



Knott's

LIST

MONSTER HOLIDAYS SERIES

TAYLOR FOX

KNOTTY LIST

MONSTER HOLIDAYS

BOOK ONE



TAYLOR FOX

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CONTENT WARNING

Dear Reader,

This book is a dark holiday romance with a dark gray hero. He's very possessive, so expect violence on page, including dismemberment.

Also contains: mentions of child death, family neglect, racism, breeding kink, primal play.

Mental health is health.

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CHAPTER 1



OLIVIA

Rolling down the windows, I belt out *Take me to Church* in that shameless way people do when we're alone. Beautiful days like these are rare in late autumn, and I savor the blue skies even as I sing about goddesses who require sacrifices.

The sun glints off my windshield as I drive down the winding road. My fingers tap against the steering wheel, following the beat of the chorus. I find my eyes in the rear-view mirror and grin.

Pride swells in my chest, but it has nothing to do with my singing skills.

I've just driven across two states to find the perfect antique mirror for my mother—a delicate Rococo piece with intricate carvings imitating leaves, dating all the way back to the seventeenth century. It's not just any mirror; it's the exact one she's been searching for for years to complete her collection. A museum-worthy piece. Not cheap at all, but Mom asked for it as a Christmas present, so I've been saving up for months.

Touching my phone screen, I glance over at the messages. I let her know I had the mirror as soon as I bought it. Even took a couple of pictures before the seller wrapped it up for protection. That was three hours ago. She read the message, but never replied.

Maybe she forgot.

That's what I tell myself every time. No amount of therapy will ever teach me that I shouldn't be so desperate for my

mother's love.

There's a part of me that craves her affection, yearning for a connection that feels perpetually out of reach.

Another hour ticks by as I wait for her response. Like a trained puppy, I keep glancing, keep hoping. When the screen shines with her reply, I slam a finger so hard against my phone that it almost falls from the holder.

Mom: Finally. Drive safe. It's an antique.

My heart sinks, heavy with disappointment. Not even one thank you?

I shake my head, focusing my attention back on the deserted road. I mean, I know we shouldn't do things expecting gratitude, but... Two states. And not one *tnx*?

Our relationship has always been strained, like a rope frayed and worn from years of tension. But even her *drive safe* wish is not about me or my safety. It's about the safety of the mirror.

A huge sigh escapes my lips. This is getting old. Despite that, I can't help but cling to the hope that when she sees the mirror in person, her eyes will light up and she'll wrap me in a loving embrace.

Maybe, just maybe, this will be the moment that changes everything between us. After all, she wanted this mirror so much...

And if I don't have hope, then I have nothing left.

A gust of wind carries the scent of gasoline, snapping me back to the present. I shoot a glance at the meter. Yeah, I could use some gas. The antique store was farther than I expected, so I'll need to get some fuel. I take the exit.

My car rolls to a stop at a gas station on the outskirts of a small town, and I step out into the icy morning air. The skies

are that stark blue of cold weather, and the wind bites at my cheeks. I tug my coat closer and race a hand through my long hair. With a glance at the white tips, I remind myself that I should get a cut after taking the mirror to Mom.

I make my way to the store, lifting my head to take in the sights. A lofty mountain blocks half the sky, with dense forest covering its base. The woods stretch all the way to the edge of town.

A balding man in his fifties looks up from behind the counter, then glances outside. “The BMW yours?” he asks, his brows shooting up.

“Yes?” I tilt my head, glancing at the car again. My mom gave it to my sister when she turned sixteen. This year, Mom gave her a new car for her twenty-first birthday, so my sister sold me this one for cheap.

Mom used to say she gave my sister better opportunities because, as the older sister, I should fight and struggle to serve as an example. It never made sense to me, and it makes little sense to my therapist, either.

The man—the tag on his chest reads *James*—scratches his full mustache, then opens a smile. “Cool ride, kid.” He tilts his head to read my license plate number. “You’re a long way from home, aren’t you?”

I shrug, smiling back. “A store a couple of hours from here had something I needed.”

