his hips again. I pull my hand free, so his pelvis can brush my clit. His chest heaves as he growls, low and dangerous, into the kiss. "I almost bit you."

I run my fingers over his neck, trying to comfort him. "I wouldn't have been upset if you did."

He doesn't stop fucking in and out. His cum definitely makes it easier, or maybe my body has finally adapted to accommodate him.

"My fucking god, I needed this." He pulls back, smirking as he grinds against my clit. "Does that feel good? It makes your cunt flutter around me. I know I like it."

"Yes." It comes out as a garbled moan. He doesn't stop, and pretty soon, my body goes from oversensitive to ready to go again.

"My cum is leaking out of you." His head shakes. He licks and kisses his way down my neck to my tit. When he flicks his tongue over my nipple, it makes me moan with little care about where we are. "Shh, we've got to keep it down." He says the words, but he continues slamming into my pussy in a way that makes his request impossible. I'm just about to come again when he pulls free of me and yanks me up. "I need to rut. Present for me, Tinsel." My mouth opens and closes a few times. "Now!"

My body responds to his bark. My forearms hit the arm of the couch as I kneel, but I back up until my top half is flat to the cushion as my ass pops up and out.

He teases a hand down my spine while the other cups my ass, but he's taking too long. I was about to detonate again, and I'm impatient.

I wiggle my hips. "Come on."

"This might have been a bad idea," he growls, shoving his cock inside me.

I slap a hand over my mouth to keep myself quiet, but the moan escapes. It feels totally different like this. I'm a big fan. His pelvis hits my ass with each punishing stroke, and the fog creeps in for me too.

The begging pleas that escape around my palm don't even make any sense.

"What's that, sweetheart?" he growls, pulling me up with a handful of my hair. My back falls against his chest as he scrapes his teeth over my shoulder. He slides the hand not in my hair down to work my clit while his arm keeps me in place.

"Fitz," I sob. "Bite me, please!"

"You can't beg like that unless you mean it." He nuzzles his cheek to mine, grinding as much as he can, considering the position. "I've wanted you for too long to hesitate."

His knot brushes my opening. He doesn't slam it inside, but I shake, begging him to. "Knot me, please. Bite me now!" Everything is hazy and intense, but not to the point where I don't know what I'm demanding.

"I sure hope you know what you're asking for," he says as I explode. My pussy milks his cock in waves that make my knees weak. He's so hard, and he only grows stiffer and thicker as I come. His tongue teases over my throat while he pinches my clit. If he wasn't holding me up, I would have face-planted into the couch. The bite of pain that comes when his teeth dig into my neck makes me gush all over him. It's embarrassing how slick I am, but the thought fades away as Fitz slides into my senses. He pulses inside me as he rides out his orgasm and licks over the bite. I'm oversensitive to the point my body shakes with violent trembles. "Are you okay?"

His warm breath fans over my skin as he continues to nurse the bite.

His concern, love, and utter excitement make my chest feel tight.

My hand tightens on his as he holds me up, and I nod frantically.

“I’m so good.” Tears spring to my eyes. I’ve never felt this type of connection before. I can’t be sure how many of my feelings or thoughts he’s picking up, but I twist my head, catching his eyes. “I love you.” I hope he knows I mean real love, not the friendly kind.

“I’ve got you, sweetheart,” he chokes out, squeezing me tight. “You know I love you with my whole goddamn heart.” He slams his knot inside me, and it swells, locking us together. All the air seems to evaporate from my lungs as I gasp. Oh crap, that’s a whole different kind of connection. I’ve never been knotted before. It fills my entire body with a warm, fuzzy feeling that I think is some biological response. His knot pulses as it pushes against me from the inside out, and my chest flames. “Wow, yeah. That’s a lot. Shit...” he continues to ramble.

My lips roll together as I try to keep from sobbing. I’m actually really freaking happy. I think it’s a mixture of both of our emotions and the connection that comes from being knotted. My eyes ache, but crying during our first time together seems embarrassing—even for me.

“Grind,” I beg, shoving my butt back against his pelvis. “I need more.”

He complies, and the dragging stretch of his knot moving sends pleasure zipping through my system.

“You’re literally stuck with me for life,” Fitz says as he licks over his bite. The haze of both of our pheromones fills the air as he ruts as much as the position will allow, and that’s the last coherent thought I have for at least half an hour.

The bond is a link directly to Fitz's emotions. I don't get thoughts, exactly. It's hard to explain, but it feels more like impressions or mild instructions.

We're escorted to the hotel by two of the label security guys. They do a sweep of our room before leaving us with the keys. It's a whole different level of precautions than they've taken before. All of our bags are piled up by the door, but Ramsey and Warrick aren't back yet.

Fitz pulls me close to his chest, grinning like a fiend. "How about a shower?"

"I could probably handle that," I agree, smiling back. He scoops me up, carrying me like a bride. I giggle like a total goofball. "I love you. You know that, right?"

"Yeah, sweetheart," he says, his voice filled with emotion. "I can feel it."

Chapter Twenty

Warrick

As a kid, I didn't think it was strange that my parents all slept in one pack bedroom. As an adult, I've had major doubts about whether I'd ever want to sleep in one big puppy pile with a bunch of other guys. I like my personal space, and I've never been so drawn to a woman that I couldn't imagine not sleeping next to her every night.

After spending a restless night tossing and turning, I start to rethink my stance on pack bedrooms. Sure, I might have to sleep next to Fitz or Ram every second night, but if I plan things properly, I might be able to train my darling little omega to sleep right on top of me. That way, those two fuckers can have either side.

I sigh, shaking my head. Who knew one little woman could change everything? I can't even bring myself to care. The elation I experience when I see her adorable face guarantees I'm totally fucked. Not that it's a bad thing. I determine that during my second hour in the gym.

By the time I make it back to the suite, I'm sweaty and exhausted. I should've hit the gym before bed. Maybe then I could've actually slept. I'm just finishing up ordering room service for breakfast when Tinley pops out of the bedroom she shared with Fitz last night.

Her hair is in two French braids, but little wavy pieces fell out while she slept. She's ruffled and sleepy looking, but a wide smile breaks out when she spots me. She meanders over, dragging her toes on the carpet.

I quirk an eyebrow, stretching out an arm, and she runs into it. The suite doesn't have a full kitchen, but it does have a small counter. I lift her, setting her down on it.

“How'd you sleep?”

“G-Good.” She wraps her fingers in my sweaty shirt. “I have something to tell you.”

She's so damn pretty, I bend, giving her a thorough kiss good morning.

My nose twitches as I breathe her in. It's instantly clear her scent has changed. She bonded with Fitz.

“Fitz and I bonded,” she whispers as we pull back from the kiss. “Are you upset? I don't know what that face means.”

Lie and say no.

“No,” I say, shaking my head. It only takes half a second to recognize that I'm really not. I'm disappointed because I want a bond too, but I'm self-aware enough to recognize that they've been in each other's lives way longer than I've known her. My fingers brush her soft cheek as I push my mouth to hers again.

“Fitz spanked me last night,” she says against my lips. “I liked it a lot.”

“Is that right?” I chuckle.

“Yep.” She pats my chest. “Did you order breakfast? I'm starving.”

I grin. “I did. Are you going to let me feed you by hand like a good girl?”

Her wide blue eyes blink almost owlshly. “Yes, Daddy.”

My head falls back as I groan.

My eyes dart from side to side, watching Tinley bounce around the bus. The time we spent in the hotel was relaxing,

but we had to get back on the road. We're about to do a show in Virginia, and then we'll be moving even farther north.

It's December and cold as hell. I offered to help her find her jacket, but she assured me she had it under control. She's busy and a little frantic as she trips over the rug, bumping into the door that leads to the back bedroom.

"I'm okay," she mutters.

"She's okay," Fitz says softly at the exact same time. "It'll get better once she can refill her prescription."

I grunt, crossing my arms.

I'd really like to introduce Carter to my fist. Multiple times. It didn't even get under my skin this bad when I realized he was stealing my pain meds. Seeing his actions negatively impact my omega is a whole different world of misery.

I shake off my anger, rolling my shoulders back. The last thing I need is for Tinley to pick up on my emotions, which she's been doing more and more frequently as we grow closer. I like to think that we're in sync.

"Found it," she says, shaking her wool pea coat in the air as she comes back into the living room.

I shove myself off the couch, taking the coat. "Arms out, pretty girl."

"I think I would've been fine during the fifty-yard walk into the building," she grumbles as I help her into it.

My hands land on her hips as I frame her from behind. "Maybe. Mostly because the pain in your ass would've been a nice distraction."

The way she shivers tells me she understands my meaning perfectly.

Fitz chuckles as his eyes glimmer with interest.

Ramsey stomps up the steps with wide eyes. "There's a full line of paps. Someone leaked a whole lot of information."

"Motherfucker," I growl.

Tinley jumps, and I wrap an arm around her in silent apology. The only people who know Fitz and Tinley bonded are members of the security team and the band, because they caught on while we were waiting for the buses last night.

How the fuck could they possibly have had time to leak that information? Someone has a preexisting connection to a member of the press. That's the only way I can imagine it would have spread so fast.

Ram prowls closer, bending low to kiss our omega. "Want to keep them guessing?"

"What do you mean?" She tilts her head as she leans back against my chest, and Ram takes a few steps back so she won't have to crane her neck.

"We head in together. That way, they'll start to wonder if they got bogus info." Ram shrugs. "It won't do much, except maybe give the two of you time to notify your families, but I like to fuck with the press as much as possible."

"Won't we just be putting them onto the fact that I'm with all three of you?" she asks, but her voice is light and airy.

I give her middle a squeeze.

"I think Ram is feeling left out that you haven't been tied to him yet." I kiss her cheek and send her the rest of the way to my brother with a smack on the ass. Her coat is so thick, I doubt she even feels it, but she lets out a little squeak, swatting at my hand.

Ram holds out an arm, and she walks right into it. "Aww, fuck, I forgot to ask. Has anyone seen my signed Ruin T-shirt? It's band night for outfits, but wardrobe never gives me trouble when I wear it instead of whatever they're offering."

Tinley's finger pops up, pointing toward the ceiling. "One moment, I'm fairly sure I stole that for my nest." Her chin rises as she walks out of his hold and toward the bedroom.

"I don't think I want it back anymore." Ram pulls off his hoodie and undershirt as he follows her. He looks back at us. "I can't be the only one who's noticed a shit ton of clothes

have gone missing. I thought one of the roadies was stealing them to auction, but this is so much better.”

“She has been very nesty lately,” Fitz says conversationally.

“Being surrounded by compatible alphas may end up helping her hormones along—” I start, but I’m cut off when Ramsey leads her out of the room and toward the door to the bus.

“Want me to carry you?” Ram wiggles his eyebrows. “If we really try, I bet we could convince them there’s a secret baby subplot. Someone hand me a throw pillow.”

Tinley scoffs.

“You better warn Mom. She would fucking murder you if she got her hopes up for nothing.” I laugh, imagining our mother coming across something like that in the newspaper. She would shit a golden brick. It takes me several long seconds to realize how joking about children might impact Tinley.

“You’re bad,” she says, linking her fingers with Ram’s. I exhale in pure relief when she smiles playfully. “No, I can walk, and there will be no faking extra human beings.”

“Fine,” he fake-pouts, leading her to the door before they head out.

“We’ll meet you in there,” I say right before the door closes.

“Someone took a payday.” Fitz leans forward, staring after them.

“In-fucking-deed.”

“Is it Christmas yet? I’m real fucking ready for that break before our New Year’s Eve show.” He sighs.

It’ll be the last one on this tour, but I don’t want to rush through our first Christmas coming together as a pack. I’m really anxious to settle in one place and be out of the paparazzi’s line of sight, but after this, we won’t have to deal with it again.

The show tonight is in a club that doubles as a concert venue. The only tickets sold were VIP, and the audience is seated at tables. I keep a close eye on my little omega throughout the show. I think Gavin put a couple of random women at her table so that she wouldn't be lonely. It actually makes me wish Ava was still around.

I slide up behind Carter as we rock through the guitar solo at the end of our last song. His scent is sour like sweat, but I swear you can smell the substances seeping out of his pores based on how much it affects his scent.

Fitz takes over, leaning forward and belting out the extro. The women seated with Tinley scream, and our little omega jolts in her seat. It's loud as hell as the crowd demands an encore.

I glare, scanning for Gavin or Steve. Where the hell is her security? I rip out my mixers, shoving them in my pocket. A roadie pops up at my side. I hand off my guitar as we step forward, tossing our picks and sticks. There's still no one bringing Tinley backstage.

I'm about to take the five-foot jump off the stage, despite the fact everyone is standing around it.

Ramsey beats me to it. The showy fucker does a front flip, landing on his feet, before taking a few steps to Tinley's chair. He offers her a hand, and even though the stage lights are bright as fuck, I can still see how the area lights up around them as everyone snaps pictures.

That's definitely going to fan the flames of the press obsession we're currently embroiled in.

There's still barely any security on the floor, so Ram picks her up, elbows a few fans out of the way, and heads for the stage. It's pure madness as the audience swarms, trying to get close enough to touch him.

I squat down, lifting Tinley out of his grip, while Fitz offers Ram a hand. I glance around. Jack is up front, signing random shit and trying to keep the fans distracted, but he's only one person.

Xavier and Carter are nowhere to be seen.

That fucking figures.

"That was super intense," Tinley says, cradling her camera between us. "But I kind of feel like a princess right now. Carry me to safety, good sir."

I chuckle. She really is excellent at keeping me calm. The urge to rip someone a new one is still there, but not stronger than my urge to kiss the hell out of my omega.

So I do.

Tinley's nails dig into my neck as my tongue dances around hers. The screaming from the fans gets so loud it's actually distracting.

I stomp off toward the backstage corridor as Ram calls out, "Hey, asshole. Way to try to one-up me. I was totally a badass just now."

I snort, shaking my head.

Tinley giggles as her eyes sparkle up at me. "You may want to call your mom and give her a little warning because I have a feeling that'll be all over by morning."

"Yeah, probably." No doubt about it. It's probably on someone's social media by now, but luckily, she already knows all about Tinley.

I sigh when I spot Gavin off to the side on his cell phone *and* screaming at several members of the venue security. I don't stop as I stomp Tinley down the hallway and into our greenroom. We've been getting a separate one from the rest of the band at most venues.

I'm really fucking grateful for that as I shove my omega against the wall as soon as we make it in the door. I take her camera as my mouth devours hers. I even try not to growl when Fitz and Ram stomp their way inside. I hold the camera

out until one of them takes it and continue grinding my jeans against her pussy.

“You’re going to want to lock the door.” I quirk an eyebrow at Fitz in challenge.

He curses under his breath as my fingers dance over Tinley’s panties, but I hear the lock click.

“Are you going to share her?” Ram slides a hand between us to cup her tit. “Or are we relegated to watching?”

Tinley looks up at me, and damn if it doesn’t seem like she’s trying to *challenge* me.

I yank her off the wall, stomp us over to the couch, and toss her down. It makes her tits bounce as her dress bunches around her hips.

Before I even get the chance to kneel, Fitz is there, helping her lean up. He pulls her hair to the side, unzipping the back of her dress as Ram helps pull it up and off.

How the hell did Ram end up in my place?

Fuck.

I guess it’s time to put up or shut up. And it’ll be a good test to see how I handle sharing up close and personal.

Chapter Twenty-One

Tinley

Wow, so I guess we're branching into group activities of a more sexual kind? Yeah, it definitely seems like it as Fitz unhooks my bra from behind.

Warrick seems on edge. He's kneeling near my side. I'm pretty sure he thought this was going to be just us, but that somehow evolved into *all of us*.

My tits bounce as Fitz helps me out of my bra. I turn, grabbing Warrick's shirt and pulling him to me. He looks like he needs a distraction.

Fitz snorts. "He was looking a little like he might pop a blood vessel."

Ramsey laughs. His hands slide up my thighs, grabbing my panties and yanking them down as Warrick tips his mouth to mine. "You're going to have to lie back if you want me to lick your pussy."

I nod as Fitz wraps his hands around my middle, pulling me down until I'm lying on the couch.

Ramsey's warm breath fans over my pelvis as he loops his forearms under my thighs. I thrash as he licks from my ass to my clit. That was definitely a weird feeling.

"Nah, no fighting," Warrick murmurs close to my ear. "Let him suck on your cunt, baby girl. Maybe you should hold her arms."

"Are you good with that, Tinsel?" Fitz asks, pulling my wrists toward him. It stretches me out, and my tits push up.

Ramsey seems to be making out with my clit, while Warrick teases his calloused hands down my sides.

“Tinley?” Fitz asks.

“Yeah, I’m good,” I moan as Ramsey gives another slow lick. My thighs clench as my back tries to arch up off the cushions.

“You’re okay with being held down?” Fitz asks, suddenly very close to my other ear.

“Yes.”

“Of course she is,” Warrick says, flicking his thumbs over my nipples. “She’s such a good little omega. Aren’t you?”

My pussy leaks at the sound of his low, gravelly tone, and I nod wildly. “Yes!”

The feeling of Ramsey’s hot mouth devouring my sex is enough to overload my senses. Let alone the four extra hands, lavishing attention all over me. The scent of their arousal is heavy in the air as Ramsey shoves two fingers inside me.

I arch forward, struggling against Fitz’s hold. Warrick lays a heavy hand on my sternum, pushing me back down before his mouth latches on to my nipple.

My eyes squeeze shut, but I can tell by the position that it’s Fitz who kisses me. It’s an upside-down kiss that makes my heart sizzle. I can feel how desperate he is to slide inside me, and I ache for that too. The bond pulses with his amusement, like he picked up on my thoughts.

Ramsey crooks his fingers, brushing the front wall of my sex, and my face flames. I can actually hear how wet I am.

Warrick gently bites my nipple before flicking his tongue over it. I wish he would sink his teeth in and actually break the skin.

I sob into Fitz’s mouth as pleasure courses through my system. My feet bounce against the couch as I thrash, but my alphas do an excellent job of holding me in place.

“Come all over Ram’s tongue,” Warrick growls. “Fuck, your pheromones are so thick, it’s like you’re perfuming.”

“Yeah,” Fitz agrees, nuzzling his cheek to mine.

I get louder, and Fitz slaps his free palm over my mouth. I’m obsessed with the way the thumb on his other hand runs over my wrist as he holds me in place. My pussy contracts in waves, desperate for a knot.

I beg and demand against Fitz’s hand, but it’s mostly muffled.

Ramsey growls, lapping at my clit as he works his fingers in and out of my core.

My head shakes as I start to come down. “It’s too much. I’m too sensitive.”

Fitz releases my mouth and gives me a quick peck on the lips. “What’s the plan?”

Warrick smirks. “I don’t know, but we’re definitely late for the meet and greet.”

“They can wait a little longer.” I push up on my forearms as Fitz releases me. “Someone better fuck me.”

My head tilts. I have no idea why I’m demanding that. I’m really rather satiated.

“He’s covered in her slick,” Warrick says, nodding to Ramsey. “There’s no way I’m letting any of them catch a whiff of that.”

“Agreed,” Fitz growls. “We’ll cover for you. Meet you on the bus.”

They head out as I stare at them upside down. Why are they leaving? They should be *participating*. My impulses don’t care if they have a legal obligation to do their job. Knotting and rutting and bonding seem way more important. Oh yeah, I’m definitely on the verge of having an omega tantrum.

“Make sure you relock it,” Ramsey calls out before looking directly at me. “Did I leave you wanting, shortcake?”

He doesn't wait for a reply. Instead, he pulls me up until I'm kneeling over his lap.

"No," I assure him. "I feel like I'm always the one naked while you give me pleasure. That, or you're constantly walking in while I'm with one of the others." I scoot to the cushion next to him. He's sitting with his back wedged into the corner at an angle. "Let me take care of you for a change?"

Ramsey groans as his head rolls around, but he nods. He's got his hair up in a bun on the back of his head, and his eyes are so blue. He licks his thick lips, looking like sex personified, and it's a little intimidating.

At some point while he was eating me out, he undid his belt and jeans. I slide my hand inside and cup his shaft as I pull the zipper down. He handles yanking off his shirt while I'm busy.

I pull his jeans down, and my mouth waters as I catch sight of his cock. His tattoos go all the way down both hips, over his pelvis, and right to the base of his shaft. His scent is heavy in the air, making my mouth water as I breathe him in.

I wrap my hand tighter around him as my tongue swirls around his crown. He palms the back of my head, and it manages to make me feel safe and protected. But that's just Ramsey. He always puts me at ease.

I cup his slightly swollen knot but slide the other hand to show him that I want his fingers in my hair.

"You really want that?" he asks, staring down at me. I nod, grinning around him. "You're so fucking beautiful. I swear my chest gets tight when you smile at me." His head shakes, like maybe he can't believe he said that, but I have a similar reaction to him quite regularly.

I get to work, sucking as much of his length as I can fit into my mouth. Now that he's guiding my movement, I bring my other hand back to his shaft and gently roll my fingers over his balls. It makes his thighs tremble under my forearms. I pull back and focus on the crown again. My tongue swirls around the underside, and he dribbles pre-cum. He tastes a little like

gingerbread with hints of molasses. I hollow my cheeks, sucking harder. I'm desperate to taste more of him.