James nods. “Still impressed. We don’t get visitors these days.” He chuckles. “I don’t think we ever did, to be honest. But drought is moving our neighbors away, so it’s getting even emptier.”

“Oh, I’m sorry about that.” I blink twice. I was never good at small talk. “Yeah, the weather is crazy. Global warming.”

He mutters his agreement. “Yes, we’re all fighting hard these days.” James shoots a doubtful glance at me. “But are you traveling alone? You shouldn’t be driving for too many hours. It’s dangerous.”

“Yeah, it’s just me,” I reply, flashing him a smile that does little to hide my loneliness. “But I’m well rested, and I plan on stopping for lunch.”

I push a couple of bills to James over the counter. He works on the change for a moment, so I click my phone screen on.

Nothing. Unsurprising.

“Boyfriend?” James teases with a glint in his eyes and an avuncular grin on his face. “You should break up; he should have come with you,” he jokes, laughing even before he says the entire sentence. “Just joking. He must have been occupied with something else, right?”

I smile back at him, shaking my head. “No boyfriend.” The ache in my chest grows, but I force a carefree chuckle. “Just checking on my mom. She’s always so busy; she takes a while to get back to me.”

“Family can be tough,” James sighs, pushing the change my way. “We can’t expect more from them than they’re willing to give, but you also feel like it’s your duty to stick around. The human dilemma.”

His words ring true inside me. A knot tightens in my throat.

James juts a thumb over his shoulder. “You know, New Oberzell is just around the corner. We’re famous for our Streuseltaler pastries. If you have some time to spare, maybe you should pay a visit to our local bakery. Everyone’s working extra hard before winter hits.”

This stranger was so kind to me that I can’t help but want to give him back some kindness. I long for a taste of this charming town and its sweet delights.

“I will,” I tell him, smiling. “What’s the name of the bakery?”

* * *

he half-timbered, pastel-colored buildings lining the cobblestone streets give this town an old-world charm.

Green roofs and cute chimneys stand out against the blue sky. I stick an arm out of the window and gape at the cobblestone streets and flower bushes.

Window boxes overflowing with colorful flowers add vibrancy throughout the town. I drive down the tree-lined Main Street and past the Town Hall, a cream-colored building with peaked blue gables. New Oberzell has come straight out of a Brothers Grimm's tale. It doesn't even look real!

Locals stare at me. They don't get many visitors, so I understand the curiosity.

Parking my car in the central square, I step out and take in the whimsical beauty around me. There's an air of enchantment in this place, like a storybook.

The aroma of baked goods catches my attention. I search for the source and find the bakery James mentioned. It's a pink-and-white building with the cutest awning and little tables on the sidewalk.

Life has so many surprises for us! Look at this place—a European little town stuck between mountains in America. My heart swells at the thought that kindness brings such pretty gifts.

The moment I push the bakery door open, I'm engulfed in warmth and mouthwatering scents. A bell rings above me, but I don't pay attention. Cinnamon, sugar, icing, and vanilla. All the smells make my stomach rumble.

A long counter is covered in glass displays, showing off beautiful golden breads and bright, colorful pastries. The tables are empty, and my heart squeezes at the thought of this beautiful food going to waste.

A woman in her late twenties, like me, appears behind the counter. She shoves her black hair up into a ponytail, a riot of curls bouncing with every step. She greets me with a bright smile that reaches her eyes.

“Welcome, welcome! You’re a new face! What can I get for you?” she asks, her voice a melodious lilt.

I can’t help but smile back at her warmth. “James at the gas station told me about your famous pastry. S... Store...?”

She grins. “Streusel-taler.”

“That’s the one.” I laugh. “I’d love to try one, please,” I reply, grinning. “And, I’m sorry, but...” Should have looked it up. Too late now. “But I don’t know what that is. Are there vegetarian options?”

The girl laughs, but there’s no judgment in her voice. “It’s a German pastry. It’s sweet.” She guides me to where she keeps them and points. “These are the regular ones. No meat. But these are vegan, and these are gluten-free. I know I shouldn’t bake these many options when we hardly get visitors, but I want to be ready when someone shows up.”

I smile back. “They look delicious. I want one of each.”