"Fuck, that feels so good. You're goddamn dangerous." His praise makes me light up inside. "It makes me throb. I'm desperate to ram every inch of me inside your perfect cunt." I'm really getting into it and making real progress on bouncing my lips against his knot when he yanks me up, using my hair as leverage. "You want that, right, shortcake? You want me to fuck your world up?"

"I was really enjoying tasting you, but I won't turn that down, either." I grin as he gives another tug on my hair.

I scramble onto his thighs, and my tits push into his chest as he captures my mouth. I think he has a hand wrapped around his shaft, because it feels like he's jerking it against my clit, but I can't see to be sure.

"I was enjoying it too. Actually, a little too much. I was about to burst. Climb on." He nods at his dick trapped between us. I lick my lips as he yanks me toward his chest. "Fuck, hold on. Let me..." I lean into him as he kicks off his boots, yanks off his jeans, and gestures toward his lap. "See, totally a gentleman." He winks. "Or I'm trying to be. I really want to feel all your soft skin against mine while you fuck yourself down on my cock."

"Ramsey..." A shiver runs down my spine.

"I haven't fucked without a condom, so yeah, if I blow my load too fast, we'll just hope my refractory period is on point tonight." He grins, showing off his perfect teeth. I laugh, giving his cheek a playful peck as he moves his tip to my hole. I'm pretty sure alphas don't have a recoup period when omega pheromones are involved. "Ride me, shortcake."

My hips swivel in a circle as I descend on his impressive length. He keeps a tight grip on my hair at the base of my skull, and every time he tugs, it feels like I get even wetter.

"That's... wow," I moan, and my head falls back, lulling around.

“You’ve gotta let me in,” he groans. “Fucking hell, that’s a tight fit. Are you okay?”

“Yeah.” I gasp as he uses his feet planted on the floor to buck up into me. “Maybe,” I correct. He uses his forearm on my hip to shove me farther down as he fucks up into me in deep strokes that take my breath away. “Yeah, I’m good.” I nod as the pleasure turns to full-on bliss.

“You’re not going to break. Your body is made for alpha cock.” He smirks as the pieces of hair that escaped his tie fall around his face. He’s so mind-bogglingly hot that I shove my mouth to his. He tugs, trapping my lower lip between his teeth, and the bite of pain sends me soaring. “Fuck, I love it when you moan like that.”

My hands fall to his chest as I practice bouncing on my knees. I’m so slick it’s embarrassing, but it only seems to spur Ramsey on. He yanks my hair, pulling my head to the side, and sucks on my neck. It makes me tremble, and I tease my nipples over his chest. His free hand tightens on my ass, helping me grind over him. I’m obsessed with the feeling of his warm skin against mine. His scent is heavy in the air, spurring me on.

My nails dig into his neck when he stands with his cock still buried inside me. He lowers me to the couch and crawls over me while gently tugging my ear with his teeth.

He pulls back, staring at me. “Have you got any idea how bad my teeth are throbbing? Huh, Tinley? Why *the fuck* did they think it was safe to leave me alone with you when your perfume is this thick?”

My feet dig into his tight butt, like I’m afraid he might try to escape. “I trust you. A bite wouldn’t be the end of the world. It would be the beginning of our future. But if you don’t make me come, you might see the unglamorous side of having an omega up close and personal.”

He chuckles, rolling his pelvis against my clit. “Is that right? I like the idea of you with the claws out.”

My toes dig into his ass as I rake my nails down his muscular back.

Ramsey snarls, bucking into me much deeper than before. My head bounces around as I slide across the couch with each powerful stroke. He wraps his hand around my head to keep me in place.

I sob ridiculous demands for his bite and his knot.

“Shh, there are fans out there somewhere.”

“I honestly don’t care,” I moan as my pussy begins to contract in rhythmic waves. My pheromones flood the air as heat pulses in my core.

“Oh fuck,” Ramsey growls, slamming his knot inside me. All the air leaves my lungs as my back arches off the couch. “My fucking god. Tell me you’re okay.” I nod, scratching at his skin. The way his knot swells and locks him in place is perfection. It makes my chest feel warm and fuzzy with the added level of connection. “Tinley? I’m foggy. I need you to tell me this is okay. I’ve never knotted anyone before.”

“I’m good. Rut into me, please?” My eyes squeezed shut at some point, but they pop open. Ramsey stares down at me with pure carnal hunger. “Rut, alpha.”

“I’ve got you.” He pulls back just a bit, and we both gasp as he thrusts as much as he can with us locked together. It doesn’t take long of him working me over before I tumble into the most intense orgasm I’ve ever felt. My vision goes spotty with black dots, and I get so loud that Ramsey seals his mouth to mine. Our tongues flick together as I tighten around him. “That’s a good girl. Fucking hell, you really liked that; you actually gushed. Okay, it’s now officially my life’s mission to make you squirt. I’d fucking kill to feel you soak my face and have you dripping all down my beard.” He shoves his tongue into my mouth and practices grinding his knot inside me. The kiss goes on for so long, I have to pull back to gasp for air. “I’ve never...” Ramsey groans against my lips. “Never felt anything like the way your cunt is rippling around my knot. I’m about to come inside you with nothing between us. That’s so fucking hot.” The way his shaft and knot swell signals that

he means *right now*. He slams as deep as he can get, considering we're locked together. I wail—there's no other word to describe it. "I need you to come all over my cock. Be a good little omega and coat me in your slick again."

I use my feet as leverage, doing my best to grind over his length from below. He thrusts a few more times and shudders, bucking deeper as he kisses the hell out of me. My entire body lights up with a warm fuzzy feeling. His muscles seem to get tighter as he growls and falls on top of me. I don't mind; my impulses really like the feeling of his weight pushing me into the sofa. It takes a while for us to both catch our breaths, and I love the way his sweaty skin is plastered to mine.

Ramsey stares down at me and captures my mouth in a quick kiss.

"Wow," I whisper as he runs his hand over the top of my head.

"Yeah, shortcake. Wow," he agrees. My body still zips with little jolts of electricity. "You're trembling." His hands run down my arms.

"I think my nerve-endings got overloaded." My cheeks feel warm, but he breaks into such a wide smile that I can't help but cheese back.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Ramsey

We've learned what sends the press into a feeding frenzy even more than rock stars. It's rock stars settling down with someone who isn't famous. Who the fuck knows why they're so fascinated, but they're up our dicks to the point the next few performances on the lineup are miserable.

After a few questionable shows, the label caves and sends us extra bodies, but there's only so much they can do.

Every time we step out into public, it's a feeding frenzy.

Tinley is a good sport, even when she learns the hard way that every single person she has ever known will now pretend to be her long-lost best friend. We make the rounds, calling all our families to warn them to be on high alert.

I wouldn't say the video chats go badly, but I get the feeling Tinley's dads only grudgingly accepted me and War because they trust Fitz.

Whatever, they better get on board with having us as in-laws. The countdown is on for our final show before the Christmas break. We all need it with how fanatical the press has become.

Our faces are plastered on everything from gossip websites to magazines, and even a few national news outlets. They're all over War and how he's getting his happy ending after the heroic attack that almost cost him his life.

I roll my eyes so hard they practically get stuck in my head. Not that I don't think my brother is a hero. He's always

been a standup guy. It kills me how the press latches on to anything they can to run up their ratings. The fact Tinley fits the girl-next-door vibe to perfection has only made them even more ravenous for every shot and sound bite.

I check the clock on the wall, realizing I've got to get my ass in gear. No one is practicing if they don't have the drummer. Warrick and Fitz headed over a while ago to try some shit with swapping out on lead. I shove myself out of the chair and go looking for my omega.

I'm pretty sure she's in the back bedroom. I swagger down the hall, a little concerned that she fell asleep and I'll have to wake her.

She always kicks us out when she's working.

Fine, she may have politely asked me to stop interrupting her focus when I tried my luck by sliding a hand up her short, fluffy skirt for the third time. That was when she finally told me I had to go.

I laugh, pulling the handle.

I like that she doesn't always give me what I want. I feel confident she's like seventy percent locked down. Unless War or I do something extremely fucking dumb, I'm pretty sure she's going to keep us.

Tinley is lying with her head facing the door, which she's mentioned before she does because it's easier to sleep when we're moving. I was just in here a few hours ago, but she's got all the pillows built up around her and the blanket tucked tight to her sides.

"It's about that time." I squat down, running a hand over her hair. "Are you feeling all right?"

"Yeah," she huffs. "It's just a lot."

My gut drops, but I know what she's saying. It's been a bit much for me, and I'm used to the insanity of the industry.

"Stick it out for another..." I frown, trying to remember what day it is. "Ten or so days, for me?"

She gives me a smile, but it seems forced. “I’m not going anywhere. I still have a job to do. I have to document the rest of the shows and do Xavier’s and Carter’s interviews. I was kind of hoping I’d fly under the radar until this tour was over. Some of the press, and especially the paparazzi, are really pushy.”

“I’ll do everything I can in my power to keep you safe,” I assure her.

“I believe you.” She sits up, brushing her fingers over my cheek. “Let’s get this over with.”

I laugh, trying to run through ways to lighten the mood. I come up with exactly nothing. My eyes fall back to the bed as I help her up. She has been extra nesty lately. Hopefully, if her heat does decide to start, then it can hold out for the Christmas break.

“Have you noticed?” I ask Fitz, lacing up my boots. My tank top tonight is ripped from the armpit right down to my jeans. Who knows how wardrobe decides our style, but it’s the middle of December. You’d think they could offer me a full shirt.

“I notice everything to do with Tinley.” Fitz rolls his eyes but quickly focuses across the greenroom. This place doesn’t have enough space to split the band, so we’re sharing.

Warrick is across the room, carefully monitoring Tinley as she asks Xavier some questions. We all want that situation to be over as soon as possible. Luckily, Carter is nowhere to be seen, which is probably why War agreed now was the best time for her to interview Xavier.

“She’s anxious and on edge, but more than that, she’s nesting like ninety percent of the time when we’re on the bus.” I frown, scratching my jaw. “The other ten percent is when War is holding her while she eats.” I switch to tying the other boot.

“Aww, are you jealous, Ram?” Fitz asks, chuckling. He almost never calls me by my nickname, but I like that he’s finally warming up to us. Even if my impulses simultaneously want to punch him in the face for having a bond with *my* omega. “She cares about both of you. Not one more than the other. You can’t let it get to you. She’s just settling into one bond; give her a little time to get used to it. I can’t even deny that I know it’s coming.”

“Really?” I ask, tilting my head as I study him. He better not be fucking with me right now.

“Yeah, she’s definitely got feelings for both of you. Maybe we should spoil her with another pack courting gift?” he offers with a shrug.

“You know what? That’s not a bad idea.”

“Are you going to plan this one?”

“Yeah, but I need more insight into what she likes, outside of photography. She’s been reading a lot lately...” An idea sparks, and I give him a feral grin. “I know exactly what we need to do. It’s just going to take a little planning.”

It takes an extra four days until we’re in a city where I have connections. War and I spent a lot of time playing in New York and Boston before we made it big. We won’t be in New York until Christmas and New Year’s Eve, but we’re in Boston now, and I was able to leverage a few favors to make tonight something special.

A buddy I used to drink with after our sets at the bar down the street is now the night supervisor for security at a fancy little museum. We’re setting him and his wife up with tickets for our show tomorrow and a few autographs.

Tinley squeals as she runs into the courtyard. It’s not like I could swing the Museum of Fine Arts on such short notice, but I’d say she’s digging the architecture and eclectic nature of

this place. She heads out toward the fountain as I follow with a jaunty skip in my step.

“I need you to look that way,” she says, pointing to where she wants me. I stop at the spot and her small hand raises, waving as she stares through the screen on her camera. I sidestep and then again when her fingers keep wiggling. “Okay, and let your hair down, but don’t look at me. No, silly, I said, don’t look at me.” I grin and she pulls her camera down, giving me a bright smile. “I will come over there and pose you if necessary.”

I chuckle. “Yes ma’am.”

It’s cold as shit out here.

So cold that her breath fogs as she speaks, telling me what to do for each shot.

I pose, carefully following her instructions.

“Thank you.” Once she’s done, she stomps off toward the big metal fence without a backward glance. She squats down, focusing her lens on something.

I stand over her shoulder and blink when I catch sight of the full moon through the tines on the fence.

Damn, that is a killer shot.

She pops up with a huff and a little shiver that betrays how cold she is.

“Want my jacket? Or are we done out here?” I ask as she walks into my chest. She nuzzles around, rolling her face up so I can see her wide blue eyes.

“This is amazing. I hope you know how much you mean to me.” She bites her plush lower lip, but I pull it free as I capture her mouth with mine. Her frisky little tongue makes my cock hard. She pulls back, and I notice how red her nose is. Boston really is cold as fuck. “I’m serious, Ram.”

“I know, shortcake. Me too.”

I wrap my arm around her lower back and guide her inside as her gaze darts around. “Hey, weren’t Warrick and Fitz going

to meet us here?”

I smack her ass over the coat, chuckling. It only took her an hour to notice they never showed up. “They’re getting the second part of our date set up.”

“What? It’s like one in the morning.”

It’s probably closer to two by now, but I don’t correct her.

“That’s the benefit of dating rock stars.” I bend down, kissing the hell out of her as I lead her to our next adventure.

The second part of our date surprisingly took the most planning. I don’t want to stereotype, but I had a hell of a time finding anyone I know who could help me out with this one.

“What’s this?” Tinley tilts her head, studying the front of the old bookstore. “I don’t want to ruin your plans, but I think they’re closed.”

I yank out my phone, texting the group chat. “Not for us.”

War pops open the door and, right on cue, the lights come on. “Your nose and cheeks are red.” He glares at me over her shoulder. “If she catches a cold...”

“It was amazing,” she says, skipping in the open door. “Don’t even get started with your growly Daddy behavior. Neither you nor the cold are ruining my awesome date. Spank me later if you have to.”

I laugh, sliding inside while my brother frowns indignantly. “She got some shots you’ve got to see to believe.”

“I’ll bet.” Fitz pulls her to his chest, cupping his hands around hers and blowing into them. “We’re going to need to buy you some gloves.”

At the same exact time, War says, “She needs gloves and a hat.”

“You two are too much.” Tinley grins over her shoulder at my twin. “Does anyone want to tell me why we’re here?” She

gasps. “Can I take pictures of the shelves? The aesthetic is perfect for a vintage flair.”

“It’s a whole experience.” I gesture out around the two-story shop. “We’ve only got thirty minutes because the owner will need to lock up, but you’ve got about twenty minutes to browse, take pictures, and explore to your heart’s content.”

“Then you get three minutes to pick as many items as one of us can carry,” Fitz says. “But if the holder physically can’t hold any more, then you’ve got to put them all back.”

“Ooo, that sounds like a dangerous balancing act,” she says.

“You better pick your partner carefully.” I gesture at my chest.

“A timed shopping spree? I’ve seen these on social media! This is amazing.” She glances around like she’s taking everything in.

“One of us will carry, one will take pictures, and one will reach anything outside of your height range.” War shoves his hands in his back pockets, rocking on his heels like he’s nervous if she’ll like it.

Tinley grins even wider, spinning in a circle. “You guys are amazing at picking gifts. Okay, so I can explore?”

“Yep, get to it,” Fitz says with a chuckle.

Her dress flies up as she twirls, taking off for the stairs.

She spends the next fifteen minutes browsing both levels and carefully plotting out her plan of action.

“You can start down here if there’s anything you’d like on this level,” War says. “We’ll freeze the timer when you’re ready to head upstairs. The last thing you need to do is run on stairs.”

“Excellent point.” Tinley turns to face Fitz. “And I get to choose who does what?”

“Yup,” I tell her.

“Okay, Fitzy. I need you to take pictures and also run the timer. I know you’ll make sure to get the good shots.” She leans up, kissing his cheek. “And maybe give us a few extra seconds’ grace to get my last treats.”

Fitz beams at her words, taking the camera.

She spins to War, resting her hands on his chest. “I need you to be my official book toter.”

“I’ve got you, baby girl.” War captures her mouth in a kiss that makes me a little jealous.

Fitz covertly rearranges his dick. Damn, I wonder if it was the show or spillover from the bond. I can’t wait to know what that connection feels like.

We’ll get there.

I just need to be patient.

“And you,” she spins to face me, “I’m going to need you to be my grabber for anything too high for me to reach.” She stretches up, giving me a quick kiss that has my hand digging into her ass. She smiles against my lips. “I know you’ll work fast and with a ton of enthusiasm.”

Fitz laughs, but I’ll take that compliment.

“All right, shortcake. Where are we starting?” I give her ass a squeeze.

“Down here is fine. Set the timer, Fitzy. Ramsey, you’re starting at the back. Second shelf from the top third and fifth books from the left.”

Warrick snorts.

My brain files through what she said, and I dart off to my starting position.

I’ve got an omega to impress.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Tinley

Fitz definitely helps me cheat on the countdown to zero. I shove another giant coffee-table book of wildlife photos on top of Warrick's stack as Ramsey barely makes it back with the last fiction book.

"You're a cheater," Warrick says, grinning over the massive pile in his arms. "But I'll allow it because you're cute."

"Thanks." I light up like the dang Christmas tree in the corner.

"Here, let us help with those," Fitz says.

Ramsey and Fitz help split the pile. When we make it downstairs, there's an older man with a fuzzy salt-and-pepper beard. He's wearing a Christmas sweater—with two chubby, angry-looking cats—that says, *Is this jolly enough for you?*

"That's adorable." I gesture to his chest. "I love Christmas sweaters."

"Thank you. Let's get you all checked out. My husband will never let me hear the end of it if I wake him up when I climb into bed." He chuckles, shuffling behind the glass counter in his matching red and green slippers. The smacking sound of all my books being laid down makes my cheeks heat. Maybe I went a little overboard and took advantage of the situation. In my defense, I've always been competitive, and I was really excited. I didn't want to miss out on any of the treasures.

Warrick wraps his arms around me from behind. I lean back into his chest, breathing in his nutty scent.

“Can I have my camera?” I ask Fitz. He immediately hands it over. “Can I take a few pictures of you?” I direct the question toward the old man.

“Sure, why not?” He chuckles.

I get it focused, so I can snap a couple of shots. “We’ll send you a copy once we’re settled.”

“Well then, I’ll hang it on the wall.” He tosses a thumb behind him. “Would you like me to take one of the four of you?”

“Hell yeah,” Ramsey says, scooting in closer. Fitz does the same on the other side as I hand over my camera.

The shop owner snaps a few pictures and grins mischievously. “That’ll be six hundred and forty-three dollars.”

I gasp.

The old man chuckles, snapping away. I can only imagine how those pictures will turn out.

We’re in a hotel for the night because the guys have another show at the same venue tomorrow. I fell asleep between Ramsey and Warrick. I slept without pajamas because I wanted to feel their warm skin against mine. I’ve got no idea what’s happening as I blink awake, but my body pulses with interest. I’m slick and someone has a calloused hand in my panties.

My eyes flutter open as I bite back the moan that tries to escape.

“How about you keep super fucking quiet,” Ramsey rasps into my ear. “And we’ll see how long it takes for my brother to join the party.”

I nod as my hand slides down to cup his. He slips a finger down into my hole as he licks and sucks my neck. I shove my ass back into his erection. My panties are still on, but my thighs meet bare flesh and an extremely hard cock. His finger works in and out of me easily, and it's clear I'm ready to go.

"Ram, fuck me, please," I whisper as his palm brushes my clit. He nods against my neck and yanks my panties to the side. The fabric brushes my skin as he moves his cock to my folds.

I lift my leg just a little to make it easier for him to thrust inside me. The way his hand tightens on my hip as he works into me makes me feel safe and secure.

"Goddamn. I never knew it could feel like this until you," he whispers into my ear. "You're going to let me claim you. Aren't you, Tinley?" My chest gets tight. I want that too, but I still worry about tying alphas to me when there's no guarantee I'll have a heat. "You can't still have doubts about how much I need you." He pulls out and slams in even deeper on the next stroke. "I've never felt as completely fulfilled as I have since you came into my life."

I nod, sliding a hand back to run my fingers through his hair. He leans over and pushes his mouth to mine while I tease my free hand lower to work my clit. The fabric makes for a unique feeling that I don't hate.

Ramsey knows just how to slam his length inside me while teasing me with his knot. He doesn't push it inside me, but it does graze my hole in a way that makes my legs shake.

"More," I whisper, clenching my eyes closed as I focus on the warmth of his body wrapped around mine. The intense, pulsing stretch of his cock rearranging my insides is nice too. He bounces against the bottom with each languid thrust. It doesn't take much longer for the pleasure to build to the point I can't keep quiet. My head rests on Ramsey's forearm, and he wraps that hand around my mouth to muffle the sounds I'm making.

"Oh, baby girl." Warrick's scent floods my nostrils as he gets close to my front. My eyes pop open. He's leaning close

with his head on his palm. “There’s no way I could miss your scent. It woke me up before the bed started rocking.”