Her black eyes glitter. She’s so happy at my answer, her dark skin glows. “You sure?”

“Absolutely.”

She smiles and nods. I watch her pick them up and put them on a plate. “I’m Violet, by the way.” She offers a hand over the counter.

I shake it. “Olivia. Nice to meet you.”

“Are you visiting family?” she asks as I take a high stool by the counter. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you around.” She points at my white-blond hair. “Pretty sure I’d remember. Your hair is beautiful.”

“Yours, too.” I take a bite out of the pastry and spend a solid minute between mumbling and humming in delight. “This is amazing.”

“Thank you! It’s my mom’s recipe. Her parents were German, but my dad was from Pennsylvania.” And she points at a picture frame behind her. It shows a man in an afro holding a smiling dark-haired woman and a baby Violet, just outside the bakery.

The picture fills my heart. It's the kind of thing that only happens in small towns. That old yearning for a place to belong tightens in my chest.

I raise my eyes to the other pictures. A sepia close-up shows three men, one of them resembling James—the gas station guy. He smiles back at me from the frame, the same smile I saw minutes ago, just missing the mustache.

“Is that...?” I begin, gesturing toward the photo. I'm definitely wrong, but the picture looks older than James could be.

Violet glances at it. “Oh, that's James's grandfather. Some families have lived in this place for centuries.”

Of course. He just looks like his grandfather. A lot.

My gaze goes over the other pictures, then I stare through the windows to the main square. Children play, and a couple of mothers sit on benches, chatting. I catch a couple of people sneaking glances at my car.

I chuckle against the pastry. “This town is so cute,” I say, then snap my attention at Violet, hoping she doesn't think I'm being ironic. “I mean, I like it here. It's cool how everybody knows everybody, so they watch the newcomer.” That would make me feel safe, knowing my neighbors had my back. Knowing someone, *anyone*, had my back.

Violet's smile trembles. She leans over the counter. “Small towns can be charming, but they're only good to visit. People here have some old mentalities, you know? Mom moved back here with Dad, and it was quite the scandal. He's been dead for twenty years, and people still treat me weird.”

My brows shoot up. “This is awful. I'm so sorry...”

Violet shakes her head, putting a smile on her face as she pushes away from the counter. “Don't worry about that. I'll leave this town behind one day. Soon, I hope.”

I open my most reassuring smile. “So, besides pastries and slight racism, is there anything else this town is famous for?”

Violet throws her head back, laughing out loud. She leans forward again, cupping a hand next to her mouth as if to tell me a secret, even when we're the only ones here.

“They say Krampus lives in the mountains.”

“Krampus?” I raise an eyebrow, unfamiliar with the term.

“Krampus is a folkloric figure who partners with Santa Claus. You know, Santa rewards the good kids, while Krampus punishes the bad ones—usually with beatings.” Her tone is casual, but I sense an underlying seriousness. “It’s a small town, so people truly believe in such things,” she adds. “You should look around anyway. No one can deny the town is beautiful.”

CHAPTER 2



OLIVIA

Dappled light filters through the canopy of leaves, and the air is perfectly crisp. I follow the direction Violet points me to the very edge of town—a meager fifteen-minute walk. An old wooden sign catches my eye, marking a trail into the forest.

Teufelsberg, it says in bold, big letters peeling off the wood. Underneath it, *Devil's Mountain* is written in a smaller font.

A shiver rushes down my back. I tell myself it's the cold under the shade of the trees, but my coat is quite warm.

The chitter of birds and the blue sky urge me into the trail. There's no way I'm scared of a fairy tale, right? A fairy tale I only just learned existed.

To prove to myself that I don't believe it, I cross the threshold into the woods, my boots stepping into soft undergrowth.

Pines rise to my sides. The trail is slippery, unused. Don't children enjoy playing in the woods?

Of course, it's not exactly safe, and if they believe in Krampus, it would be even worse. Yes, it makes sense. It makes sense why no one uses this trail.

The chitter of birds continues. The trail is large enough that I'm not afraid to get lost, so I let myself enjoy it. I let my guard down.