“Fuck, I love the way you clench around me.” Ramsey digs his hand into my hip, releasing my mouth.

Warrick immediately dives in for a kiss that overloads my senses.

I moan as my body starts to shake. “I’m there.”

“Come all over me. Prove to me that you’re mine,” Ramsey growls.

Everything gets hazy as I thrash around, riding out the mind-blowing orgasm that rocks through my system.

“Bite me, please?” I sob out the plea as Warrick runs his thumbs over my nipples.

“You mean that, shortcake?” Ramsey’s cock swells so thick it becomes difficult for him to work in and out.

“God, yes.” I slam my ass back into his pelvis, working over his length the best I can.

Ramsey bumps my face to the side with his and licks over my neck where it meets my shoulder. “This is where I want my bite. I’ve thought long and *hard* about it. Is this okay?”

“Bite me,” I snap as I pull my fingers from my clit. The sensations are too much with all three of our pheromones thumping in the air.

Ramsey growls and strikes while Warrick pushes his mouth to mine.

Warrick scratches his teeth over my bottom lip but doesn’t break the skin.

Ramsey thrusts, working himself even deeper as the pain of the bite finally processes.

I gasp, pulling back from Warrick’s kiss as the bond settles into place. A warm feeling coats my insides, starting in my chest. The link between us lights up with Ramsey’s excitement. He’s still coming deep inside me, but he’s ecstatic to be tied to me for life. It takes my breath away as his

emotions settle into my chest. I'm not sure if it's love. Not quite yet. It's more the warm, fuzzy excitement that grows into it. I feel the same about him. I try to send it through the bond like I do with Fitz, but I'm a little afraid I'm slamming my emotions at both of them.

"Jesus fucking Christ," Ramsey groans, clutching me even tighter. "You're all mine. And I can feel how content you are about that."

"I am," I assure him.

Warrick growls, "Yeah, I'm going to need in on this bonding action."

"Really?" I ask. "I want that too."

Warrick sits up while Ramsey slides free of me. Warrick gives his brother's shoulder a push until Ramsey is lying flat on his back. I have no idea what's happening, but Warrick pulls me up and lies me down on Ram's chest.

Ramsey's cock gets trapped between us, but he shrugs. "Let's just let him do what he wants. He seems like he's kinda rabid."

Warrick climbs over Ramsey's legs as he pulls my panties down my hips and yanks at each side one after the other. The ripping of the fabric fills the air as he chuckles darkly. Once they're disposed of, the bed shakes as he gets himself situated. I do a double take when I see he's squatting with his feet on either side of Ramsey's hips. He yanks my ass back and thrusts inside me with no warning. Thank God I'm already plenty wet because it's a tight fit, especially in this position.

I moan, clawing at Ramsey's chest.

Warrick isn't fucking around. He slaps into my ass like a man possessed.

Holy fucking shit, he *really* is full-on rabid. The sounds he releases as his pelvis meets mine have me baring my neck.

Ramsey pulls my hair to the side and distracts me by pushing his mouth to mine. I'm so slick, and his cock was already wet with both of our cum. The feeling of his length

bouncing around from my clit to my stomach only makes it hotter.

Warrick snarls, fucking into me in a way that ensures I'll be feeling the effects of this tomorrow.

I love it.

Although, I do think it will hurt to sit up straight for a few days. I'll gladly handle a little discomfort. The way he's using me makes me tingle with anticipation to see what comes next.

Ramsey's bite is still tender on my neck, and the twinge of pain only seems to enhance my need for more of it.

"I love the feel of your titties bouncing against my chest," Ramsey growls, running his thumbs over my cheek. "It doesn't hurt having that slick little cunt grinding over my cock while my brother knocks the bottom out for you."

I moan, trying to determine if this is even reality. I wonder how many fans have dreamed of being in the middle of a Malone twin sandwich.

"Mine," Warrick snarls. My head snaps back as he wraps a hand in my hair at the base of my skull. He pulls me up until my back frames his chest, but I lower my hips so I can continue to grind my clit against Ram's cock. "Tell me, baby girl. Who do you belong to?" He scrapes his teeth down my throat.

I can't get over the fact I get to keep them both. It's a whole different experience feeling the two of them throbbing against my sex. Ramsey might not be inside of me, but the bond tells me he's enjoying every second of it.

"I asked you a question." Warrick's voice vibrates through me like a command.

"You," I sob as my pleasure coils tighter. I grind against Ramsey's throbbing length, chasing pressure for my clit.

"Oh, dirty girl. I know you can do better than that." Warrick wraps his free hand around my stomach and pushes near my pelvis. It tilts my top half farther toward Ram, and the angle sends me soaring.

“You, Daddy!” I groan as he pushes with more intensity.

“That’s right, baby girl.” He gathers my hair, pinning it on top of my head before licking over the base of my neck where it meets my spine. “This is where I want my bite.”

“Bite me, Daddy.”

Warrick lunges, and his teeth dig in deep. My core convulses as my thighs tremble.

“Whoa,” I moan, trying to keep myself upright.

Warrick growls, lapping at the bite as his cock jumps. Everything is hazy and muted by the pleasure. I can hardly keep track of which way is up. Electricity zips through my system as I come around Warrick, gushing slick all over Ramsey’s pelvis.

“Fuck me,” Ramsey says. “Did you just squirt? I’m so fucking jealous right now.”

Warrick ruts up into me, cursing under his breath. “One of these days, I’m going to breed your slick little cunt.”

I moan, nodding wildly as he kisses his way over my shoulder.

“I’m covered in your pussy,” Ramsey growls. “Grind on me, shortcake. I’m going to blow.” He grips my waist and helps me slide back and forth. After a few slick grinds, he goes stiff as he comes all over his stomach.

I watch with rapt fascination as I roll my hips, trying to make sure he enjoys himself. That’s a lot of cum, and my mouth waters as I imagine licking up every drop of it.

It takes way too long for my skin to stop feeling overly sensitive to every touch. As I do, a wave of pure smugness hits the bond.

I tilt my head, looking over my shoulder at War.

“You’re all mine,” he says, and the smile that crosses his face takes my damn breath away.

“Guess what? That means you’re all mine too. That goes for the both of you.”

“You know, that’s hotter than I expected,” Ramsey adds. “I like being claimed.”

I snort, but then my whole body shakes as Warrick fully settles in place in the bond. His unwavering devotion and support are almost indescribable. That feeling might be love, it’s hard to tell, but he cares about me deeply.

Warrick is steadfast comfort, like the base I need to balance out my hyperactive soul. The bond is difficult to explain, but his loyalty and affection are impossible to miss.

I take a few ragged breaths to calm my emotions. Three bonds are way more overwhelming than one, but I don’t regret it. Not at all. We all blend together in the link until it’s impossible to decipher what is coming from who.

All the air leaves my lungs as it hits me.

My pack is finally complete.

Super embarrassing tears fill my eyes as Warrick pulls out of me, tossing himself down on the bed at Ramsey’s side. He yanks me off his brother and into his chest as he palms the back of my head.

Ramsey grumbles his way through cleaning up his cum before climbing back in bed behind me. My body shakes with trembles I can’t control, but my entire being pulses with joy. The three missing pieces of my heart are now fully in place.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Fitz

We're in the homestretch. Two more shows and we will finally get a fucking break. Ramsey and Warrick have made it clear that Tinsel and I will be staying with them at their house in Maine for the holiday.

I'm good with that. Mostly, I want to spend the entire time inside my omega. But we need to determine if it's where we're going to land permanently. Both mine and Tinley's families are just outside of Chicago. I don't know if she'll be comfortable moving that far away from them, and I already know Shanna won't be pleased.

Ramsey is covertly showing me pictures of the house. It's beautiful, but that's a fuck ton of snow. "It's only a five-minute drive into the city, and the entire area has houses with decent acreage, so it feels private, even though you're close to all the amenities."

"It's nice," I agree, but my attention is on Tinsel. She's interviewing Carter, and even Gavin is hanging around, watching the interaction. That's likely because a lawsuit wouldn't look good for the label. That, or it could be he doesn't want one of us to beat Carter to death with our bare hands if he decides to show his ass.

"Well, we can always look for something else if she doesn't like it," Ramsey says. "We also need to start shopping for an engagement ring. My mom was really serious about that."

“I know exactly what she wants.” I grab my phone and unlock the screen. “Tinsel and my sister used to cut out pictures in magazines. I’ve still got the one I stole off their dream-board thing in high school.”

“Don’t you think it’s possible her tastes have changed since then?”

I laugh. “Maybe. We could buy her one from each of us and make her pick.”

“Hell, no.” He chuckles. “But you should let War have some say before you buy. He’s a lot more...” He shrugs.

“Yeah,” I agree, because he doesn’t even need to say it.

My eyes dart around the hotel room, but the light is on in the bathroom. I tilt my head to the side, listening for the sound of the shower running. I’m pretty sure she’s still in there. The annoying jangle of the ring sizer tool in my pocket is almost obnoxiously loud.

I’m on a mission.

There are benefits to being a celebrity. Not a ton, but I was able to talk Gavin into having one delivered before we left the venue tonight. We’re in the same hotel for tonight and tomorrow night. Then we’re free for our mini vacation. It’s more like permanent freedom, considering we only have one show in NYC on New Year’s Eve, and then the contract is complete.

I spot Tinley’s purse and head over, checking to see if any of the rings she normally wears are inside. Buying an engagement ring and getting the wrong size seems like a disaster I don’t want to walk into.

Shanna cackled like a lunatic when I asked if she knew Tinley’s ring size. Shouldn’t this be something best friends know about one another? Tinley’s mom was exactly no help, either. She guessed a six or seven, but come to find out, there are quarter and half sizes too.

“Whatcha doing?” Tinley wraps her arms around me from behind.

I jolt, slamming my hand into the desk as I rip it free of her bag.

Dammit, this covert mission failed.

“I was looking for gum?” I lie quite badly. Even I can hear the question in my tone.

“Oh, it’s always in the little side pocket.” She slides a hand up and under my T-shirt. My head falls back as she scratches her nails down my abs and into the band of my sweats. “You should know that.”

My mind races on ways to distract her, but my naughty little omega moves her hand down into the waistband of my sweats. Her fingertips tease through my happy trail and lower. The towel wrapped around her middle pushes into my back as she leans into me, working her way toward my suddenly thickening cock. She cups her fingers, working just the root, and I groan. Her hot breath puffs through my T-shirt, and thoughts of rutting her into oblivion file through my mind.

Wait, I’m supposed to be distracting her. I spin around, but she keeps her hand in my sweats. Her hair is a mess of brown waves, but it’s her blue eyes that always get me. Her mouth forms an “O” like she doesn’t know what to do now that I’m fully focused on her. I pull my shirt off with a hand at the back of my neck before moving it to caress her cheek.

“You’re so fucking beautiful.” I bend low, brushing my lips over hers. Her hand wraps around my shaft, working me despite the confines of the fabric. Her arousal hits me through the bond, and my head tilts as my nostrils flare. “You need my cock, don’t you, sweetheart?”

She smiles against my lips. “What gave it away? Me slamming it into the bond or this?” Her fingers tighten around me as she runs her thumb over my crown.

I chuckle as I rip off her towel, letting it fall to the floor as my hands land on her hips. I move one to her hair at the base of her skull, tilting her head to the side.

“I’m here whenever you need me.” I push my mouth to hers as I shove my sweats down. The jingling of that fucking ring sizer fills the silence, but I’m hoping I’ve got her sufficiently distracted. I kick them aside and lift her with my hands on her hips. She lands, bouncing on the bed, and my eyes immediately zero in on her tits. “Spread wide for me, Tinsel.” I hit my knees in front of her as my cock bounces.

Her pheromones are especially thick, but I don’t focus on myself. She scoots back a little, pulling her legs up and spreading her knees. Her fingers trail down her stomach to her cunt, and she works her own clit. Since she’s got that covered, I know where my tongue is going. I breathe in a deep hit of her scent and dive in. I suck each one of her labia into my mouth before burying my tongue in her hole.

“Fitz,” she moans, clutching my head with her other hand. I fist my cock and lock her in place with a hand on her hip. She grinds against my face as I lick and suck.

“That’s it. Fuck my face,” I growl, moving to lap at her clit. She keeps her fingers spreading her hood apart, and I lick at them too. I’m half lost to the fog, which hasn’t happened since we bonded.

“I thought I was about to miss out on the good stuff.” Warrick’s gravelly tone fills the air. “Can I join you, baby girl?”

“Y-Yes, Daddy,” she moans.

That’s hotter than I ever imagined. When I watched porn, I occasionally stumbled across pleasure Doms. That seemed more my style, because age play doesn’t appeal to me. Well, maybe certain aspects, but I’m definitely down for Daddy vibes. She moans, and my eyes cut up to see Warrick kissing the hell out of her.

My cock pulses in my fist as she gets even slicker, and I bring the hand from her hip to bury two fingers inside her. Her pleasure pulses in the bond as I work in and out. She’s so snug, I ache to feel her wrapped around my shaft.

It's incredible being able to tell what pleases her and what doesn't work. It's a gift from God, considering my history—or lack thereof. Her pussy starts to flutter like she's about to come. I grab her legs, wrap them around my back, and prepare to swap my hand for my dick. My fingers are covered in her slick, and I pull them to my mouth, licking her off.

“Fitz,” she snaps, but it's muffled. “I was right there.”

“I know.” I chuckle, slamming forward. She's a little too far up on the bed to get more than half my length inside her. I grip her hips, bringing her flush with the edge of the bed. “I'm going to fuck you through it. Come all over my cock, sweetheart.” The haze gets thicker as I plow in and out of her wet pussy. Her feet dig into my ass as she gyrates her hips, rolling to meet mine.

Warrick is busy kissing her and playing with her tits.

“Knot me, Fitzzy,” she moans. “I need your knot, now!” Her cunt clenches in waves, and Warrick's low chuckle fills the air.

“Flip her over for me before you do that.” Warrick strips out of his shirt.

“I'm going to murder the both of you if I don't get to come real damn quick!” our omega declares, and the bond fills with her annoyance.

Warrick pulses in the link, but even if he didn't, his amusement is evident on his face as he strips out of his sweats.

I pull our pouty little omega up, kissing the hell out of her. She grinds her pussy against my pelvis, and I like knowing she's desperate to come on my cock. I yank myself free of her tight little hole and help her lean over the end of the bed. She's so short that she has to lay the top half of her body at an angle, and her feet touch the ground instead of her knees. The sight of her curves as she wiggles her hips at me has my tip dribbling pre-cum like I can breed her from here.

Warrick guides her mouth to his cock, and they both moan as she licks all over his crown. Her ass is kind of high up, and her slick little pussy is peeking through at me.

I plant one foot on the floor and kneel with the other leg to give myself leverage as I guide my length inside her. Her ass jiggles against my pelvis, spurring me on.

I'm way too foggy. My brain tries to convince me that I can breed her full of my baby if I rut hard enough. I stretch over her back, pull her hair to the side, and lick over my bite. It gives me a lovely view of War's hairy thighs as he grunts, thrusting into her mouth.

I almost laugh.

Who the hell knew pack life would be like this?

"Knot," Tinley demands without missing a beat as she bobs and sucks.

"You need it. Don't you, baby girl?" War coos, running a hand over the back of her head. It puts it right near my face as he flips me off. "Tell your alpha to knot you, or I'll take over. She's perfuming, asshole. Do your job and knot your omega."

I really liked being able to thrust, but her grinding on my knot will work too. I slam the slightly swollen appendage inside her, and the pressure from this position takes my breath away.

"Oh fuck," I groan into her neck as my knot starts to swell. "I love your pussy. It's so perfect. Actually, I just really fucking love you." My balls slap against her skin as I plow as far as I can go. "The pressure of your cunt wrapped around me is unlike anything else in the world."

She moans, chasing her release as she grinds as much as she can. "Harder, rut me harder!"

My hand wraps around her shoulder as I fuck up into her as much as I can. My vision goes spotty as her cunt locks down. My balls get tight, aching for the release that's right there.

"Shh, you can handle that when you're done," Warrick says.

My eyes pop open as she moans and begs through her orgasm. He pulled free of her mouth, and he's got a hand

between her and the bed. He's working her clit, which is good, because I was preoccupied.

Fire licks up my spine.

My head falls against hers as I rut into her like a mindless beast. They're shallow strokes, but the friction makes my knot pulse as my cock swells.

I growl, emptying as deep as I can get.

"You're so goddamn perfect. Our perfect, sweet omega." I don't know how much is coherent. "I love you so fucking much. You're such a good girl. Work my cock, Tinsel. Soak up every drop. I'm going to be spilling out of your tight little cunt all night long."

"More," she whines. The sound triggers every impulse in my system. Even though I'm still recovering from blowing my load, I can't deny her anything. I growl, fucking her deeper, and I'm pretty sure I slip into a mild version of rut.

"Damn, someone warn a man next time," Ramsey says, coming into the room. "I was talking to our mother. No man should ever be forced to finish a conversation with his *very* chatty mom with a hard-on."

Warrick snorts.

"I had to take the call off speakerphone—that's how loud you were screaming, shortcake." Ramsey chuckles.

I'm too lost to the sensations flooding the bond from Tinley to process anything but her need to be fucked. My mouth falls to my bond mark, and I lick over it, sending her all my love and carnal attraction.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Tinley

There's a jolly skip to my step as I bounce around in front of the stage, taking pictures of the guys as they practice. Their final show before the break is tonight. My entire body wobbles with butterflies at the thought of settling in one place.

I can't even lie; I'm extremely nervous to see Ramsey and Warrick's house. Their family will be right down the street, and they've both made it clear there will be no holding their mother back from coming to make introductions. I'm optimistic but terrified at the same time.

They'll be my in-laws for life. I drag my Converse against the rug, shaking my head as I stare at my feet. I'm not embarrassed we bonded so quickly. My parents didn't know each other an entire month before the first claiming bite. Things move lightning-fast when pheromones are involved.

But I'm not even truly an omega.

What if they're upset and worry I'll never be able to give them grandchildren?

What if they think I trapped their sons into bonding me? God, I'm so lucky to know Fitz's family will be in my corner, no matter what. My parents' pack is amazing too.

I don't know why I'm psyching myself out so hard, but my stomach aches at the thought of them disliking me.

Fitz and Warrick were gone for most of the morning. They swore they wouldn't go Christmas shopping without me, but I'm starting to panic a little. I have four new parents to

purchase for and a very limited part-time photographer budget to make that happen.

I toss myself down in one of the front row seats and get back to work. The other half of my income from this job comes once it's complete, which means I need to stop stressing about my personal life and focus on being a professional.

The skirt of my dress flies out as I pace the hallway. Warrick is ten feet away talking to Gavin, Northern Star's manager, and someone else I don't recognize. My eyes dart from him to the curve I know leads to the ladies' room. It's not his fault they approached him after he said he'd come with me, but I really need to use the bathroom. My stomach has been hurting all afternoon, and the crampy feeling that comes right before my period starts is out in full force.

That would be a crappy gift for our first Christmas together. My legs cross as I bounce on my knees, clutching my thighs together. I've got my camera in my hand, and I grab a couple of quick pictures to distract myself.

It doesn't help. I try to send thoughts of the bathroom to Warrick, but he's animatedly discussing something while shaking his head. Okay, the women's room is like thirty feet away from where he is. I'm sure he'll get the idea and come find me as soon as he's done.

Or maybe he'll notice I'm gone, and it'll lead to threats of a spanking. Either way, I'm ready to risk it. I flick through the pictures I just took as I bolt for the bathroom. They're intense, like Warrick isn't happy about something.

I back out of review mode as I shove the bathroom door open and barrel inside.

My head tilts as I jolt.

The unmistakable shuttering sound of a picture being taken fills the air. There's a big guy, with at least as many tattoos as

Warrick and Ramsey, and he's with Carter. I take a step back, but this is the women's room.

I didn't stumble into the wrong one, but I did just walk in on something I shouldn't have.

"Did you just take our fucking picture?" the big guy growls, taking a step toward me.

"I-I..."

"It's cool, man. She's with me." Carter gives me a look I don't understand as I take another step back.

"You're gonna want to delete my picture, right fucking now." The big guy gets closer.

I retreat until my back hits the wall. "I-I..." My stutter always gets more intense when I'm anxious. I do my best to form a sentence to assure him I will, but I don't get past the first word.

"I told you she's with me," Carter growls, coming from out of nowhere and stepping between us. "I've got this. You better get back before they notice you're gone."

"Don't fuck me over, Carter," he growls, opening the door and walking out. "You know how that would go for you."

My camera is still clutched to my chest as Carter spins to face me.

"You're all right, sugar." Carter raises his palms. I don't know where he put the drugs he was buying, but that's not my concern.

"H-He s-seemed kind of aggressive," I stutter, exhaling heavily.

"Yeah, he's not the type of guy I'd risk messing with. You need to clear any pictures off, right now." Carter shoves his hands in his front pockets.