A huge, thick oak catches my attention around a bend. It's beautiful. Gloriously tall, knotty, and old. I smile and approach to touch its trunk.

On the lowest branch, there's a wreath twisted out of wood and hay. I narrow my eyes at it. How strange. This has to be man-made. Maybe one of the children? But the branch is too tall for that—almost my height.

Curiosity piqued, I reach out to touch it, feeling its rough texture. The branch snaps under the slight weight of my touch, and the knot falls to the ground.

I squeal and look over my shoulders. Damn it. I broke it! I broke the branch, and now, if the kids come back after the wreath, it'll be on the ground.

I pick up the wreath. The hay is so old that it breaks under my fingers. A piece of wood threatens to snap. With no low branches to hang it back up, I leave the knot near the roots for someone else to find.

The trees groan with a shudder. They creak as if they were bending. Something electric courses through me.

My stomach feels heavy. Not because of the pastries. I can't help but imagine it's guilt. Pressing a hand to my belly, I turn around.

A sense of foreboding creeps over me as I walk back to town. I glance over my shoulder, but there's nothing there. Feels like eyes on my back.

I shake off the feeling and pick up my speed. It's only when I'm stepping out of the trees that I notice the deafening silence of the birds.

Once I'm back in town, it's easy to forget the feeling. I smile at the locals, and some even smile back. I return to my car and sit behind the wheel.

Glancing at the mirror on the back seat, I think of my mother. Maybe staying a few days wouldn't be the worst idea.

No. No, I better go. It's not like I have loads of money or vacation days. This will have to wait. I turn the key.

Nothing. I blink and turn the key again. No sound. Not a purr, not a choke—nothing.

My car refuses to start.

Panic swells within me. Oh shit. If I don't have the money for a vacation, obviously I don't have money to fix the car. What if I can't leave? I can't take a bus back home from here.

A calm voice interrupts my racing thoughts.

“Need some help?”

A tall man watches me from a few feet away. He's in his fifties, like James, but that's where similarities end. This man is muscular and broad, with a strong jawline and dark blond hair swept to one side. He's so out of place here.

He belongs in Hollywood, California, or something like that.

I open the door since the windows won't roll down. “Mm, my car won't turn on. It was fine a couple of hours ago,” I tell him as he walks closer.

He clicks his tongue. “Why don't we take a look?”

Small town cordiality. I like it. I leave the car and walk with him to the hood. He pops it open.

I glance inside, but I see nothing different. Not that I'm an expert. The stranger looks around, scratching his chin.

Finally, he straightens and opens a smirk. “I have no idea what's wrong.”

His answer is so ludicrous, I can't help but laugh. “Me neither.”

“I should learn something about cars, but we have such a brilliant mechanic that I never get around to it.” He offers a tanned hand. “Doug Horner. I'm the mayor.”

“Oh!” Unexpected. “Olivia.”

“How'd you like our little town?” He points at the main square, golden light bathing the buildings. Whatever few stores were open earlier have closed. “Pretty, isn't it? We're

working on internet marketing. Not me, of course. I don't know my way around a cell phone. But soon, we'll be quite the tourism hub."

I nod. "Well, I'm pretty sure you will. The place is lovely. Could you point me at the mechanic, please?"

The mayor dismisses me with a wave of his hand. "Nonsense. I'll call him and tell him we have a special client." Mr. Horner opens a smile, row after row of pearly white teeth. "Violet told me we had a guest when I went there for a little afternoon snack. Were you hiking? You must be tired."

Afternoon snack? I cock my head. "An afternoon snack this early? Oh, is it because everything closes this early here?" It can't be one in the afternoon, and the stores are all locked.

Mr. Horner chuckles. "Not that early. It's almost six!" What? No, there's no way. I'm not through with the shock when he goes on. "You hiked for hours! You must be exhausted."

"No, there's no way..." I shake my head and pull out my phone to check. He's right. It's almost six in the afternoon.

He clicks his tongue with an amused smile. "It's said our forest is quite magical. My grandma used to tell me stories of how our family had witches, and fairies and elves lived here..." He chuckles. "Maybe you lost track of time. I'm glad! It means you enjoyed yourself."