I turn the camera and show him the screen that confirms the delete. It's still there, though. Anyone good with tech could recover it. "Why did you..." I don't even know how to finish

that, but I do think things could have gone much differently if he didn't vouch for me.

"I'm not a monster," Carter says with a shrug.

"Thank you." I close the screen on my camera. Holy crap, I'm actually surprised I didn't pee my pants. That was kind of scary.

"Are you gonna rat me out?" Carter raises an eyebrow, but the door slams open beside us at the exact same moment.

I squeal, and Carter takes a step in front of me. My hands are shaking, and pure adrenaline pulses through my system. The bond is so muted that I don't pick up Warrick's fury until it's right on top of us. He wraps a hand in Carter's shirt and yanks him to the wall a few feet away.

"Rat you out for what?" Warrick snarls, slamming a fist into Carter's jaw.

"Warrick," I call out, running to his side. He lands another solid hit before Carter swings back. Carter is aiming for Warrick's core, but War is punching Carter directly in the face. "Stop it, please. I'm fine, but I am having a bathroom emergency, which is how I stumbled into him in the first place." I make a grab for War's arm. "*Please! Stop!*" It comes out as a whine.

Warrick immediately drops Carter, spinning around to face me. "Are you okay?"

"He didn't do anything. Just let him leave so I can use the restroom." My head shakes. I was clearly crazy when I agreed to come on this tour. I look at Carter. "Go, you two obviously don't get along, but can we please keep the fighting to verbal assault?"

"Baby girl," Warrick says, approaching similarly to how Carter did before with his hands raised.

"No," I say firmly. "You stay over there. I'm going into that stall to use the bathroom. Carter, you're leaving, and the two of you will keep your distance from each other."

“Well, I’ll be damned.” Carter wipes at his bloody lip. “She might just give you a run for your money.”

I scoff, suddenly over giving a crap if anyone hears me pee. It’s an emergency. I spin around, heading into the stall. I hang up my camera on the hook, and once I’m seated, the door opens and closes like someone left the bathroom.

“You better enjoy sitting,” Warrick says. “Because I have a feeling you’re going to have a very hot bottom after you tell me what happened.”

I roll my eyes. “Hit the button on the sink, would you? I need background noise.”

I don’t make it out of the stall before Fitz and Ramsey shove their way into the bathroom. I stop to wash my hands, but they quickly corral me to the greenroom we started in.

Warrick is in full-blown alpha-freak-out mode as he paces the floor bare. “I told you to wait for me.”

“And I told you before we left this room that it was an emergency.” I give him a serious look, but he doesn’t see it as he spins around, pacing back in the other direction.

“She has a small bladder. We all know this,” Fitz says, placing himself down next to me on the couch.

“Could one of you fill us in? We’re supposed to be on stage in less than ten minutes.” Ramsey takes a seat on the edge of one of the makeup chairs.

“I got stopped by Gavin and one of the label execs. Once I noticed she was gone, I abandoned that conversation. They’re probably not pleased, but neither am I! She was in the women’s bathroom with Carter when I walked in.” Warrick snarls a low, vibrating sound that indicates he’s foggy, or maybe about to snap completely.

I hand my camera to Fitz as Ramsey curses under his breath.

Warrick is still pacing, but I have no fear where he's concerned. He makes it to the end of the room and spins around. I make sure I'm right there when he does. I raise my arms and he sighs, lifting me and wrapping me around his front.

"I wouldn't survive it if something happened to you, especially on my watch." His hair falls against my cheek as his head shakes. The hold he's got on my hip and ass is kind of painful, but I know it's not intentional. "Being bonded gives you a sliver of extra safety, but the truth is, omegas are always at risk. This isn't the small town you guys grew up in."

"I know that." I brush my fingers over the scar on his cheek. He really is a good man. He takes the weight of the world onto his shoulders. He comes off as abrasive and kind of controlling at times, but even I can recognize that's part of how he shows someone he cares. "And truly, if I could have waited any longer, then I would have. I'm okay." I have to choose my words carefully because the last thing I want to do is lie to them. We're bonded. They can probably tell, anyway. "It means the world to me that you look after me so fiercely." I stretch up, getting very close to his ear. "I love you for it and about a million other reasons."

Warrick growls, spinning around and slamming my back against the nearby wall. It helps keep me upright as my feet dig into his ass. "Don't think this gets you out of your punishment." He pushes his mouth to mine as he grinds against me. He's frantic, and his concern fully filters through the bond as he gets distracted by the kiss. My nails dig into his neck as he devours me. It starts rough, but quickly turns to soft kisses with lots of tongue. He pulls back. I follow his mouth, but he bumps my face to the side. His warm breath fans over my neck as he gets close to my ear. "I love you too, baby girl."

"I know. I've been able to feel it since we bonded," I assure him as my eyes pop open.

Ramsey watches us carefully. I send him a pulse of my emotions in the bond, but I want to wait to say it to him until the moment feels right.

“They’re going to be calling for us at any time.” Fitz leans forward on the couch. His forearms rest on his knees and his tension is clear. “I just need to know if I need to dispose of a rhythm guitarist before we take the stage.”

My chest gets tight. I’m not Carter’s biggest fan. Not by a long shot. His behavior fits the classic rock star asshole down to a T. I don’t think one instance of showing basic human decency negates everything else he’s done. Warrick mentioned how Carter stole his pain medication while he was healing from a major injury. He was also clearly behind my meds going missing. Luckily, I was able to get them filled when it was time, but it was still a huge hassle and a breach of trust.

It’s complicated.

I don’t think mentioning it right before they go out to put on a show for thousands of people is the right move, either. I won’t be lying to them. Maybe just putting it off until we’re in another state. That way, I don’t have to worry about any additional physical altercations.

There’s a knock on the door, and my head whips to the side.

Warrick curses. “You’re going to stay right at the edge, just behind the curtains. If you disappear, then I’m telling you right now, I’ll walk off the stage. I don’t care if it’s mid-performance.” I blink in shock, but I can feel the truth in his words. He pulls me off the wall and his palm lands on my backside. “Tell me you hear me.”

I nod. “Yes, Daddy.”

Something is very wrong. They left me alone and went into the hall with someone. It’s definitely been at least ten minutes, so I’m pretty sure they’re supposed to be on stage right now.

They’re trying to mute the bond, but their concern and anger are spilling over to the point it would be impossible to

miss. I push myself off the couch and start to pace. What in the world could be happening?

It has to have something to do with Carter and that guy, right? It feels like a real possibility.

Ramsey comes inside with Gavin and the guy Warrick was talking to earlier. War and Fitz aren't with him.

The other two stay by the door, but Ramsey comes up slowly, stretching an arm out for me.

I tilt my head, studying the worry on his face, but head into his hold. "What's wrong?"

"At some point between when you saw Carter and when Xavier went to find him to call him to the stage..." Ramsey's head shakes and my heart stalls.

"What?" I ask.

"He's on his way to the hospital."

"We think he overdosed," Gavin says. "But I personally helped Xavier flip the room, looking for the drugs, and we couldn't find them. Meaning, we have no idea what to tell them he took." He studies me, like I might know.

"I don't have anything to do with that stuff," I assure them.

"We know that," Ramsey says, running his hand down my back. "But did you see anything that might have been helpful?"

My stomach drops as I glance between them. That guy was kind of intimidating, but if keeping my mouth shut could put Carter at risk...

My panic rises as I realize the picture will have to be recovered by tech and that could take extra time. I tell them everything I saw and how Carter intervened on my behalf.

"That could be anyone. Venue staff, one of the roadies, a random connection he has in the city." The guy with Gavin curses, pulling out his phone and typing on it. "I'll let them know. They've got to be almost at the hospital by now. The police escort had to have helped, despite the traffic."

Ice slides through my veins because that sounds especially serious.

“All right,” Gavin says. “You’ve got to get out there. The crowd is waiting.”

“You’re still performing?” My mouth falls open. They’ve been bandmates for ten years. It feels like they should be heading to the hospital to check on their friend.

“It’s too late to cancel,” Gavin says, as if that should be obvious.

“War will be doing rhythm while Fitz does lead. It’s not the fans’ fault.” Ram glares at Gavin. “Carter needs real help, which we’ve mentioned, but hopefully this will force someone to listen!” His concern radiates through the bond, making my chest ache. Yeah, it’s clear he’s torn and unsure what the right call is.

“Come on, you’ve got to go.” Gavin waves a hand.

“Steve is going to be with you the entire time we’re on stage,” Ramsey says, nuzzling his cheek to mine.

I’m so overwhelmed, all I can do is blink. Holy crap, what a nightmare. I’m not fond of Carter, but I do hope he’s okay.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Warrick

Our plans to propose to Tinley during our show go out the window because of Carter. We've been friends for a decade, and despite my anger over the position he put my omega in, I'm still worried as fuck.

It's complicated. I feel like a total dick. The last thing I did was punch him in the face.

Carter is in stable condition. We're going to see him tomorrow because the hospital's visiting hours are over tonight.

Who the hell knows why the label booked us three shows in a row in the same city, two weeks apart. There's a brief discussion about what to do about our flights. They're set to leave in the morning, but we decide as a pack that it isn't the right time to fly to Maine.

We spend a somber night in a hotel in New York, and I field a call from Rooker Jacobs before six the next morning. He's Jamen Jacobs's son, and they're several hours behind us in Colorado, which might account for why he's calling at such a ridiculous time.

Rook is in the process of taking over for his father to run the label. After a lengthy conversation, where it's made very clear our concerns haven't been making it to those at the top, he passes me off to a tech specialist. The guy's name is Storm, and he barks orders like I'm on his payroll.

"I don't understand how you're going to access a deleted picture on a memory card from another state." I sigh, grabbing

the adapter Tinley uses and plugging it into her laptop.

“It’s a version of screen sharing. I’m going to let myself in by remotely accessing your girl’s computer. All you have to do is click the link I’m sending to her work email,” Storm says as I boot up the machine. “Can you get access to it?”

“Yeah, but it’ll take me a minute. It’s still turning on.” I yawn, trying to keep my voice down to avoid waking the others. “What’s the purpose of all this?” I’m still half asleep and confused as fuck why they’re asking for this information instead of the police.

“If it’s someone employed by Ruined, then we’ll be ensuring they look for other employment. Someone had to remove the drugs after he was incapacitated, which tells me the dealer either knew there was a chance they could be laced, or he was anxious after the interaction with your girl. He found Carter and left him,” Storm says. “There’s no telling if the police will follow up. It falls to how busy they are and what else comes across their desk. It’s also a major holiday, but this feels especially personal. I’m not prepared to let it go. Not yet.”

“Right,” I mutter.

It’s hard not to be bitter, when all this could have been prevented if someone had listened just one of the times we brought it to Gavin and the lower-level execs we had access to.

“I don’t like the idea that he could still be around. You get what I’m saying? He’s a threat until we determine he’s not. We all know how you had Issac’s and Dexter’s backs.” Storm mentions the guys whose baby mama was in labor while we were stuck in a different building during the riot when I was injured.

A shiver runs down my spine. I still hate thinking about it, even after all this time. The fear and disappointment I felt realizing I’d blown my career was extreme for a while.

Luckily, I’ve got better things to focus on now.

“All right, it’s up and running. What am I looking for?” I ask to get back on track.

The next half hour is spent on speakerphone while Storm remotely accesses not just the image that was deleted, but every single photo on her camera.

“Some of those are our courting pictures,” I say, clearing my throat. “Don’t fuck them up.”

“Hey, congratulations,” Rook says, piping in from the background for the first time since he handed over the phone. “I was wondering if the stories were true.”

“Yeah,” I agree. “But my omega will literally smother me with a pillow if any of those pictures go missing. They’re the only ones we’ve got, except a few on our phones.”

“You don’t even have to say it,” Storm says, chuckling. “I’m pretty sure all women would have a similar reaction. I didn’t delete anything, just restored the recent deletes and sent myself copies of those, along with everything on the memory card. I’m going to set up my software to comb through and see if he comes up in the background of any of the others.”

“We planned to propose at the last show, but with everything that went down, we held off...” I swipe a hand over my face. Is it crossing a line to ask a favor of my boss? Possibly, but I really don’t care. “Could you make copies of the courting pictures and send them to me?”

Their laughter fills the line.

“Yeah, not a problem. Give me a couple of hours, and I’ll send them to the email you’ve got on file for contracts,” Storm says.

“Congratulations,” Rook says again. “Let us know if you need anything.”

I scoff. “A miracle to keep the press off our backs? Do you know if we’ll still be performing the New Year’s Eve show, or are you going to sub us out?”

“Fuck, I don’t know about that. Give me a few days and let me talk to my dad,” Rook says. “We’ll be in contact.”

We wrap up the call and disconnect. Today is fucking Christmas Eve. This entire tour has been one giant shit show.

The only good thing is Tinley. She makes all the other bullshit worth it.

The label security accompanies us to the hospital. They manage to sneak us in through the celebrity and rich people's entrance. It's convenient New York is set up for high-profile clients, even the hospitals.

The press hasn't broken Carter's story yet, although I verified before leaving the hotel that his family has been notified. That's the last fucking thing any parent deserves to find out on some gossip news website.

"Are you sure you want to head in there?" I ask Tinley as we finally make it to the waiting room for Carter's floor.

She rubs at her lower stomach and shrugs. I feel her out in the bond, but she's majorly overwhelmed. The press we encountered while leaving the hotel was enough to frazzle anyone, and she's still worried about Christmas shopping. "I feel like I need to thank him for stepping in, but I know they only let two people in the room at a time. I can stay out here with Fitz. Just tell him thank you for me."

"Not to be an asshole, but he's the one who got you into that situation to begin with." Ram wraps an arm around her lower back. "But we all want him to get his life together, so I won't be pointing that out unless it's necessary."

"Come on, Tinsel. We can snuggle up on that two-seater bench," Fitz says, nodding to the small couch on the far wall.

The hospital attendant we were assigned stands patiently, waiting. Once Fitz and Tinley head off, Ram joins my side, and we aim to check on Carter.

"Are you here to take another swing at me?" Carter asks, pushing himself up in the hospital bed.

Ram snorts.

I swipe a hand over my face, shaking my head. “Nah, you kinda look like shit.”

“Thanks, asshole. I feel like it too,” Carter says.

“I’m glad you’re not dead,” I tell him truthfully as I toss myself down on the other free chair.

“Me too,” Ram agrees. “Are you going to get yourself together?”

“The label gave me two choices. Quietly disappear from their sight, or they’ll fund a lovely round of rehab in one of those fancy places out West.” He shrugs. “I’m getting too old for this shit.”

I frown, because I don’t know if that clarifies his choice one way or the other.

“They’re getting everything set up,” he finally finishes.

My eyes widen as I lean back. I wasn’t expecting it, but I am relieved.

Carter used to be a decent guy and a solid friend. It’s been a whole lot of years of not being able to trust him, but I still want him to be all right in the long run.

“What about Xavier?” I know he’s been at the hospital, but he wasn’t here when we arrived. Jack had to leave the room so Ram and I could come in.

“Who knows?” Carter shrugs, but his jaw gets tight. “He left as soon as Gavin brought up our choices.”

That makes my fists clench. I get that addiction is a mental health issue, but those two grew up together. It’s sad to see how quickly things can dissolve when shit gets real.

“Do you know what happened to you?” Ram asks.

“Nah, I don’t remember shit between being in the bathroom with you and the photographer and waking up here.” He shrugs. “The doctors said it was laced with something way stronger than what I was used to taking.”

I'm not sure why I believe him, but I guess I do. "The guy Tinley got a picture of. Is he with the tour?"

Carter sighs. "If the label doesn't cancel the New Year's show, then I'd leave your girl home. I don't think he'd go after her or anything, but better safe than sorry. He's not technically employed by the tour, but he's got connections within the label. High-up type of connections. He's been at every stop." His jaw clenches as his head shakes. "I've got nothing else to say. Thanks for stopping by, but I'm tired."

Ramsey gives me a bewildered look as his jaw falls open. I'm equally confused, but Carter shuts down. We have no choice but to say our goodbyes and head out. Once the door closes, I look over at my brother.

"That was fucking weird." I glance back at the door.

"Yeah," Ram agrees. "It makes me want to take Tinley and get the fuck out of this state."

I'm not sure I'm quite at that level, but I'll definitely be touching base with Rook again.

Ramsey and Fitz are at another store a few down from the one Tinley and I are in. The frazzled little omega is using me as her shopping basket once again, which I find adorable. I dislike the way she frantically studies the prices.

"You know we don't have a budget, right?" I ask close to her ear.

She jolts, nearly dropping the set of glasses she's been studying. I steady her hand with one of mine. "You're all extremely difficult to shop for."

"You don't need to buy us anything," I assure her, but raise my arm, showing off the mass of T-shirts and other miscellaneous shit. "You've done amazing. Ram and Fitz are fully covered."

“Yeah,” she whispers, spinning to face me. “But everything is so freaking expensive. All New York shops are out of my price range.”

“Can I take those from you?” a helpful associate asks. “I’ll start you a crate behind the counter.”

“Thank you.” I turn, handing off the clothing items.

“But what if I find something better and need to put some of that back?” Tinley asks.

“That’s no problem,” the older woman says.

I grab the glass set from Tinley and hand it to the sales associate.

“I wasn’t completely sold on that,” she mutters as the store employee walks off.

I grab her ass, pulling her into my chest. “We’re bonded. You’ve got to stop stressing over money. It’s setting off my impulses.”

“That’s easy for you to say. I have a three-hundred-dollar budget to shop for all three of you, and that’s if I put off shopping for my family until I get paid for the tour.” She stares at my chest, refusing to meet my eyes.

“You can shop online for your family and have everything shipped to them. It won’t make it before the holiday, but we’ve had a lot going on.”

“Yeah,” she agrees, spinning under my arm and scanning the shelves. She sidesteps a couple of men doing their last-minute shopping.

“What do you plan to get for me?” I ask close to her ear as she studies a mini jukebox display.

“I don’t know. You should probably go have a seat and let me browse,” she snaps.

“Don’t stress, sweet girl. I’ll be on the wall of shame with the other husbands.” I kiss her cheek and swagger over to toss myself down on one of the empty chairs.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Tinley

I stand up from squatting and bump into an older man's walker. "Ohmigod, I'm so sorry."

"It's all right. Merry Christmas," he says, shuffling off.

"You too." My shoe taps against the carpet. I need to swap out who I'm with, so I can shop for Warrick. He hasn't taken his eyes off of me, and I'm starting to get irritated.

There are so many people, and I'm majorly frazzled. Everyone's scent seems especially harsh, and I'm still having cramps. My period should be here any day, which really sucks. I frown even harder as my gaze falls to the floor. If I spend all my money on gifts, then I won't have any for necessities. We haven't even been bonded a month. Sponging off their success feels like a terrible way to prove I really love them for them.

I bring what I picked for Warrick to the sales associate at the front and head back to find my alpha.

"Ready?" he asks.

"Yeah, I also need to find a pharmacy before we head back to the hotel." I'd rather be prepared this time. It's a miracle the press hasn't found us yet. I think it's smart to take advantage of that while we can. I still have some stuff left from last month, but what they got wasn't what I normally buy. I guess I'm picky.

"Come on, let's get going." Warrick stands, and I have to crane my neck up to meet his eyes.

“Sorry about the crankiness. It’s busy and that always sets off my sensory issues.” I swallow thickly.

I’ve been tuning out the blaring Christmas music to the best of my ability, but this is the third time this song has played while we’ve been here. I truly don’t understand how the staff handles it. Then there’s the smell, and yeah. It’s just a lot all at once, and it’s overwhelming my senses.

“Never apologize for being overstimulated.” Warrick kisses my forehead and plants a hand on my hip, guiding me to the counter. We wait our turn and finally step up when the woman from earlier waves us to a different register. I grab my purse and dig around for my card, but my jaw falls as the sales associate slides a card and receipt toward *my alpha*.

“You didn’t,” I say, but I already know he did.

“I’m taking one worry off your plate. That’s all.” Warrick rocks on his heels, shrugging like it’s no big deal.

“I was going to pay for that,” I hiss, and my tone sounds shrill even to my own ears. The woman looks between us with wide eyes, and I force a polite smile. “Thank you.”

“We’ll finish this disagreement at the hotel,” he murmurs, handing back the signed copy.

I’m so annoyed that I think it’s giving me indigestion. I’m sure War can feel it in the bond as he collects the bags.

The security guy holds the door open as we head out.

The blast of cold air makes me shiver, but I’m more focused on Ramsey and Fitz. They’re acting strange as they meet us outside of the small boutique. I’m not quite sure what’s off, but they keep glancing at each other, and they’re blocking their emotions in the bond.

“The car is back.” Fitz takes off toward the SUV. It pulls to a stop and we climb inside. The heat is running, but I’m still shivering as we take off.

“We need to make another stop before we head to the hotel,” Warrick says from the back row. I have no idea how he and Fitz ended up back there together, but they did.

“Really?” Ramsey turns to face me. “Is it an emergency?”

My head shakes. “No, not an emergency, but it is important. I’d rather not put it off.”

“Gotcha.” Ramsey leans forward, letting the driver know we need to make a stop.