That's a way to look at it, but... No way. Between leaving the bakery, hiking, and reaching my car, it didn't feel like an hour had passed.

"You should hit the inn. Right there." He points at a cute yellow building covered in red ivy. "Have a shower and rest. I'll get you a discount."

"Oh, wow, Mr. Horner, you don't have to—"

"Nonsense! I'm the mayor, and I need to make sure you have a perfect experience. I'll leave your car keys at the check-in desk for you once James's done with it." He opens his hand to take my keys.

This would never happen where I live. But Mom hasn't replied, and I don't really want to go home, and I'd love to believe there's a place where you can still trust people in the world.

So, I nod and hand the keys over. "Thanks, Mr. Horner."

"Don't mention it. I'm very glad you stopped by."

CHAPTER 3



OLIVIA

New Obernzell's morning air fills my nostrils with the scent of fresh bread and dew-kissed grass. I grunt, my stomach already rumbling. I don't think I could live this close to a bakery without eating there every day.

Still under the covers, I crack an eye open, wondering if I left the room window open. But no. The window's shut, keeping the cold out. The smell of bread is sneaking through cracks in the wood to tempt me, I'm sure.

I stretch my legs, wiggling my toes under the softest sheets ever. Last night, I could have waited for the mechanic, but I decided I needed a respite. I would have to stop somewhere to sleep either way. Why not here?

The bathroom had an amazing bathtub, so I took my time to soak, brought my battery-operated boyfriend with me, and let myself relax. I thought I could stretch my back for five minutes before knitting a little, and... Sunlight and morning. The time passes so strangely in this place. You blink, and it's gone, as if there's too much to take in at every second.

My heart flutters with anticipation for a new day here. Something tells me this quaint town will be my sanctuary, a place to call home.

It might be that silly hope that never leaves my chest.

I slip out of bed and put my nightshirt inside my backpack, tucking it over my vibrator so it's hidden. After showering and changing into my last clean clothes, I make my way downstairs.

The sweet owner isn't behind the counter, instead leaving a note saying she'll be back in twenty. I don't want to pry after my keys, so I'll come back after breakfast.

The bakery is livelier in the early morning. Not half full, but a few locals chatter over steaming mugs of coffee and decadent pieces of pie. Some glance at me in that hesitant way.

Probably my expectations are screwing me, as always, but I expected a tiny little more warmth from people here.

Violet is warm for all of them. She smiles at me from behind the counter, her dark curls tied into twin braids. "Morning," she calls out, but I can't avoid noticing there's something different about her voice.

"Good morning, Violet," I greet the baker, taking my spot at the counter.

"Slept well?"

"I did, thank you." I tilt my head. "Aren't you surprised I'm here?"

Violet shoots me an apologetic smile. "Mayor got a coffee first thing in the morning, and he told me."

"Of course." I can't help but chuckle. But then again, there's that strange look on Violet's face. I lean closer. "You alright?"

Violet twists her lips and props her elbows on the counter. "I'm sorry about the strange looks you're getting. It's just... there have been some unfortunate incidents lately," she replies, her voice as soft as the pastries. "A child drowned only days ago, and another was found dead last night. The town's on edge."

My stomach drops. How insensitive of me! "I'm so sorry! That's awful."

"Yeah," Violet sighs. "Other towns have been going through rough patches, with how bad this year's drought has been, but nothing like this. People here are scared, and they don't know who to trust."

I frown at her. “Wait. You make it sound like it wasn’t an accident.”

Violet shakes her head, and her smile trembles. “Of course. I mean, they look like accidents. But it’s children. Everyone’s worried it might be something else. You know. Small town.”

Her words paint a picture of a once-idyllic place now shrouded in fear.

And I see what the locals see. A strange girl with her bright white hair and her expensive car. A stranger. Dangerous, maybe.

I showed up right around the murders. They have reason to mistrust me.

“Maybe I should leave.”

Violet puts a steaming mug of hot cider and a plate of pastries in front of me, paired with a soft smile. “I’d advise against staying too long, yes.”

The bell over the door chimes, and I turn in time to see Mr. Horner walking in. He’s wearing an elegant gray button-down shirt and dress pants. He’s almost too elegant for such a tiny place.

I smile at him in greeting, and he opens a large, welcoming smile. “Morning, Olivia! What luck to find you here,” he says in a warm voice. “James had to go out of town to get a part for your car. It won’t be ready until tomorrow at the earliest.” He twists his lips in an apologetic look. “It’s the thing about some cars, right? Parts are harder to find.”

“Of course. That makes sense. Thanks for letting me know.”

“The keys are with the front desk at the inn, but the mechanic will use them again when he has the part. I’ll talk to Jeanette about giving you a discount for the extra night. If you need anything, you can find me at either the town hall or back home.” He juts a thumb over his shoulder. “It’s the last house that way, a big farm with a big oak tree up front.” He taps my shoulder, about to go back to his business, but he stops and smiles at me. “Oh! We have a snow forecast tonight, and the

first snow of the season is always harsh. If you feel cold, ask Jeanette for extra covers.” He nods once and walks to a table in the back.

Mr. Horner sits with a couple around his age, and I can’t help but admire their appearance. The woman has a regal air about her, her black hair pulled back into a neat bun, and deep-set blue eyes. The man beside her is just as imposing, his salt-and-pepper beard impeccably trimmed and a pair of wire-rimmed glasses perched on the bridge of his aquiline nose. Both glance at me before turning their attention to the mayor.

Glancing behind the counter, I search for Violet, but she must be in the kitchen. I look down at my phone, hoping for a message from my mother or sister. My inbox remains empty. Mom knows I’d have to drive far, but she never asked if I made it to a hotel.

I chew on my bottom lip, feeling the sting of rejection prickling beneath my skin all over again. Just like every other time, I wonder what I did wrong. Is this because of me? Am I a bad daughter, sister, friend?

I always try to stay positive and be useful, and still... Why do people only reach out when they need me?

My phone buzzes. I almost jump out of my skin. My sister’s message flashes on the screen. I click on it, a hopeful smile blooming on my face.

There. It wasn’t so bad. It’s just that I’m too clingy.

Hope fades as I read the chat.

[3 days ago] Olivia: Heyyyy, how was your week?
Mom said you had finals?

[2 days ago] Olivia: Hey there, hope you rocked
the finals!

[Yesterday] Olivia: How was your week? Any plans for the weekend?

[Now] Sister: Busy, talk later

“Busy” seems to be the word of the day. Of the week. Maybe of my life.

I sigh and take a sip of the hot cider Violet brought me, letting the warmth spread through my chest and chase away the icy knot in my heart.

I spend a couple of minutes doomscrolling through my social media, but it doesn't help. The aimless swiping through photos and posts of people having fun and living their perfect lives just increases the emptiness inside me.

Shoving the phone into my pocket, I force myself to see the bright side. Life is making me stop and take a breath. I can't drive out of here, so I'll have to enjoy myself.

The sky's cloudy, announcing either rain or snow. I can take a walk in another part of the woods in the morning before the sky opens, then spend the afternoon knitting. It's been forever since I had time for it.

Nothing bad can come from a spontaneous vacation. This sounds like a good day off.

CHAPTER 4



OLIVIA

Ever since I was a kid, if I had a stressful or restless day, Mom would catch me sleepwalking around the house. She would always get so mad that I had given her a scare.

It's been years since I last experienced one of those episodes.

It's the first thing that crosses my mind when I'm yanked from slumber—my feet landing on the ground. A nightmare. I must have been sleepwalking. What other explanation would there be?

Hot, clammy hands close around my arms. I'm dragged out of bed, away from the window. Adrenaline floods my veins. I'm wide awake now. My eyes are open, but I see nothing in the inn's darkness.

“Wha—?”

Someone slams a piece of sticky plastic against my mouth, muffling my voice, then something covers my head. Panic bursts in my chest as I dig my heels in. Nails pinch my arms. I kick and squirm, but whoever has me is stronger.

They're stronger, and they know what they're doing. What other reason would they have to tape my mouth and cover my face?