“Do you happen to have your phone?” Fitz asks, running his fingers through my hair.

“Yeah. Do you need to borrow it?” I dig in my purse, yanking it out.

“Would you mind?”

“Not at all.” I pass it back as the car comes to a stop.

“I guess you’re stuck with me this time, shortcake.” Ramsey grins. The security guy pops out of the front and moves to the back to hold the door open for us.

Ramsey slides out, offering me a hand. I climb out as cars honk behind us. It makes me stumble over my shoes on the concrete, but Ramsey keeps me upright.

I honestly have no clue about the etiquette for these types of things, but the traffic is unreal, considering it’s late in the day on Christmas Eve. For big occasions back home, we go into Chicago, but this area of New York is like an entirely different world to me.

“Come on.” Ramsey carefully corrals me toward the building. “They’ll circle the block and come back for us.”

“I’m fairly sure you only purchased that stuff so I wouldn’t make a fuss about you paying.” I pull on the gloves he picked out. They are quite toasty. I was even able to grab a few last-minute things I needed for their gifts.

Ramsey chuckles. “Possibly. Nah, we don’t need to pay eight dollars per beer for room service when I could conveniently pick it up.”

He also grabbed a ton of snacks, a deck of cards, and so much other random stuff that I can't name it all. He gets most of the load, but I snag the last couple bags from the dangly area. They aren't heavy. The security guy, who I don't know, gives us a nod and heads out the sliding door of the pharmacy.

I shiver as the frigid air hits my skin. All the traveling through the South must have spoiled me. Usually, I handle the cold pretty well, but New York is absolutely freezing. My breath fogs as I wiggle around, trying to warm myself up.

"The car isn't back yet," Ramsey says, nodding at the wall. We lean against it, keeping our eyes peeled in the direction they should be coming from. "If I wasn't overloaded with shit, then I'd offer you my jacket."

I laugh. "No, that's okay. I don't want you to freeze to death." I wouldn't have turned down a hug, though. It's been a stressful few days, and it's taking a toll on my body. My abdomen aches with cramps that come and go, but more than that, I just feel majorly unsettled. It's hard to explain, but I've got the overwhelming urge to nest. Or maybe run a mile? It's nervous, frantic energy while simultaneously not feeling great.

Two guys walk toward us from the direction the SUV should be coming in. We flatten against the wall to give them plenty of room on the sidewalk, but when they get close, they turn to face us.

"Miss Rhodes, any comments on the interview Harvey Meyers gave? Did he speak truthfully regarding your designation?" The man shoves a small microphone in my face as my mouth falls. "Did you purposely hide that information from your pack until you were bonded?"

My heart seems to drop into my stomach. Harvey gave an interview about me? The guys tried to warn me that it could happen. Not just ex-boyfriends, but old friends, coworkers, classmates.

I bite my lip to keep from defending myself. Fitz and Ramsey gave me my own version of media training. They'll twist anything I say. Warrick's advice was to tell them to *fuck*

off, but what works for a heroic and beloved rock star would not have the same effect for me.

My chest feels tight as my gaze darts around. If I bolted, would they follow? With my luck, I'd probably slip on ice, and they'd get pictures or video of the entire experience.

My eyes ache as I process the fact the world now knows I'm basically a beta with the anatomy to take a knot. Oh yeah, and they think I'm sneaky enough to trap people to me without warning them.

"Hey, asshole," Ramsey growls, shoving off the wall and getting in the reporter's face. "It's Christmas Eve. I get that it's your job, but have some fucking humanity. If you choose to keep asking questions, then I'd be real fucking careful of your tone."

"Head down this way, they're eight back in the line of traffic," the security guy says, jogging toward us.

Ramsey's hand meets my back, guiding me away as the reporter continues to ask questions. The bags bounce around against my butt as we move away at a rapid pace. Luckily, the security guy plays interference, keeping them back as we walk toward the idling SUV.

"That's why Fitz took my phone." Realization dawns as I exhale heavily. We make it into the SUV and have to wait for the security guy to join us. The other guy I wasn't paying attention to definitely has a camera. I turn my face away, staring anywhere but at the photographer. I really hate being on this side of the lens.

What a freaking disaster.

I'm currently pretending to be the panda my hoodie blanket is designed after. Animals don't have to deal with the press, hurt feelings, or worry that they're majorly inadequate in comparison to their packmates.

Money isn't everything.

I get that, but I'm frustrated. I wanted to pay for their gifts. I appreciate Warrick was trying to take that particular worry off my shoulders, but I just feel so beat down.

I'm afraid I might burst into tears. The feeling of betrayal is severe, even though I can recognize Harvey probably doesn't owe me anything. I broke up with him, but if the situation was reversed, I would've respected his privacy.

Okay, I'm actually furious, but I think calling him would be a huge mistake and likely something else he could take to the press.

"You might want to sit somewhere else. I'm still not pleased with you," I tell Fitz, yanking the hood up on my blanket snuggle thingy. "Does my family even know that I'm okay?"

"I spoke to both of our families while you were in the store. Our fathers intended to see themselves arrested on Christmas Eve, but luckily, I was able to talk some sense into them."

"What?" I gasp, turning to face him.

"Yeah, they wanted to have a heart-to-heart with Herby." Fitz frowns, shaking his head. "Me too. I'm so sorry for all of this. It was a low blow—"

"I'd like to read the article." I hold out my hand, raising my eyebrows. He still hasn't returned my phone.

"You don't." His accent is thicker than normal, and it makes me anxious. It always gets heavier when he's upset.

"I never would have met Ramsey and Warrick without you bringing me with you. I don't regret coming, but I am frustrated that you're not hearing me. I'm an adult." I squint, jabbing a finger at him. "I deserve to know what's being said about me."

"Knowing what they're saying never makes anything better." Warrick comes into the room, putting himself down on one of the chairs.

“Oh, great!” I snap, burying my face in my hands. “That makes it sound even worse than I imagined.”

“I haven’t read it. There’s no point. They’ll print whatever will sell stories. True or not. Don’t let it get to you,” Warrick says.

“And don’t get me started on *you*. Those were *my* gifts. I’m going to take a shower,” I grumble, pushing myself up.

If I don’t walk away, I’m afraid I’ll say something I don’t even mean.

“Can I join you?” Ramsey asks, flashing a dazzling smile. “You’re only pissed at them, right?”

“Fine, but don’t try to sweet-talk me into being un-angry with your packmates.”

“Suckers.” His voice follows behind me as I head into our room. The suite has two others, but we’ve all been congregating in one. “Do you have a kitten print one of these?” He yanks on the back of my hoodie. “Kitten is kind of a cute nickname, and I definitely have some cream you could lick up.”

I snort a laugh that can’t be held back. “You’re ridiculous.” I glance at him over my shoulder as he slides up to my back.

“I’m sexy and you know it.” Ram helps me out of my hoodie and unzips my dress before removing it too. His hands tighten on my hips, and he spins me to face him. “Let’s get these off too.” He pulls off my leggings and quirks an eyebrow as he snaps the band on my panties.

“You should know by now that you have permission.”

“How hot is it to have a big, strong alpha on his knees for you?” His breath fans over my stomach as he tosses my panties aside. His hair is up in a bun like usual, and it never fails to show off his stubble and ridiculously hot bone structure.

“Um, it is, in fact, super hot,” I agree.

“Damn, I forgot to unhook your bra.” He stands, and once he’s towering over me, he reaches a hand back and undoes the

clasp.

It falls down my arms as I stare up at him, but his eyes are on mine.

“You always manage to make me feel better.” I stretch up on my tiptoes, shaking out of the bra and tossing it aside. “I hope you understand how much I love you.”

“Me too, shortcake. Me fucking too,” he growls, capturing my mouth. The kiss is slow and deep as my nude frame presses against his completely clothed body. He pulls a hand up, brushing his fingers over my cheek, and the tender touch makes my heart race. Or maybe that’s the way he slams his feelings toward me in the bond.

I gasp as we pull apart. “I’m pretty sure I’m going to need to apologize to War and Fitz.”

“Oh no.” Ramsey chuckles. “I have an even better idea.”

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Ramsey

Am I a bad influence? Possibly. Watching the showdown between my brother and our omega is too damn good to miss out on.

“The spinach, sweet potatoes, and...” She points to the corner of her plate. “Whatever the hell that is, are collectively not passing the palate test.”

“Which one is the least unappealing?” War asks, leaning closer.

“You mean the most appealing?” She crosses her arms over her chest, tipping her chin in the air. “None.”

I grab my napkin, pretending to clean my face in an attempt to hold back the laugh. I sure hope she’s blocking her feelings in the bond for at least Fitz and War, because she’s about to bubble over with excitement in our link.

“Are you sure you don’t want to reconsider?” Fitz asks, grimacing a little.

“Nope.”

“Oh, baby girl. You’re just itching for my palm on your ass, aren’t you?” War asks, dropping the fork.

“I’m pretty sure you’re all talk.” She slides out of her chair and aims for the living room, but War is out of his chair in a blink. “Uh-oh,” she whispers, bolting for the bedroom.

War chuckles darkly, striding toward her on long legs. He snatches her with a huge handful of her still-wet hair at the base of her skull.

I shove myself out of my chair, about to tell him to chill the fuck out, but Tinley moans long and loud as her head snaps back.

“Come on, Fitz. You can help me punish our omega.” War guides her over to the back of the couch. “You can watch her face for me and keep her hands restrained.”

Fitz jogs over and kneels on the couch cushion as War bends Tinley over the back of the sofa. My brother carefully stretches her hands out, and Fitz watches the entire process with rapt fascination.

War still has a hand wrapped in her hair and pulls her head back, tilting it so he can see her face. “Do you have a safe word you’d prefer to use?”

She shudders out a breath. “Red is fine.”

“Yellow, if you’d like to slow down or you’re getting too close to your limits.” War releases her hair, and she smiles brightly at Fitz as he holds her hands to the top of the couch.

“Yes, Daddy. I understand.”

“You’re pure goddamn trouble,” Fitz says, his accent making his words run together. He chuckles, nuzzling his nose to hers.

“Which side would you like to view from?” War asks me.

I’ve been standing around as purely a voyeur. I shrug. “I’ll watch from here and maybe meander to check on her face.”

“That works for me,” War agrees. “I’m going to bare your bottom now, baby girl.”

“Yes, Daddy.”

War slides his hands up her thighs and under her pajama dress. Her panties hit the floor, and the image sends a pulse to my cock. He pins the dress just above her ass with his forearm and caresses her hip with his free hand. “Now I think we both know you were asking for this without saying the words. I also owe you a birthday spanking. So, unless you have any objections, we’re going to keep this closer to fun-ishment than actual discipline.” He pulls her ass back even farther with the

hand on her hip and runs the backs of his fingers over her pussy.

“Just get to it,” she huffs, wiggling her hips. It makes her ass jiggle, and I bite my lip as my cock pulses with undeniable interest.

War doesn't hesitate, but it's clear he's going easy on her. The loud, echoing slap of his palm landing on her right ass cheek fills the air.

Tinley jumps around on her tiptoes, but she doesn't struggle. If anything, I think her ass pokes out farther.

“Do you want to tell me why you're upset with me?” War swaps to the other cheek, peppering her ass with a few more slaps.

Her head shakes.

“I shouldn't have framed that as a question. Tell me why you're upset with me,” War prods, leaning over her back as he speaks close to her ear.

“No,” she gasps as she trembles.

My brother returns to landing a few more swats against her ass. “Are you sure about that?” The sounds get louder, indicating he's landing his smacks with more force.

“I'm frustrated,” she grunts.

“That's clear. Tell me what I did, so I can apologize if necessary.” War caresses the bottom of her butt cheek, and when she still doesn't say anything, he gives her a little pinch.

“Ouch. Fine, you paid for the gifts that are supposed to be from me.”

“I did. I was trying to alleviate some of your stress.” War goes back to spanking her jiggling backside. “I'm sorry that it upset you. Do you forgive me?”

“Hell no,” she sasses, shoving her hips back even farther.

War chuckles. It's an ominous sound. “Really, baby girl? Are you the type to hold a grudge?”

“Not usually,” Fitz pipes in, laughing.

I grimace when War lands a few smacks on her upper thighs.

“That’s actually starting to hurt. I thought you said this would be a fun spanking.” She looks at him over her shoulder.

“I did say that, didn’t I?” War chuckles. “Help me with this.” He releases his forearm from holding her dress, and Fitz helps him get it up and off of her.

War kisses over her shoulder as he slides two fingers down her pussy. It’s hard to see from this direction, but I think he teases her clit before working back to her lips and giving them a squeeze.

Damn, I can see how slick she is from here. My mouth waters, desperate for a taste.

Tinley moans long and loud, but War immediately goes back to slapping her already red ass. “Hey!” she hisses. “Let’s get back to the good stuff.”

“That’s the problem with bratting. You think you’re getting away with topping from the bottom, but eventually, you’ll fuck around and find out what happens when you push Daddy too far.” War laughs darkly, but his eyes glimmer as they meet mine. The echo of his hand on her ass gets louder. “Sometimes, submissives find they want to be punished for something, *even* when it’s not their fault. Do you know what I’m saying, sweet girl?”

Her head shakes, but she stops herself.

War slides his hand up her back, over her neck, and into her hair. It’s a messy grab because her waves are everywhere, but he gives her head a tug back. “Physical responses still count as lies, but you stopped yourself. You didn’t do anything wrong, but I know you’re upset about that bullshit interview with whatever the fuck his name is.”

“I’m angry,” she whispers as her eyes slide shut. I don’t know when exactly I moved to get a better look at her face, but now that I’m focusing, her emotional pain is clear in the bond. She’s hurt and embarrassed more than anything, but

maybe it's easier for her to concentrate on the anger. War is the same way. When his feelings get hurt, he gets mad first. I still don't think he realizes that's why he's been so furious with Carter this last year.

"As you should be. Your trust was violated," Fitz says. "But you've done nothing wrong. You have *nothing* to be ashamed about."

"Right," she agrees weakly.

"If a bite of pain helps you to process those emotions, then that's okay too." War frames her back and kisses her cheek before releasing her. "We're here for whatever you need." He looks at Fitz. "Go on, kiss her and play with her tits. I know you've been waiting for your chance." He glances back at me. "And come on, if you hit your knees, you might be able to suck on her pussy. Let's give our omega exactly what she needs."

That doesn't sound like a terrible idea.

"I have some doubts that I can get that low," I tell them truthfully as I hit my knees at her side.

"This is the beauty of teamwork." Fitz pulls her top half higher on the couch, giving me an extra six inches or so.

I prepare to duck under her middle but get close to her ear before murmuring, "Sorry, shortcake. Maybe I give bad advice."

A wide smile breaks out across her face. "No way, I regret nothing."

War chuckles, shoving my head down. "You focus on her clit, and I'll finger her from behind."

Tinley moans and begs for exactly that. I laugh, shaking my head, but the haze of her pheromones hits harder than I'm expecting. Everything changed in the blink of an eye, but I also have zero regrets.

I wake up the next morning with a very naked bundle of omega bouncing on my cock.

“Merry Christmas,” I growl, pushing up on my forearms.

Her stomach rolls as she grinds farther down my length. “Yeah, you too. Sorry, I hope this is okay. I woke up sore and achy.”

“Always, shortcake. My cock officially belongs to you.” I wrap my arm around her lower back, rolling us and settling on top of her.

“Good, so I need you to rut deep.” Her adorable little nose scrunches. “But no knotting. We’ve got to exchange gifts.”

I yank her legs up on my forearms. It takes some effort to keep myself up only using my core, but I manage so I can kiss her. Her slick little pussy clenches violently as I start to roll my hips into hers. Her soft moans vibrate against my lips, and I swear it’s more addictive than any drug I’ve ever tried. I work in and out as deep as I can get until my knot hits her lower lips. Her pheromones have been thick as hell recently, but I know better than to piss her off on Christmas morning. She digs her teeth into my lower lip as her cunt flutters.

“Aww, fuck,” I groan into her mouth as my cock swells and my balls throb. Well, that wasn’t my most lengthy performance, but she doesn’t seem to mind as she coats me in her slick. The way she locks down when she comes does me in completely. I buck against the bottom of her pussy as fire licks from my spine down to my balls. “That’s it, shortcake. Milk my cock.” I’ve still got her knees on my forearms, and her feet bounce as she tries her best to gyrate her hips to meet mine. I spill deep inside her as she moans against my cheek. My muscles eventually start to loosen as I come down. “I love you so fucking much.”

Her pretty blue eyes pop open and she grins. “I know. I love you too. Okay, let’s get to it. It’s time for Christmas!”

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Tinley

“I ’m pretty sure I could take you if I tried.” I cross my arms over my chest, glaring up at my giant alpha.

“You must’ve really enjoyed yourself last night,” Warrick says, chuckling.

A shiver runs down my damn spine. Although my butt is tender this morning, it’s sore in the most incredible way. Images of all the ways they ravished me last night quickly bleed into the sweet but intense quickie with Ramsey this morning.

“I know you want to get to the gifts, but breakfast will be cold. Have a couple more bites of egg for me.” Warrick holds the fork close to my lips.

I grumble my way through the few bites he feeds me, but I make sure to send him my appreciation in the bond.

We make it over to the living room area. Fitz and Ramsey are already waiting with the gifts separated out in stacks.

“Are we doing this free-for-all style?” Ramsey eyes his pile.

“No way.” I laugh. “I labeled each of yours with numbers. If you could open them at the same time, that would be great.”

Warrick takes one of the chairs, but Fitz holds out an arm for me. I let him pull me into his lap, but I don’t think the orange juice with breakfast helped me relax.

“Okay, go on,” I tell them, grabbing Fitz’s for him. It’s not glamorous, but I did the best I could under the circumstances.

They pull the tissue paper out of the bags and check out their stuff.

“Holy shit, you got me cheesy sayings T-shirts,” Ramsey says, pulling one out and holding it up. “This is strangely fitting after my dismal staying power this morning.” He wiggles his eyebrows as my hand flies to my face. I can’t hold back the laugh, even though he has nothing to be ashamed of. The shirt is Santa in a sleigh, and it says, *I’m here for a good time, not a long time.*

I grin, mouthing, *I love you.*

He nods, still laughing.

A deep booming laugh comes from Warrick, echoing around the spacious living room. “Cheeky, but I love it.”

“Oh, Tinsel. You’re brave,” Fitz chuckles, nuzzling his cheek to mine from behind.

I shrug. “It seemed fitting.”

Warrick got two shirts, the same as the others, but one says, *Daddy Claus*, and has Santa with a big, long beard. The other is an old man with a cane that says, *Father Christmas*. I’m totally fine with the fact he’ll probably never wear them.

“You too,” I tell Fitz, patting his arm. One says, *I love Mr. Fitz*, and I have no idea what that might be from, but I lucked out so spectacularly that I don’t even care what it’s referencing. He shakes out the first shirt, and it’s the other design. I really was limited, but it’s a T-shirt for the zombie apocalypse show that we binged during high school.

“I have some great memories of this,” Fitz murmurs against my ear.

“Me too. The next one is even better.”

He pulls it out, and it must be facing Ramsey’s direction, because he snorts a laugh.

“What? No way. This is great.” Fitz laughs, kissing my cheek. “But I think it would be better if you wear it. So you can profess your love for me while you sleep with nothing underneath. That way, we have easy access.”

“That can be arranged,” I say.

“That was a good find.” Warrick catches my gaze and winks. “Would you like to open one next?”

“No,” I assure him, bouncing around Fitz’s lap. “Please, open yours first.”

Ramsey hands out the bags, and they dig in at the same time. The hardest part of this one was getting the pictures printed, but luckily, the pharmacy was able to do it in less than five minutes while we were there. Convincing Ramsey to browse on a different aisle was more complicated than the rest of the process.

“It’s my favorite picture with each of you,” I tell them as they study the frames. “I know it’s not much, but I hope you like them. Next year will be better because we’ll have time and—”

“It’s perfect,” Ramsey says, running his finger over the glass of the frame.

“Yeah?”

“Yes,” Warrick says firmly.

“I love you.” Fitz squeezes my middle. “The gifts are amazing, but all I’ve ever needed is you.”

“Me too,” I agree, grinning at him over my shoulder.

“Time for your gifts.” Warrick grins.

Ramsey hops up and comes back with three boxes. They’re much more intricately wrapped with black paper. They each have a different color ribbon, which leads me to believe that means one is from each of my guys.

“Is there any particular order?” I ask, vibrating with nervous energy. I’m super excited, but a little afraid my last-minute gifts won’t compare.

“Nope,” Ramsey says, putting them down on the coffee table. “They’re all from the three of us.”

I grab the box with the baby blue ribbon and give it a tug. It falls over my lap as I pull the lid off, setting it aside. There’s

a pretty, silky-soft black dress with a gold overlay.

“It’s beautiful,” I assure them, running my fingers over the material.

“We were hoping you’d wear it to our show on New Year’s Eve,” Fitz says.

“If they don’t cancel it, but if they do, you can wear it on our date,” Warrick says.