We stumble down the hallway, several pairs of feet stamping the hardwood floors. I land a kick, and a male voice curses under his breath. It's not enough. They keep hauling me

out, with hushed voices I don't recognize and the fragrance of strangers barely filtering through the bag over my head.

My heart thunders in my ears. What's happening? What's going on? Who would want to do this?

I thought small towns were supposed to be safe.

My bare feet hit the pebbles outside the inn. The cold air bites at the exposed skin of my legs. I'm still wearing just my nightshirt. My eyes are huge, but the night's too dark, too quiet, and nothing filters through the bag.

Who? Why? Why me?

My mother doesn't know where I am. If I were to vanish, who would even know? Who would come looking for me?

My feet sink into something wet and cold. I curl my toes and stumble. The icy chill sears through my skin, and tears prick at the corners of my eyes. I slam them shut. I pray to wake up.

All I want is to curl up somewhere warm and safe, but there's no escaping this nightmare. With each step, sharp branches and freezing slush assault my feet. The woods. It must have snowed sometime in the evening.

The strangers drag me far into the trees. There's no sound but hushed breaths and our feet crunching the undergrowth. I'm dragged farther into the forest. The soles of my feet touch stone, and we halt.

In the darkness, they force my arms up. Someone holds my legs down when I try to kick. The tape devours a torrent of curses I spit. Something chafes against my wrists. I pull my arms down, but there's no give.

"Can she move, Archie?" a strangely familiar male voice asks. This voice. I know this voice.

Someone tugs on my wrists.

"No."

Who's Archie?

Warm breath filters through the bag over my head. “I don’t want to hurt you. Don’t make me,” Archie murmurs.

You literally dragged me into the woods, fucker. I use my tongue to force the tape away, but it’s no use. This is nothing like in the movies.

My stomach churns with nausea. The ropes around my wrists won’t give. I can’t even scream. All that’s left to hope for is that someone saw us earlier. Maybe someone saw them dragging me.

A light flickers on. Someone yanks the bag out of my head. I slam my eyelids shut, then force them open once my eyes are used to the brightness. The faces of my captors take form. My blood runs colder than the snow beneath me as recognition dawns.

I blink in the soft light of a gas lantern, my vision adjusting to reveal Doug Horner, the mayor, and James, the gas station guy. There are two more people with them—the couple I saw having breakfast with the mayor. Their faces are stone masks, revealing nothing.

They all stand several feet away from me. Why? I can’t kick them. I can’t...

The light covers the stone at my feet. The markings are old, but it’s clear enough. It’s a circle. Like a magic circle. Like the summoning circles we see in movies where teenagers draw them with blood and call on demons. I look up. My wrists are tightly bound to a thick tree branch.

There’s no escape.

My stomach plummets.

Did I stumble upon a cult?

“Olivia,” Mr. Horner begins, his voice surprisingly gentle, “I’m so sorry, child. This is not personal. We have no choice.”

I mumble a *what*, but the sound disappears against the gag.

“The children,” says the woman, her hands pressed together in front of her as if she’s praying. “You must have heard.”

I shake my head. I don't understand. What does that have to do with anything? Weren't those accidents? Do they think I did that?

"What Mrs. Klein means," says James, and he has the audacity of looking at me with pity, "is that we know why those children died. Every twenty years, Krampus comes down to our town and eats a few children until someone is sacrificed for him. I'm very sorry, Olivia."

"This is not about you," says the mayor in a soft, reassuring voice. As if that would appease me. "You said that your mother is always busy. You don't have a boyfriend. No one called you or messaged you while you've been here. But think of those children, Olivia." His eyes flicker with sympathy. "The Krampus will eat them until someone is given away. Your sacrifice will stop the death of the innocents."

Terror grips me as I struggle against my binds, the cold seeping into my bones and making every movement painful. But there's a small part of me, buried deep beneath the fear, that wonders if they might be right.

I try so hard, and still I don't get people to love me. Not even my mother. Is this the sort of life I want? Is loneliness all that exists for me?

What if my life could save others?

"Dorothea," Mr. Horner says. "Put these away."