“There’s more.” Ramsey’s right. There’s a black bra and panty set and under that a pair of flats.

“Thank you. And of course I’ll wear it.”

“Silver or pink?” Ramsey nods to the two remaining boxes.

“Pink, please.” I hold out my hands as Fitz helps move the stuff to the cushion next to us. When I open the box, my jaw falls. It’s a photo album, but not like the one Warrick gave me for my birthday. The middle has a picture of the four of us in a little window, and the year is emblazoned on the top in silver with the words *established in*. I gasp as I flip it open. They must have used one of those photo printing companies, because the pages are flat but designed like a scrapbook. Our pictures fill the pages labeled by city and others with dates. My chest rises and falls as my eyes ache. “It’s an absolutely perfect gift. I love it.”

“Good,” Warrick says as Fitz purrs behind me.

My head rolls back against his chest as I breathe through the overwhelming feelings. I’m happy. Completely content. I have no idea why I’m so emotional.

“One more, shortcake.” Ramsey moves the album to the side and places the last box in my lap. “And we saved the best for last, if I do say so myself.”

I laugh, pulling at the silver ribbon. This box is much lighter than the others. I pull the top off and gasp.

“Will you marry us?” they ask in unison.

I hop up, slamming into Ramsey, since he's so close. I bolt for the bedroom to grab my camera, and by the time I get back, I'm close to hyperventilating. The three of them stand with shocked looks on their faces.

"Yes, of course, I'll marry you! But no one thought to take pictures of our first Christmas or your proposal." I head over. "I'm sorry. Pictures aren't nearly as important as the moment itself."

"So, that was a yes?" Ramsey pulls me to him.

"Yes!" I squeal as he kisses the hell out of me. Someone grabs my camera, and its shuttering sound fills the air.

Fitz's scent floods my nose as he grabs my hand, spinning me to face him. "I love you, Tinsel." He brushes his nose against mine and kisses me softly with lots of tongue.

Hands land on my hips as we pull back, and I'm turned toward Warrick. I guess he and Ramsey switched off taking pictures. He lifts me, pushing his mouth to mine in one fluid movement.

"You're all ours, baby girl."

"Yep," I agree.

"Would you like to see the ring?" Ramsey asks.

"Can I reopen the box and pretend to be surprised?" I ask.

"Yeah, we can do that," Warrick says indulgently.

And that's what we do. It's a round two-carat solitaire in white gold, and it's exactly what I would have chosen for myself.

We spend most of the next few hours making calls to our families.

It's clear my family pack knew it was coming, and they're more than excited about it.

After we disconnect, Fitz calls his sister.

“Did she say no?” Shanna answers the video call.

I snatch the phone.

“She did not.” I hold the ring up to the camera.

We both squeal, and eventually, Fitz kisses me on the cheek and gives up trying to talk over us. He heads out, and I stretch out on the end of the bed.

“I’m *so so so* happy for you,” she says.

“Thank you.” I bite my lip. “No luck on matching yet?”

Her eyes dart away before she replies.

My head tilts. That’s usually a tell she’s about to lie.

“Maybe one day,” she says awkwardly.

Hmm, I could probably push her for information, but that might be a conversation better handled in person.

We talk for a while longer, but she hands off the phone to her parents as Fitz comes back in.

It’s an entire process, as we do a version of the call again with Ramsey and Warrick’s family pack.

Not one of them brings up Harvey and his horrible interview.

I’m grateful for that, but I know they had to have seen it. It’s embarrassing, but I have nothing to be ashamed of. I think it would be easier if he lied. He may have. I still don’t know everything that was said in the article. It’s complicated to feel so betrayed by someone else’s actions.

My hands shake as we wrap up our goodbyes.

I’ve got the urge to get up and do something, but at the same time, the idea of leaving the safety of the hotel sounds awful.

“I think we’re going to hit up the gym if you don’t mind.” Ramsey shoves himself off the bed. Ah, that makes me think it was spilling over in the bond. Maybe I’m picking up his

energy and it's influencing me. Or I guess it could be the other way around.

Fitz tilts his head, studying me. "I can stick with you if—"

I cut him off, saying, "No, don't be silly. Warrick can keep me company. Unless you planned to go too?"

"No, I'm good on the gym," Warrick says.

Fitz and Ramsey give me a quick kiss before swaggering out of the room. I get to keep them forever, and it's a truly surreal feeling.

Warrick rolls to face me. "This is the best Christmas I've ever had, but I get the feeling they're only going to get better from here."

"Yeah," I agree, studying his dark eyes. "I meant to ask how in the world you got those pictures. It's been driving me crazy."

Warrick blanches. "I probably should have mentioned it yesterday, but the label had a security specialist access your computer remotely. He made copies of all the images per the label's request, and I may have asked a small favor. Are you angry?"

I gasp in faux outrage. "How dare you?" Warrick's head tilts, but I give his chest a shove. "Of course not. It's amazing. I'll treasure it forever. If you only sent them the pictures yesterday, how in the world did it get here so fast?"

"That was thanks to the label security guy. He hooked us up with a shop that was open until four p.m. yesterday, despite the holiday."

"Dang, I really do feel bad that people have to work during the holidays, but I'm grateful for the gift." I run my fingers over his cheek.

"Do you like your ring? Do you think we need to have it adjusted?"

My eyes fly to it. The stone sparkles as I twist my fingers. "No, it's a little snug, but I figure maybe that's because I'm bloated. My period is supposed to start any day."

Warrick tilts his head, and I'm not sure what the look means. He yanks his phone out of his pocket. "Have you taken your meds this morning?"

"Yeah, I took them before we opened gifts."

"When you got your ADHD meds filled eight or nine days ago, you said that your birth control wasn't due to start a new pack because the refill dates don't always line up."

I frown but nod. He's very attentive and remembers details a lot better than I do. "Yeah, I need to start the new pack tomorrow, but I've already got it."

"But if my math is correct, it's been, give or take, thirty-three days since your last period started," he says, staring at his phone. "Is that usual for your cycle?"

"Ohmigod, Warrick." I laugh, covering my face. "No, it's usually closer to twenty-eight. It almost always starts during the placebo pills at the end of each pack, but stress can make it weird sometimes."

"Answer me this, because I spent a lot of time researching it a few weeks ago. I just never got around to asking. If it's rare for an omega to conceive outside of a heat, then why the birth control? Just for precaution?" Warrick asks.

I pull my hand back, wobbling it side to side. "Yes and no. So, up until an omega presents, they may or may not ovulate. There's just a low chance conception will occur. It's a small chance, something like two or three percent." I shrug. "But stuff happens, and I didn't want to take that risk, even though my previous partners have been betas. The likelihood is higher with alpha partners than betas, but it's still a slim possibility."

"That's very responsible of you."

"Maybe overkill? I've never been intimate without condoms until you guys, but birth control also helps regulate my cycle. So, if a woman doesn't ovulate, like when she takes a combination birth control pill, it's actually something called withdrawal bleeding. It's not normal menstruation because there's no unfertilized egg to shed... Am I grossing you out

right now?" I ask, frowning because I did just hyperfocus and spew a lot of unsexy information at him.

"Not at all." He leans forward, brushing his lips over mine. "I like to know as much as I can about things that are important to me."

My chest rises and falls rapidly as he smiles. Damn, he still gives me butterflies. Will this continue for the rest of our lives? I sure hope so.

"Tinley?"

"Oh yeah, so that breakthrough bleeding that happens without ovulation can be erratic, and the birth control regulates the hormones to help ensure it comes at the same time. It can help with cramps and stuff too—"

"How often does the date of your period fluctuate?"

"Not often, but I'm not pregnant."

"I'm not saying you are, but I do think we should see if we can get you in with a specialist while we're in the city. Last night, your pheromones were thicker than they ever have been. It felt very much like a mini heat." He smiles, showing off his perfect and slightly predatory teeth. "Are you sore this morning, baby girl?"

"No," I whisper as my eyes fall shut.

"Mmm, well, in that case, I think we know what we're going to do to pass the time until they get back from the gym..."

I smile as he rolls over on top of me, fully caging me in with his strong frame.

It did feel a lot like they slipped into rut last night. The only memories I have are hazy too, but I know better than to let myself get too excited. My pack is all the Christmas miracle I could ask for.

Chapter Thirty

Fitz

“If you don’t stop jiggling your foot, then I’m going to be forced to break both your kneecaps,” Warrick hisses under his breath.

“I’m sorry,” Ramsey growls back, keeping his voice low. “I’m kind of losing my shit.”

“We all are,” I assure him, stretching back in the uncomfortable office chair.

Warrick made some calls. It took a few days, but someone apparently owed him a favor. I get the feeling it had to do with how he was injured, but I’m just grateful they moved fast. Yesterday was a miserable day. They sent her for lab work and we got no answers.

One of the top omega specialists on the East Coast is going to go over all her records with us, but they called her back and made us wait in the waiting room.

I don’t like it.

All three of us smell sour with the acrid scent of our anxiety. We’ve been sitting out here with no updates for close to an hour and a half. If it goes much longer, then I’m going to have to ask the receptionist to get us some information. Having Tinsel out of my sight makes my impulses difficult to manage.

“Why the hell is it taking so long?” Ramsey growls.

“Fuck if I know,” Warrick says with a heavy sigh.

“I hope this isn’t a bad sign,” I whisper more to myself than to them. I’m pretty sure we’re all feeding off each other’s stress and anxiety, but we’re doing our best to keep it from spilling over to our omega.

“All right, you can come on back,” the nurse says, popping her head out into the waiting room and making eye contact with us.

We shove ourselves out of our chairs and follow silently. She guides us down a hallway, past a bunch of exam rooms, and opens a door. We file inside, and the room is obviously an office, but it’s set up for packs. There’s a long couch and several chairs on one side of the room and a desk with more seats on the other.

Tinley spins around, giving a little wave. She’s got a bandage on the opposite arm from yesterday.

There’s a chubby older man with salt-and-pepper hair and a curly beard on the other side of the desk. “Welcome, I’m Dr. Benson. Have a seat and we’ll get into it.”

There are four chairs, but I want to hold my omega. However, Warrick gets there first, scooping her up and taking her seat before I can snatch her away.

“Are you good?” I bend to give her a quick kiss and ignore War’s low warning growl.

“I’m good,” she says. “I promise.”

Ramsey and I settle into the other chairs.

“Yes, snuggle your omega.” Dr. Benson chuckles, nodding at Warrick. “Okay, let’s see...” He grabs several sheets of paper and places them down on the desk. I grab one and Warrick grabs the other. “The graph on top is baseline hormone levels in an average female omega. The one on the bottom left is Tinley’s from her last annual exam.” He hums, pushing up his glasses. “So, that’s about nine months ago. The colors indicate each specific hormone, but I’m not going to bore you with the names because some of them are ridiculously long. Anyway, all of her levels were consistently

low. Now, the bottom right is where she's at today." He smiles. "We did an ultrasound this morning—"

"You're pregnant?" Ramsey sputters.

"No," Tinley says with a laugh.

"No, no, we were checking for any physical indicators of why her heat is delayed, but there was nothing." Dr. Benson looks at Tinley. "Which, as we've already discussed, is an excellent sign."

"The bottom right is today?" Warrick asks, studying the graph.

"It is. As you can see, her levels are much higher than they were nine months ago. The hormones responsible for inducing heats, soothing pheromones, and fertility chances are on the way up." He gives our omega a soft smile. My damn heart races. God, I hope this is a good sign. "I can't make any guarantees, but I'm optimistic. It's frustrating to me that doctors in my profession still use scare tactics, like they can fear-monger your system into responding in a timeline that makes them comfortable."

"Yeah, I met a couple that made it seem like my life was practically over if I didn't present before twenty-one," Tinley says, snuggling back against Warrick's chest.

"Hardly," Dr. Benson says. "Ninety-eight percent of omegas present by age twenty-one, but that still leaves two of every hundred who don't have their heat until later. Much later, in some cases. I see thousands of omegas a year that are in a similar situation."

"Is there anything we can do?" I ask. "Ways to help encourage her system in a healthy way?"

"What he's doing now." The doctor nods to Warrick. "Your pheromones respond to each other. I can't tell you how many patients no longer need me once they meet a compatible pack." He chuckles. "Which is good. Put me out of a job. My pack wants me to retire, anyway." He swipes an aged hand through the air. "Encourage her system by allowing her to soak up alpha pheromones directly from your skin. Cuddles and

snuggles or nesting as a pack is perfect. Keep her stress to a minimum. Many omegas feel safest when they have a routine. It's like in nature—certain animals won't procreate if they aren't in a safe environment. Think of it that way."

"Will we need to see you regularly?" Ramsey asks.

"You can, but if you won't be in the area, I can try to find some recommendations for doctors close to where you live. I would like to monitor her hormone levels over the next year if her first heat doesn't begin by then." Dr. Benson looks back at Tinley. "Truthfully, though, I wouldn't consider medical intervention until much later into your twenties. Let your body progress naturally at its own pace. That's my advice after forty years of experience."

"Thank you," I say, exhaling heavily.

"Yes, thank you so much," my little omega says a little breathlessly.

I feel her out in the bond, and it's clear she's about to bubble over with excitement. A slow smile crosses my face. He just gave us an excellent excuse to make a new house rule. No-clothing-allowed cuddle sessions sound like fucking heaven.

Operation *Spoil the Princess* is in session. We spend most of the afternoon resting at the hotel, but I think we're all getting a little claustrophobic.

We sweet-talk our omega into going out to eat, and Ramsey secures a reservation. She even agrees to wear the baby blue and silver Christmas dress. She's saving the black one for New Year's Eve. We're doing the show, but only something like five songs. A couple of other bands on the label will help fill in, and from what I've heard, they're huge names. I don't see the fans complaining, but I am grateful. We have plans to wine and dine Tinsel after that show too. And we'll be taking a flight to New England come the second of January.

The high rise has spectacular views of the city skyline and just enough of a relaxed atmosphere that I'm not worried it'll stress her out. It doesn't hurt that the table they sat us at is in full view of the small dance floor. Who knows how they accomplish it, but despite the freezing temperature outside, it's quite warm, even with the door to the rooftop bar regularly opening and closing.

The meal is absolutely fucking delicious, but it's that dress on my omega that has my mouth watering.

"If I give you my coat, will you dance with me, shortcake?" Ramsey asks while we wait for dessert.

Dammit, why didn't I think of that? I glare at him like my eyes are laser beams that can make him drop dead where he sits.

"You mean out there?" Tinley asks with wide eyes.

"Oh yeah, they've got heaters. It'll be chilly, but there are others out there. We can always come back in if it's too cold." He slides his chair back and grabs his jacket before heading over and offering her a hand up.

"She never technically said yes," I mutter as they head off.

I'm not expecting the booming laugh that comes from Warrick.

"Give them a dance or two and you can cut in." He grins, staring at the door to the outdoor terrace. "Maybe less if he forgets we aren't in a club."

"That dress is absolutely killing me." I can only see the bottom and where Ramsey's coat is open in the front, but she's so damn beautiful as she smiles up at my packmate, it makes my chest tight. The jealousy hasn't gone away completely, even with the pack bond. It's just slightly more manageable.

"Life is good. We got hopeful news. You've got to relax," Warrick says, pushing his plate back.

"That's easier said than done. I'm still not happy they're making us go through with the New Year's Eve show." I run

my fingers through my hair. That performance is hanging over our heads. The last roadblock to finally being free.

“We’ve got this.” Warrick leans closer. “If she leaves our sight, then...” He shrugs. “It’s our last obligation. It’s not the audience’s fault, but I honestly don’t give a fuck. I’ll eat the penalty if the label tries to ping us with one, but I’m not going to stand around on stage, finishing out a song and wondering if she’s okay. I’ve got one priority—keeping her safe.”

“Yeah,” I agree, but I’m still not as relaxed as Warrick seems to be.

We spend most of New Year’s Eve practicing with the bands we’ll be crossing over with. Ruined Records started this gimmick, where bands perform certain songs, but members of other well-known label groups pop in, and the audience fucking loves it.

I’ve never participated in one before. It’s hard to pick up someone else’s song with no notice and vice versa, but with eight to twelve musicians rocking out, it’s impossible to pick up any errors. It all blends into pure fucking crazy energy.

If I wasn’t worried about Tinsel, I’d actually be really fucking excited to be in on such a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

“You’re going to stay with Steve the entire time,” I say, nuzzling my nose to hers. I don’t frame it as a question. That asshole Carter was involved with could be anywhere.

Rook and Jamen Jacobs are on site for the show, and it still hasn’t quelled my anxiety. Not even the extra security they’ve got in place is lessening my impulses.

“I will,” she says, wrapping her arms around my neck. “Those lace-up leather pants are *killing me*. I’ve never had a butt obsession until you bent over to tie your boots.”

“Hey,” Ramsey says indignantly. “My ass is worthy of you lady-perving it too. Hold on, let me just...” He bends over,

wiggling his hips at Tinley.

I laugh, but damn, I'm on edge. If it wouldn't reflect badly on Donovan for vouching for me, then I absolutely would have backed out of this performance.

"It's a very nice butt too." Our little omega giggles, finally releasing my neck.

"I hope you're ready because, after this, we truly get to start our lives." I bend low, capturing her mouth again.

She grins against my lips as she pinches my ass in the skintight leather. "I'm not complaining. That eyeliner is strangely doing things for me." She laughs like a fiend.

I snort, shaking my head as I palm her ass in return. The wardrobe department sure did go hardcore on our appearances tonight.

"All right," Warrick says, coming back into the room. "They're ready for us."

Tinley spins around, and her jaw falls. "Um, yeah, so am I."

Warrick smirks, sauntering over. "I hope you look at me like that for the rest of our lives."

I release her.

Her black dress flares out as she skips over to Warrick. "I don't think that'll be a problem."

Ramsey catches my eye. "Let's do this, so we can be done and *do her*."

That sounds like pure fucking bliss.

Chapter Thirty-One

Tinley

The guys are in front of us with a bunch of other artists from bands I recognize. The energy is palpable as they get fitted for their earpiece thingys. Each band has its own manager and assistants making sure their wardrobe is exactly right.

Ramsey spins around, shooting me a wink before they're guided out on stage. I'm supposed to take some pictures from the backstage area, but they'll be out there for multiple songs, and all the important people are still loitering around.

"You're going to need to be within three feet of me at all times," Steve says, giving me a serious look.

"I will," I assure him, swallowing thickly. I liked the greenroom because it was a confined space. I know there's extra security, and they have pictures of the scary guy from the bathroom.

In all honesty, I don't think he'll want anything to do with me. It would be really ridiculous for him to even show up tonight.



After the first song or two, most of the venue and label staff clear out. This show doesn't have fans or the crush of people that I normally have to battle backstage. I stay well behind the curtain but walk the small area to get as many pictures as I can. This view is definitely different from when I've been in

the audience, or even on the stage, which was by far the most stressful experience I've had as a photographer. I think these images will be especially cool for anyone who wonders what the special backstage vibe feels like.

Despite it being a huge stage, there are so many musicians up there that it actually seems a little cramped. Steve stands a few feet behind me, and it's almost like I can feel his eyes burning into the back of my head.

I spin around and face-plant into the boob of a beautiful and very tall woman. Or maybe someone other than Steve's eyes, I guess.

"Ohmigod, I'm so sorry!" I let my camera fall to be held up by the strap and place a hand on the back of the toddler I almost knocked out of her grip.

"Oh, you're fine," she says, laughing. She has big blue eyes, dark brown hair, and killer curves. "I'm probably to blame. You got some wicked shots of my men. I was creeping over your shoulder."

"You're with one of the bands?" I ask, shaking my head. Of course she is. Not only is she stunningly beautiful, but she's backstage with a toddler. It's highly unlikely a fan would bring a baby to a New Year's Eve show.

"Matted Whine," she says. "By the way, I'm Love."

"Tinley." I hold out a hand.

Damn, now *I* feel like a creeper. I had the biggest crush on Issac Matthews a few years ago. He's one of the two frontmen for Matted Whine.

"You're with War and Ram, right?" She shakes my hand but rocks back and forth. The baby in her arms is probably a year or two old. She's got an adorable pair of ladybug headphones that cover half her head.

"And Fitz," I agree, smiling politely. The audience screams in the background, and I'm baffled how any child could sleep through this chaos. They must be some dang good headphones.

“Right, that man is one fine hunk of alpha.” She laughs, but I’m pretty sure my smile turns to a frown in a millisecond. I shake off the omega pout that comes when anyone checks out my alphas. I mean, they are all equally gorgeous. “Aww, your face. You’ll get used to it, but I wanted to introduce myself and make sure to have you tell Warrick how happy we are for all of you.”

“Thank you,” I say sincerely.

“You know, I still haven’t been able to shake the guilt.” She nods at the baby. “Warrick was injured helping my guys make it to me when I was in labor. I’m sure you know he intervened when a woman was being attacked.”

“Yeah,” I agree, but he and I haven’t talked about it in depth yet. The only time he mentioned it, the conversation focused on the emotional ramifications, rather than many specific details.

“Plus, they’re all part of the Ruined Records family. I’m just saying, if you ever need anything...” She wraps an arm around my shoulder, yanking me into her chest. “And please tell him how happy we are for all of you. I haven’t seen him since the hospital right after the riot, but we brought Bellamy in case.” She shrugs. “I don’t know. I’m just a big fan of that guy as a human being, ya know?”

A wide smile breaks out over my face because we can definitely agree on that.

I pull back as we separate, and ice slides through my veins. Xavier specifically didn’t come back for this performance, but he’s walking our way with the guy I now know is Gavin’s assistant, and the scary bathroom guy. They’re still pretty far down the hallway, close to the greenrooms, but they’re coming in our direction.

“Oh God,” I whisper, moving my face back in line with Love’s shoulder.

“What’s wrong?” she asks, twisting her head. “Is that the guy? The one we’re all supposed to keep an eye out for?” I nod. “Gotcha.” Her head swivels to the back wall and she pulls

me with her over to two men. “This is Jude. That’s Vince. They’re going to go detain him.”

One guy is tall with blond curly hair and a surfer vibe. The other is shorter and stocky, with a dark olive complexion and black hair.

“That group walking our way?” the shorter man asks.

“Yeah, Xavier from Northern Star is with them.” I peek around Love. “Okay, they just took a turn into one of the greenrooms on the right.”

“Shit, Tinley. I turn around for ten damn seconds and the two of you disappeared.” Steve jogs over.

“Isn’t Xavier supposed to be on stage with the rest of Northern Star?” the blond man asks.

“Doesn’t matter,” the other guy says. “Let us handle this. You stay here.” He looks at Steve. “You’re with us. We’ve got a hit.”

The audience screams in the background, but since we’re farther away, it’s slightly muted.

“Um, so I think you might be in trouble,” Love says, spinning me around.

My camera slaps against my stomach as Warrick stands, chest heaving and looking quite feral. Several of the venue staff who stuck around are trying to shove him back toward the stage.

My giant alpha quirks an eyebrow, holding out an arm for me.

“Oh wait, let me hold this for you.” Love carefully pulls the strap of my camera up until she can slide it over my head. As soon as that’s off, she gives my shoulders a helpful shove from behind.

I stumble forward, pushing down my hair that got tangled up when she pulled off my camera.

Warrick meets me in the middle, shaking his head. He wraps an arm around my back and guides us toward the stage.

“Warrick, what are you doing?” I hiss, dragging my feet against the floor as he pulls me past the staff.

“I have a legal obligation to finish this show, but you didn’t keep your ass in place.” He walks us past the safety of the curtain, and my heart beats like a drum. Ramsey just laughs, shaking his head. “I told you, one day you’d fuck around and find out how full-blown feral I am when it comes to keeping you safe. I hope you enjoy the show. Consider this one step up from front-row tickets.”

We take another few steps, and Warrick turns me until my back rests against his chest.

Lachlan York, a member of Ruin, hands Warrick his guitar.

The lights are so bright, it’s impossible to see past the first few rows, but the sounds are intense.

Warrick rests his guitar against my stomach and straps himself in. I’m officially trapped with his arms wrapped around mine.

“I’m so mad at you right now,” I hiss over my shoulder.

The big giant asshole simply lowers his head, nuzzling his cheek to mine from behind.

He’s really lucky he’s hot.

Also that we’re bonded.

And that I love him. He should be very grateful all of those things are true. Otherwise, I might reconsider my stance on prison attire.

“Sorry about that.” Fitz laughs, swiping hair back from his face. “He did warn her not to disappear. I think she probably wasn’t expecting to end up out here, but...” He shrugs. “Surprise.”

“All the alphas in the audience get it. You can’t let your omega out of your sight immediately after bonding. Am I right?” Rook Jacobs cups his ear, gesturing to the audience, and they go wild, screaming their agreement.

“You’ve got that right,” Lachlan says from our other side.

My heart races. I know it's not their intention, but it does make me feel like a legitimate omega. Who cares if I have a heat? I've got a pack of growly, protective men who love me for me. I hope Harvey sees this and feels like a real asshole.

"This is our last one; it's a Ruin special. Sing along if you know it. Let's hit it." Rook strums his guitar, and the audience screams in response. It reminds me I'm on stage in front of thousands of fans.

Ramsey slams away on the drums as multiple instruments join in. Warrick starts a few seconds later as I lean back against his chest. His forearms flex as his scent floods my nostrils. We're a few feet back and to the left, but I've got an excellent side profile view of Fitzzy that I would kill to get a shot of. He and Rook move back-to-back as they pluck the strings of their guitars.

Dexter Clark and Lachlan York slide toward the audience as they hit their knees. I guess I figured out why they put everyone in leather pants. It's full-on chaos as the crowd screams. Those two are definitely the fan favorites for the ladies.

Good, let's keep it that way.

I'd damn well have to get violent if the ones in the front row were looking at my guys like that.

My whole body shakes with how much Warrick has to move to play such intricate patterns. I glance up at him, but he's chuckling and shaking his head. His affection hits me square in the chest as it floods the bond.

Oops.

I guess I forgot to block my murderous thoughts.

Oh well, he's stuck with me.

Ramsey guides me into a greenroom I haven't been in before. Fitz and Warrick are at our backs. I recognize some of the

faces, like Love and her guys Dexter and Issac, who are members of the band Matted Whine, but there are some I don't.

The guys from Ruin are also sitting around. Rook has a pretty woman with long blonde hair next to him. On the other side of her is a big guy with short curly hair and dark skin.

"Storm," the big guy says, standing and offering a hand to Warrick. "We spoke on the phone." He looks at me. "Hey, how'd you like the photo album?"

My cheeks heat as I realize he's the tech guy who got copies of all the pictures on my memory card. Not that any of them were explicitly dirty, but a few were questionable. If given the chance, I probably wouldn't have let them see the light of day.

I still force a polite smile. "It was great. Thank you so much."

"Have a seat. We saved that couch for you." Rook nods, and the guys sit down. They take up all three seats as I try to determine who to sit with.

Ramsey is in the middle, and he leans forward, yanking me to him.

Okay, decision made. I always like it better when I don't have to pick between them.

"We heard security was able to grab the guy." Warrick leans forward. "What's happening there?"

"Yeah, Love's team was able to detain Xavier and Leo Samuels. That's the guy. Xavier had all of his privileges revoked when he chose not to comply with some of the stipulations we intended to enforce in his contract," Rook says. "He never should've been allowed entry to begin with."

"No offense, but I don't give a fuck about Xavier. I want to know what's happening to the other guy," Warrick growls.

I stretch a hand over, linking our fingers. He tosses himself back against the cushion, exhaling heavily. I run my thumb over his to hopefully give him some comfort. I may have

briefly considered strangling him for dragging me out on stage, but it really was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Mostly, I just can't stand seeing any of my alphas upset.

"He's got several outstanding warrants from two or three states," Storm pipes in. "He was also arrested for trespassing and a few drug charges that will carry pretty heavy jail time, considering his previous charges." He shrugs. "There's no guarantee with our justice system, but I'm optimistic he won't be a problem for any of us again. At least not in the near future."

"Wow," I whisper.

"Damn," Ramsey says, squeezing my middle. "Thank you."

"We've fired Lucas, Gavin's assistant, for his hand in all of it," Rook says.

I'm guessing they determined that he was the inside contact who had been getting Leo Samuels into all the shows. That sucks. He stood around while I told Gavin and Ramsey all the details. He easily could've contacted Leo to find out what drugs Carter had taken.

"Unfortunately, we're concerned the problem is more widespread than just Leo Samuels and Lucas," Rook says with a heavy sigh.

"Leo was a low-level runner," Storm agrees. "The more I look into it, the more it seems this goes deeper than just this one tour."

"We'll be doing some digging to see if this really has been happening label-wide. Then we'll go from there and take action accordingly," Rook says, shaking his head.

"Good," Warrick growls.

The adorable toddler from earlier is awake and stumbling around the room. She comes over and holds small hands out.

My eyes immediately fly to Love's. "May I?"

"Oh, yeah." She laughs. "Go for it. Just be careful. Bellamy is in that biting stage that just won't quit."

I'm not afraid of toddler teeth. Baby snuggles are worth the risk.

I release War's hand and scoop her up. She immediately starts to fiddle her finger against the fabric of my dress. Her little face is so expressive as she pokes at the pattern.

Fitz leans over, giving her a smile. She buries her face in my shoulder and scoots as far away as she can.

"Apparently, she's not a fan of eyeliner," Fitz jokes, referencing my comment before the show.

Bellamy gets close to Warrick's side, and I'm a little shocked when she climbs over into his lap.

"Oh, all right," Warrick says as the little lady yanks on his hair. He looks at Love, who is now surrounded by her security guys. "She's a cute kid."

"Thanks," she says with a laugh.

"I'm glad we could address this situation." Rook looks directly at me. "I'm even more frustrated it was an issue to begin with. We want to discuss the possibility of the three of you doing some crossover shows in the future."

"I'm just fill-in," Fitz sputters.

"You're a damn good musician," Rook says. "I know no one wants to talk contracts and royalties tonight, but it's an option for sporadic shows without the commitment of a tour. Give it some thought. We'd also like to discuss having you document those shows whenever you're available." He looks directly at me again, and I blink.

"Seriously?" I was convinced they'd want to be done with me after this tour. Ramsey squeezes my middle. All three send encouraging thoughts and excitement in the bond, but I'm still shocked.

"Absolutely, if you're still interested. We checked out the shots you got when Storm was combing through the pictures. They're killer. You're welcome back anytime." Rook stands, offering the blonde woman a hand off the couch. "By the way, once he settles in at rehab, it might be nice if you give Carter a

call and just let him know you're thinking of him. I'll be happy to give you all the info."

"Definitely," Warrick says.

My eyes fly back to my alpha.

Damn, he looks good with a baby in his arms.

Is that a thing?

Does a hot guy holding a cute baby make women randomly ovulate?

Somehow make us walk around with emoji hearts in our eyes?

Whatever.

I don't care.

Adoption or naturally, it doesn't matter to me. We're going to have a houseful of kids one day soon, and we're officially free to start our lives.

Epilogue

Fitz

“I think this is ridiculously silly,” our little omega grumbles as we lead her up the stairs. She looks cute as hell with the blindfold on. I can’t lie; it conjures other images I wouldn’t mind exploring.

“Someone is a cranky traveler.” Ramsey chuckles, pushing open the garage door to his and Warrick’s house. The exterior is gray brick and the yard is huge. It’s covered in snow at the moment, but even I can tell it’ll be beautiful in the spring and summer.

Maybe it’ll feel like home to all of us one day soon, but at this point, I’ve only seen pictures and the outside.

Tinley hasn’t even had that chance.

“There were so many people. And that one couple on the plane who couldn’t stop coughing and sneezing. They definitely should have stayed home,” she says, holding on to my arm as she makes it up the last stair.

“Agreed,” Warrick says from behind us.

Ramsey flips on the light and guides us down a long hallway. He passes the kitchen, and I continue guiding Tinley along until we come to a giant living room.

Ram moves around, flicking on light switches as Tinley taps her foot against the tile floor.

“All right, baby girl. Ready to give it a look?” Warrick asks.

“Yes.” She nods wildly. She bounces a little on her crossed legs, and my head tilts. Warrick pulls off the blindfold, and she glances around. “It’s beautiful, truly lovely. I’m so sorry, you were right. I absolutely should have used the bathroom at the airport. Someone point me in the direction of the closest one, so I can fully appreciate it.” Her head bobbles up and down. “It’s kind of an emergency.”

“Come on, shortcake.” Ramsey holds out an arm and leads her back the way we came.

I hold the bark of laughter until they’re barely out of sight. It escapes, echoing around the spacious house.

“Not funny, Fitzy,” she calls out.

“God, I love that woman,” I say, trying to catch my breath. “She was so dead set on making sure you knew she’d appreciate the bathroom...” I snort as my head shakes.

“I’m glad to see you back to the guy we met when we were practicing,” Warrick says, clapping me on the back.

“Yeah,” I agree.

No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t seem to relax my impulses when we were on the road. It’s fucking heaven to finally settle in one place.



“Oh, shit,” Tinley groans, dropping the turkey back on the oven rack. “That’s so stinking heavy.”

“That’s because you’re trying to feed twenty-five people.” I highly recommended just a couple of turkey breasts and a spiral ham, but our little omega demanded I hush as she proceeded to make her own plans. “Give me the pot holders.” I hold out a hand.

“Here you are. Thank you.” She smiles brightly, spinning around and heading toward Ramsey. “How are the potatoes coming?”

I set the heavy-ass monstrosity of a turkey on the rack laid out specifically for this purpose before yanking off the pot holders to give the huge turkey a last baste.

“They seem reasonably mashed to me,” Ram says, frowning into the bowl.

“Okay, great.” She wipes her hands off on her adorable apron, spinning in a circle. “Right, so I know there’s more. Wait. Where is Warrick? He can’t still be out there, shoveling snow. It’s so weird that it snows so much here this early. We never got any good snowfall until December. Not that I don’t love it here. I totally do. I just need him.” She spins around again, looking at the huge mess of dishes filling the sink and half the surrounding countertop. “Ohmigod, this is a disaster.”

I drop the baster and head over, pulling her into my chest. My hand tightens on her luscious ass as I give her a quick kiss. “Did you happen to take your meds this morning?”

“I-I don’t know,” she whispers.

“Why don’t you go check, and I’ll get started on the dishes.” I kiss her forehead. “Does that work?”

“Yep, thank you.” She stretches up to kiss my cheek and spins around, heading off.

I shove up my sleeves and curse under my breath. “We need a maid.”

“And maybe a chef,” Ramsey snorts. “None of us have the first damn clue how to cook anything, but it is sweet that she wanted to host all of our family packs. Don’t forget to put the turkey back in. The last thing we need is to poison everyone with undercooked poultry.”

“Agreed,” I mutter, yanking the pot holders back on and handling that.

“Oh, don’t you even start with me.” Tinley stomps into the room as I’m closing the oven.

“I’m just getting started on the dishes, I swear,” I say, holding up my hands that are still covered in the pot holders.

Warrick follows her in, and his hair is up for a change. He makes a grab for Tinley's hip, but she slaps his hand away.

"Where is my birth control?" she asks, popping a hip out.

I grimace, pulling the pot holders off and bolting to do the dishes.

"Really?" she hisses. "Not one of you is going to speak?"

"You agreed you were ready to ditch the birth control," Ramsey says, his voice lined in pure confusion.

"Right, we talked about it while the three of you were busy tag-teaming me. I can't be held responsible for what came out of my mouth."

"But you agreed..." Ramsey laughs. "So—"

"I was literally dick drunk," she snaps.

Warrick chuckles darkly. "I love the sound of that."

"We chucked them," I say, flicking on the sink.

"You didn't!" she gasps.

"We totally did," Warrick confirms. "It's been a year. We figured it was time to leave it up to God or Mother Nature."

"Do we need to butter you up with all three of our cocks again, shortcake?" Ramsey asks.

"Knock, knock," Diane, Warrick and Ramsey's mom, calls out from the living room.

"Ohmigod, I'm going to murder all of you," Tinley whispers. "I'm still in my cooking clothes. Distract them! This conversation isn't over." She spins around, bolting from the room, but her undeniable excitement filters through the bond. I think it's been a bit of a safety net for her, considering she still hasn't had a full heat. But she has had repeated waves.

It's coming. We just have to be patient. Even if it doesn't, life is too goddamn good to let that hold us back from starting a family.

Carter is stretched out on our couch with a lazy smile on his face. That part is fine; he's actually come a long way over the last year. After he had a fallout with his family, we invited him to spend Thanksgiving with us. That's also why it's a completely dry holiday in our house. Not that any of us really mind, but I swear, I'm going to murder him with my bare hands if he doesn't stop flirting with my sister.

Shanna grins, leaning closer to say something, and my fists clench.

"Does he want to die?" I whisper-hiss the question to my omega.

Tinley giggles, grabbing me by the front of my shirt and dragging me into the hallway. Once we're out of sight, she leans up on her tiptoes, pushing her mouth to mine. It's an excellent distraction for the moment, but also...

It's Carter.

That's not happening. I've seen him with one too many groupies to ever let that shit fly.

"I'm pretty sure it's a rule not to go after your bandmate's little sister," I growl.

We don't go on tour full-time, but we did take the label up on doing some of the crossover shows. The majority of that was to give Carter a foot back in the door with a safety net of people around him who would call him out if he was struggling and support him through the worst of it. It's going to be a lifetime commitment for him, but we've done everything we can to help him succeed.

"Fitzy," she says, laughing under her breath. "Honey, you're losing your shit."

"She's my little sister," I growl.

"Yeah, but making a scene would be *super* hypocritical, considering how amazing she's been about accepting us." She

pats my chest. “Especially after the clip the paps got of your hand up my skirt while Ramsey was trying to climb into the limo...”

A slow smile crosses my face at the thought. I spin her around, slamming her back against the wall.

“You could distract me,” I suggest, getting very close to her ear. “You’ve got no idea how excited I am to practice breeding you.”

She moans, shivering against my hold. “How much longer do you think we have to let everyone stick around?”

I chuckle. “It’s been hours. I’ll start casually sending our family back to the hotel.”

“G-Good plan,” she agrees, blinking up at me with those big blue eyes I love so fucking much.

I shove my mouth to hers, grinding against her as much as I can with the height difference. “Love you, Tinsel,” I murmur as we pull back.

“Love you too. Now be the grump who kicks everyone out on a holiday.” She laughs, sliding under my arm.

I smack her ass. “I’ll find War. He’s much better suited for this job.”

Epilogue

Ramsey

It's the middle of the night when we finally get to plant our gifts under the tree. I vaguely wonder if all omegas are this terrible about trying to peek to find their presents. We hid all of Tinley's gifts at my parents' house, but we had to wait until she was asleep to set them up.

She's going to be super pissed when she realizes exactly how overboard we went on shopping.

"Are you coming?" I look between Fitz and War. They're both kneeling in front of the tree with their asses in the air.

"We'll be up shortly," War says, rearranging the packages for the twentieth time. "Here, put this one by the silver one. It'll look better when she photographs the tree."

I snort a laugh and take off for the stairs. Sharing a pack bedroom isn't bad. It's way easier than trying to handle the itchy feeling that makes me crawl out of my skin whenever we're apart for a night. Fuck knows if that's normal due to having a bond, but I can't stand being apart from her.

I'm also really damn happy I ended up with a woman I not only love the hell out of, but I also like her as a person. I yank off my T-shirt as I slide into our bedroom. It's dark, but the curtains aren't closed all the way, and it gives just enough light that I feel confident I won't trip over something and wake her up.

I'm three feet away from the bed when her perfume hits me like a fucking freight train. It's not unusual for her to perfume, but something about this is different. A low growl

rattles out of my chest as my head tilts. My nostrils flare as the edges of my vision go hazy.

I kneel on the side of the mattress, and my hand lands on Tinley's back. Her pajama shirt is soaked with sweat, and she's burning my hand through the material.

My jaw falls.

Holy fucking shit.

We've gone through waves where she's felt hot, but it doesn't extend to us physically being able to tell a difference in her body temperature. The fever, combined with her perfume, can only mean one thing.

I scoop her up and let out a little hiss as her skin touches mine. It takes some maneuvering, but I get us off the bed, without getting tangled in the blankets, and stomp toward the nest. It's right across from our bathroom and next to the walk-in closet. We've spent a fair amount of our downtime the last few months helping her set it up.

I don't close the door behind me, but I do click the circular push for the lights. Luckily, they're already on a dim setting. I head up the stairs when Tinley jolts.

Her eyes pop open and she squints up at me. "Ram?"

"Yeah, shortcake. I've got you." I nuzzle my cheek to hers, making it up the last few steps.

"I don't feel good at all," she gasps, clutching her stomach. "I need your knot. Ohmigod, I ache so badly."

I lower until I hit my knees and knee-walk us up the plush mattress. She turns in my hold, trying to do something. We reach the pillows, and I carefully lay her down. Her nails dig into my forearms as she yanks me toward her with more force than I'm expecting.

"Let me lick you," she hisses. "I need to taste your sweaty skin." Whoa, the omega monster is out in full force. I pull my armpit over, giving it a sniff, but I definitely remember showering after my workout. "Ramsey!"

Shit, this is not the time to hesitate.

“Sorry,” I say, pushing my mouth to hers. I get a strong hit of her slick cunt, and my nostrils flare. My cock instantly hardens. She sucks on my tongue, making me groan as her fist wraps around my shaft over my sweats.

Our little omega is either in heat or in the most potent wave I’ve ever experienced. My body responds by leaking pre-cum with every jerk. I slide my hands up her thighs and tug her panties down. She begs into the kiss, but it’s so muffled, I can’t understand exactly what she says. I get her underwear to just above her knees, but she takes over. She wiggles below me and kicks them off.

“You can’t tease me now, Ram. I need your knot. Rut me, alpha!” She nods wildly and moves both hands to yank down my sweats.

Her skin burns mine and terror rips through my chest. It’s the kind of fever that feels so serious, I’m pretty sure she should be in a hospital. Where the hell are Fitz and War? They’re both way more confident in their choices. What if I fuck up? She’s the most important person in the world to me. If I make a mistake and it hurts her...

Fucking get your shit together. Alphas are meant to care for omegas. Heats are natural. The thing she needs right now is a knot.

Give it to her.

I take over and get my sweats off before pulling her up and helping her out of her pajama shirt. I’m not expecting her to tackle me to the mattress, but it’s super hot as her tits bounce and she shoves with all her might.

“Just let me have sex with you,” she growls in a lovely imitation of an alpha.

“Sorry, shortcake. My dick is permanently at your bossy little disposal.” I grab her hip in one hand and guide my tip to her opening with the other. “Sink down. Take every inch of my fat cock.”

She teases her clit as her stomach heaves with how deeply she’s breathing. She’s still burning up. I’ve got to get my knot

inside her, even if I have to take over again. Her head falls back as she moans, sliding down my length with no trouble. She's so wet that slick drips from her pussy. It makes my chest heave.

She always feels like heaven, but her pussy ripples in a way that usually only happens when she's milking my knot.

Fuck, I should've called for the guys. She needs all of our pheromones filling her nest.

"Ride me," I growl, pushing her farther down my length. "You're such a good girl. Harder, sweetheart. Use me."

She nods, but her eyes are so hazy, it's a little intimidating.

I finally understand why the laws are so severe when it comes to respecting an omega and how and when they can legally consent.

She falls to my chest as my hands span her entire ass and part of her hips. I pull her down and yank her back up as I plant my feet on the mattress so I can fuck into her. My knot, balls, and pelvis are coated in her slick, and every thrust is easy with the added lubrication.

"You're so fucking wet," I growl, plowing up into her. "Work your clit. I need to feel you come all over my dick."

"Harder," she begs, licking my nipple.

"You want me to take over? I can't really rut like this," I growl, getting another deep hit of her pheromones. "You need me to fuck you *real* deep, shortcake?"

"No, keep her just like that," Warrick growls, climbing into the nest.

I roll my eyes. "Yes, boss."

"Ohmigod, War," she sobs, twisting until she can see him. "I need you too!"

"I'm coming, baby girl."

She nods, slamming her hips back at the same time as I thrust. It shoves my slightly swollen knot inside her, and we

both gasp. I flatten out my legs and focus on grinding her over me as my knot swells.

“She’s in full-blown heat,” I choke out around the mind-blowing pleasure.

“I know.” He strips out of his clothes quickly and heads to the cabinets lining the top of the wall.

“Your knot helped a little,” Tinley says, stretching so she can lick and suck on my neck. “But I need more. Daddy, I need you too.”

We’ve worked up to double penetration, but never while one of us was knotting her.

“Are you asking me to fuck your ass?” War asks, kneeling over my legs as he runs his hand down her spine.

“She’s already so tight,” I groan, shaking my head as she gyrates her hips.

“I am, please,” she begs.

“Kiss her while I prep her.” He grabs the bottle of lube, and the squirting sound fills the air. The feeling of even one of his fingers takes my damn breath away. I don’t know how she’s physically going to handle both of us.

She gasps, and I remember I’m supposed to be helping. Her pussy ripples, getting so much slicker. I push up using my forearms. It leaves me in an awkward crunch, but luckily, I spend enough time in the gym that it’s not a problem.

“Work your clit,” I growl, pulling her mouth to mine with a hand in her hair. Her naughty little tongue slides around mine with a desperation that makes my cock jump inside her. The pressure intensifies as War adds another finger. She sobs against my cheek, working her hips. “That’s it. Take what you need. Are you going to let me breed you? Fuck you full of my baby?”

“God, yes,” she begs.

“Come all over his cock,” War says, licking over Fitz’s bond. I generally prefer to tease my own, but any mark will

work to send a pulse through the bond, starting at the claiming bite.

“I am,” she groans, thrashing as her cunt locks down. The pulsing waves that tease my knot make my teeth throb with the urge to bite her. “Oh, fuck!”

“Work that sweet little pussy over my cock,” I growl, giving her hair a solid tug.

Her whimpering moans get so much louder, I’d be shocked if Fitz couldn’t hear them downstairs. She convulses, falling completely against my chest as she trembles. War doesn’t let up, despite how tightly her body is locked around me. It goes on for so long, she mostly devolves into mindless begging.

“I’m going to slide in,” War murmurs. “What do you say if it’s too much?”

Her pheromones flood the air, and she groans, “Rut.”

“Wrong answer, baby girl. Do you want to try again?” Warrick chuckles.

“Fuck me, now!” she hisses, wiggling her hips. I release my hold in her hair to palm the back of her head.

My balls tighten as she grinds, jiggling her hips from side to side in some motion that feels fucking amazing.

I barely hold out through her orgasm. “You better get inside her before I fucking bust.”

“All she has to do is say the word,” War taunts. “I can’t fuck her if I can’t trust her to tell me if it’s too much.”

“I say red if I need to stop. I don’t. So, why would I say it?” she sasses.

War chuckles darkly as he lands a couple of quick slaps to her ass. She only begs harder for it.

“All right, hold on tight. Let’s see what happens when you’re full of a knot in your cunt and a cock up your unbelievably tight ass.” He doesn’t hesitate to remove his fingers and shove his crown inside her. It can’t be much of his

length, but Tinley's pheromones flood the air like they're purposely trying to send us both into rut.

War freezes, cupping her hips and pulling her ass cheeks forward. It's weird as fuck feeling him pushing against my knot through her walls.

"Are you good?" he asks, studying her face as well as he can from his position behind her.

"Yes!" she squeals, clenching her inner walls.

"Aww, fuck," I hiss.

"Jesus Christ," War growls, pulling out and dipping in farther. He spends several long minutes barely working himself deeper. I run through drum patterns and song lyrics to keep myself from blowing my load before we even get started.

Tinley turns into a puddle of whimpers and moans against my chest. "I'm not going to break. Fuck me like you own me, Daddy!"

The feeling of her repeatedly coming around my cock sends me over the edge, despite my best efforts. I bring her mouth to mine, kissing her while War fucks her ass. It makes me so hazy that I don't realize Fitz is in the room until he kneels by our side, completely nude.

"God, you're so warm." He runs a finger over Tinley's cheek, and she attacks his mouth. Her hairline is sweaty, as is my chest from all the extra body heat.

"I want to taste you," she sobs, shoving her back against War's chest. At some point while he was working his way into her ass, she cuddled up to me, and I fell to the mattress. Her heavy tits bounce as War wraps an arm under them and helps her reposition her legs.

"It's fine. You're looking a little overloaded," Fitz groans.

Tinley wraps her hand around his cock, jerking him. "Put your dick in my mouth!"

"Such a bossy girl," War growls, really pulling out and thrusting back in with force.

Fitz says, “I don’t know how to make that happen at this height.” His accent is thicker than normal, and it takes me several seconds to realize what he just said.

“Step one, stand up. Step two, put your cock in my mouth.” Tinley moans. “Step three, come down my throat.”

Fitz curses under his breath, and the mattress jostles as he stands. He wraps a hand around her head, guiding her mouth to his crown. She dives on, licking and sucking. I stretch a hand out to stabilize Fitz’s leg with how violently his knees tremble. Tinley wraps a hand around his knot, hollows her cheeks, and goes to town, sucking him with a fervor I’d be jealous of if I wasn’t buried balls deep.

My twin growls, sounding truly animalistic as he slaps his pelvis into her ass. It makes her cunt spasm, and that’s all I can focus on. She’s so warm and slick, and the way she grinds on my knot...

My head shakes as I try to fight back the fog.

“Goddamn, baby girl,” War hisses as his cock swells. It’s weird as fuck feeling how much tighter she gets.

I push up on my forearm and nip at her ear, sucking my way down her sweat-slicked neck. I clench my ass in some ridiculous attempt to keep from filling her with my cum again.

But that thought leads to the thought of breeding her full of my baby. Tinley moans around Fitz’s length, and his hand bumps my face as I continue licking her neck to tease over my bond mark.

“Oh shit, sweetheart. I’m there,” Fitz warns.

Our little omega doesn’t pull off. She does, however, clench around me so tightly I explode, rambling all those thoughts of breeding her and fucking her with the big pregnant belly.

Rut takes over, and all intelligent thought bleeds away.

Epilogue

Warrick

“Are you excited for Christmas?” Dr. Davis asks, fiddling with the ultrasound machine. Dr. Benson followed up with Tinley, but once her heat started last Christmas, he referred us to Dr. Davis.

It took us several heats, and a whole lot of trying, but we finally knocked up our omega. The level of excitement is only matched by pure terror. It’s captivating watching her body change and grow, but life is going to change in a huge way. It’s a whole new person for us to love and protect.

“Ohmigosh, so excited!” Tinley says, nodding wildly. “But honestly, I’m just grateful the nausea settled down in the second trimester.”

“I think we’re all grateful for that.” Fitz links his fingers with hers.

I smile, nodding my agreement before my stare settles back on the ultrasound machine. I roll my shoulders back, trying to shake away some of the nervous energy that won’t quit.

“I’m telling you,” Ram says, laughing. “It’s twins.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Tinley says. “One baby is plenty to start with.”

“Agreed.” I nod, watching the screen.

“War,” Tinley says, holding out her free hand. I chuckle, taking the few steps and grasping her hand in mine. “Don’t stress.”

Shit, I thought I was blocking that. I'm not stressed, exactly. It's more of an anxious hope that everything is okay. Our child is inside her body, growing and changing every day. The hard part falls to our omega. She was sick as hell for the better part of four months.

It was terrifying, but she really has felt better the last two weeks. I'm excited. I just need to know she and the baby are okay, and then I can relax until the next appointment.

"Okay, so you're going to hear the heartbeat. Remember, don't be alarmed. It's completely normal for it to sound quite fast in comparison to ours," the doctor reminds us.

"Are you ready?" Tinley asks, nodding from Ram to the screen.

He lifts her camera.

"Yeah, shortcake. I'm all set," he says indulgently.

The whooshing sound fills the air, and it makes my knees weak, like every time we hear it on the Doppler.

"Still one baby?" Fitz asks after a few seconds.

"I believe so," Dr. Davis says, chuckling as he studies the screen. "And I'm fairly sure I can accurately give you the gender, if you're still interested?"

I turn to Tinley. She spent the last two months vacillating between wanting to know *right now* and being convinced she'd rather it be a surprise.

I don't mind either way. I told Ram and Fitz, we can simply set up an extra bedroom for each gender, and then we'll be golden for the next time around. If we have to repaint when the time comes, oh well.

"What do you think, Tinsel?" Fitz asks.

"I think one of you needs to swap with Ram so he can be in some of the pictures," she says, shaking her head. "Sorry, um..."

Ram comes over.

I grab the camera to take a few with him and Fitz.

“What do you think?” she asks Ram.

“I think we support you in whatever decision you make,” Ram says, grinning and nodding. The goofy fucker. That’s his motto recently. Say and do nothing that could make our omega burst into tears.

“I mean,” she blows air through her lips, “I guess we should be surprised, right?”

“I wouldn’t mind waiting,” Fitz says.

“I’m fine with either,” I assure her, focusing back on the screen. “Does everything look good? We’ve got a healthy baby? That’s all I care about.”

“You’re lucky we do this in office. If I was the tech, I legally wouldn’t be able to tell you anything. However, everything looks perfect so far,” the doctor says. “Would you like me to write the gender on a card for you? Just in case you change your mind?”

I chuckle. He definitely has Tinley’s number.

“Could you?” she asks.

“Of course, it’s no problem,” Dr. Davis says.

My eyes ache as he focuses on the baby’s profile. I get so close to his back I can easily pick out their little nose and chin. Jesus Christ, we really made a human being.

“Warrick, I’m very serious when I say I will hurt you if you don’t hand me that envelope,” Tinley grumbles, stretching up on her tiptoes to try to steal it.

The poor envelope is crumpled and not in good shape from all the times we’ve had this same disagreement over the last couple months.

“You told me you would rip my balls off if I caved and let you have it.” I chuckle, yanking her into my chest with my free hand on her luscious ass. The baby belly bounces against

my pelvis, and my cock is very fond of her extra curves. She's thirty-five weeks, and the nesting impulse has made her a little obsessive about making sure everything is exactly right. We've kept everything gender neutral, but she's suddenly convinced we have to know *right now*, so we can buy some pink or blue. "I can't do it. That threat is still the one I'm most afraid of."

"Well, now I'll do it if you don't hand it over." She grunts, making a swipe for the card she has no chance of reaching.

Ram pops up in the doorway, and I fling the card at him. He smirks, laughing as he heads off.

Tinley's head swivels, and her foot stomps against the ground. "No! Dammit. You're not allowed to gang up on me."

"Unless it's a gangbang, right?" Ram calls out before he disappears.

"He's really not as cute as he thinks he is," she mutters.

"Come on, let me make you some extra butter popcorn and rub your back," I say, hoping her latest craving will distract her.

"I'll even throw in some M&Ms on the side," Fitz calls out from the kitchen.

She pokes her lips out like she's considering it.

"Fine, I accept your offer, but I get to pick the movie this time." Her short finger shoves in the air as she spins around, and I lose my shit. I can't even keep my laughter quiet as she waddles away. I really fucking love that woman.

"There's just no way one small body should be able to produce such noxious gasses." Ram chucks the baby wipes into the trash. "I'm almost proud of your accomplishments."

"You best get that new diaper on quick before he pisses all over you *again*," I remind my twin.

“Shit,” Ram groans, grabbing one of the diapers and preparing to strap Jagger in. “I need to wash my hands. Will you get him into that?” He nods to the shirt and pants already laid out on the changing table.

“Yeah, I’ve got this.” I set the bottle down on the edge and scoop the little guy up, nuzzling my nose to his. He smells like blueberries and something nutty, but who knows if it’ll change as he gets older. He’s got a head full of dark hair and deep blue eyes, but they might change. They look a lot like Tinley’s eyes to me. He grunts, trying to attack my cheek like it’s the boob or a bottle. “Yeah, you’re definitely ready for that bottle, aren’t you?” I chuckle, putting him down so I can get him into his clothes.

Jagger wiggles and starts to fuss as I’m pulling on his socks. He kicks them off approximately sixty times a day, but Tinley stresses he won’t be warm enough. He’s a chunky little guy. He started life at nearly nine pounds, so I’m not shocked by how sturdy he is at two months old.

I scoop him up, heading over to the rocking chair.

“Oh no, don’t feed him!” Tinley hisses, yanking her tit out of the nursing pajama dress she’s wearing. Her hair sticks up in fifty directions and she looks exhausted, but she smiles brightly at the baby. “My boobs heard him calling.”

I laugh, nodding to the chair. “Get settled, and I’ll hand him to you.”

She sits down and grabs the breastfeeding pillow. “I’m ready.”

“What happened?” Fitz says from the doorway. “I thought they were on shift for another two hours?”

“We are,” I assure him.

“If I didn’t nurse, I was going to have to pump,” Tinley says, getting the baby latched. She gives Fitz a soft smile. “Go get your extra hour or two.”

“Okay.” He nods, spinning around in zombie mode. “Love you.”

She laughs, shaking her head as she runs her finger over Jagger's cheek. She's absolutely the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, both inside and outside. My chest always feels warm and fuzzy watching her with our baby.

I also know she's going to be thirsty.

I lean over, giving her a quick kiss. "I'll get you a drink."

She beams. "Thank you. I'm starving too. Could someone pop in a frozen waffle or something?"

"I'll bring you the drink and start breakfast."

"All right, I'm here." I jog into the room after dropping all three of our boys off at my mom's house. Three kids under eight is truly an adventure, but luckily, we've got my parents' pack right down the street. They try to steal them for visits on a weekly basis, which is a huge help. But they often come back high on sugar and spoiled rotten, so it's a balancing act. "What's the emergency?"

"No emergency," Tinley says, nodding to the couch. "Have a seat."

"What? Are we watching a movie?" Ram asks. "Why did we have to send the kids to Mom's?"

"Yeah, I thought we might be about to have a family meeting in the nest." Fitz gives her a feral grin.

"Ha." Tinley squats down next to her laptop that's on the coffee table. "Okay, please study the TV."

I toss myself down on the couch as the slideshow starts. There are pictures from our courting tour, all the holidays, and Tinley pregnant with each one of the boys.

She stands, planting her hands on her hips. "As you can see, we've built a lovely family. We're truly blessed, and I love you all."

I give her a bemused smile, leaning forward and trying to figure out what the hell all of this is about. “We love you too.”

“I know,” she says, beaming. “Do you notice anything about all of these family pictures?”

Fitz snorts, laughing like he figured it out.

“You make us wear matching family pajamas every Christmas Eve?” Ram says, scratching his beard.

“Make you?” she scoffs.

My head tilts as I try to determine the common denominator. There are so many amazing memories all captured by her camera lens. We really got lucky when Fitz brought her on tour. I can’t imagine life without her and the boys.

The slide show continues until we’re almost caught up to the present. Our youngest just turned two...

I grin. “You want to have another baby.”

“Yes, but I’m going to need you all to try *really* hard to only contribute girly sperm this time.” She nods, planting her hands on her hips, like that’s an actual possibility. “I live with six men, and while I love you all with my whole damn heart, I’d really love a daughter this time.”

Ram cackles. “I promise to do my best. Since we’ve got an empty house, let’s practice now.”

Epilogue

Tinley

I run a hand over my slightly swollen stomach, desperately trying to hold back my excitement. Being a mom to three rambunctious boys is a blessing. It's also a whole lot of chaos too.

I feel bad every time I get a twinge of disappointment thinking this baby might be another boy. I'll love and cherish every moment, no matter what the gender reveals. It's just that I yearn for those girly moments. I'd love to have someone to let me paint her nails and help pick a prom dress. Maybe a wedding dress one day.

The boys are definitely mama's boys. They're sweet and loving, but there's that saying that boys go out to start their own packs, but girls are yours forever...

Okay, I'm totally justifying again. Then again, the testosterone is extreme, and the boys' bathroom always smells like pee. I laugh, shaking my head. Honestly, I'll be okay either way. I'm definitely done after this baby, but it would be an amazing surprise if it happens to be a girl.

"It's twins," Ramsey says, laughing as Dr. Davis sets up the ultrasound machine. "I'm telling you, I've got a feeling this time."

Fitz snorts. "You say that every damn time, and you're zero for three."

"Well, I'm going to be one for four this time." Ramsey winks at me.

"I'll be damned," Dr. Davis says, squinting at the screen.

“What?” I ask, leaning forward. “Is the baby okay?”

“The *babies* are looking good so far.” Dr. Davis continues clicking buttons and wiggling the wand on my lower abdomen.

“Holy shit,” Fitz whispers, but a wide smile breaks out over his face.

“We’re totally going to be outnumbered.” Ramsey chuckles.

“Thank God, we’ve got plenty of help,” Warrick says. The bond pulses with his satisfaction and maybe a bit of a smugness. He’s always particularly pleased every time I’m pregnant.

“Well, I’m having trouble picking out Baby B’s gender, but I can tell you Baby A, if you’d like?” Dr. Davis offers. I bite my lip but nod before I can stop myself. “Congratulations, Mom. You’re finally getting that girl you’re so desperate for.”

My eyes ache as tears spring to my eyes. “Really?”

“Absolutely. I’ll print you a picture, but this one is pretty clear. She wanted you to know she’s going to be making her arrival.” Dr. Davis gives me a soft smile.

“I’m okay,” I whisper, trying to keep from bursting into tears. “Really, it’s a very happy moment.”

“Mom, seriously?” Liberty laughs, running her hands down her baby blue prom dress. “Did you cry like this when the boys went to prom?”

“She did,” Fitz confirms, holding up his palms when I glare in his direction.

“She was fine until she looked at you, so I’m going to call bull—” Jett says, rolling his dark brown eyes. He looks so much like Ramsey and Warrick’s side of the family. It’s pretty clear he’s biologically one of theirs. Although, we haven’t

done DNA tests with any of the kids. We felt like it was better left to chance.

“Hey,” Ramsey says, smacking Jett on the shoulder. “No cursing in front of the womenfolk. Also, don’t call your parents liars.”

“Yeah, got it.” Jett shoves his hands into his suit pockets, rocking on his heels. “Come on, wombmate.” He looks at Liberty. “We both know Mom won’t let us out of the house until she gets the perfect shot.”

I snuggle back into Warrick’s chest as he wraps an arm around my middle. I’m calling Shanna as soon as they walk out the door. I need my best friend to lament over how fast time flies. The guys are no help, because they keep making jokes about never wearing clothes again once we have an empty nest, which doesn’t actually sound terrible.

Some of these moments are a little bittersweet, but they’re growing into adults I’m proud to know. I lift my camera, preparing to take some pictures. After all, everything is easier to handle through the camera lens.

Thank you!!

Thank you so much for reading Knot Guaranteed!! I plan to explore the label wide issue more in future books, but I was limited by what my POV characters know at this point.

I really appreciate all of your support!!

If you enjoyed, or even if you didn't please consider leaving a review.

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