The mayor offers Dorothea Klein something, and she moves it to the edge of the trees. The light hits my shoes and backpack as she drops them.

Are they trying to make me vanish? Mr. Horner already has my car keys. Is he going to destroy my things so there's no clue left? Is he going to do the same with my car?

My heart bangs against my chest, a futile protest against the depressing reality. Horror makes me nauseous and dizzy. My toes hurt. My knees buckle.

Mr. Horner stretches a sad smile. "The Krampus might be cruel, but he's kept the town thriving for many years now. What's the price of one life compared to that?"

“I’m so sorry, Olivia,” James mutters, his eyes downcast. The apology does little to quell my mounting dread. This man saw me parking, used my sympathy against me, and directed me here, knowing this would happen.

How could he look me in the eye, knowing he’d have me killed?

“Thank you for your sacrifice,” Dorothea murmurs, her voice trembling. Archie doesn’t even look at me.

One by one, they leave me alone in the circle, peppered with new snow, my body shivering. The wind whispers through the branches overhead. Thorns of despair pierce my heart as their light disappears. Tears burn my eyes. I’m drenched in darkness again.

Just my luck to become a fairy tale sacrifice.

The thought is ludicrous, but laughter eludes me as I’m left alone, tied to a tree and clad only in my sleeping shirt, awaiting the arrival of a monster from folklore.

Awaiting my death, either by a monster, or by the inclement weather. I don’t think I can find a bright side to *that*.

CHAPTER 5



KRAMPUS

The dark and snowy woods stretch before me, a haunting image of isolation. It's the first snow of the season. There's only silence. Shadows appear blacker once in contrast to the white of the landscape.

The woods stretch on every side, from the top of the mountain to the edge of New Oberzell. I remember when these woods were even greater, when I could walk for hours on end without ever finding their edge.

There's no nostalgia for this memory. There's only anger.

Bitterness clings to my heart like frost to a windowpane. Or it would if I had a heart. After these many years of being isolated, *caged* like an animal, I wouldn't be surprised if the organ inside my chest had turned into a rock.

From the house, I have a short walk into the woods until I reach the barrier. The invisible border blocks me from all sides. That keeps me in.

That has kept me in for so long I've stopped counting the time.

I keep walking, following the muted hum of the magic border. My heavy footfalls break through the snow's crisp surface, the cold flakes swirling around me.

The peaceful, cool evening contrasts with the fire inside me.

My anger festers like an untreated wound, and memories of being treated like an animal by those damned villagers fuel

my determination for revenge.

Time has become a blur since they locked me here, but I know one thing for certain—they will taste their own medicine.

It's the one thing I dream about. The one thing I desire.

The snowflakes touch my exposed chest and melt away. I take the cold air in, let it burn my nostrils. I savor the scent of the first snow, enjoy the biting wind on my skin.

Winter is the closest I get to peace these days. I focus on ending my trek around the barrier and on going home tonight so I can do it all over again tomorrow. Over and over.

I approach a massive oak tree, the surrounding ground almost clean of snow, shielded by the treetop. This tree has been here for ages. I raise my eyes, honoring it. I shift my feet to make my way back.

That's when I miss it.

The hum. That permanent hum when I'm lining the barrier. Where is it?

Hope flares like a bonfire within me, but I rein it in. My keen eyes search the undergrowth and the trees, ignoring the darkness. There must be a reason. There's no way...

I see it. The magic knot, partially broken, rests on a tree root instead of its usual place on a branch. Maybe a bird hit it. Maybe the wind pushed it off the branch.

It doesn't matter. It's broken. And that's a blessing.

A vicious smile curls my lips, exposing my sharp fangs. My muscles burn. The thrill that rushes through me brings out a low roar.

I face the old trail. I take a step.

The barrier doesn't stop me. It's broken here.

I'm free.

"Finally," I murmur to the wind, my voice a low growl, "it's time for retribution."

The thought of exacting my vengeance ignites a fire deep within me, pushing aside the cold that had settled around my heart. I can almost taste the sweet satisfaction of making them pay for what they've done—a long-awaited meal to satiate my ravenous hunger for justice.

I rush through the trees, my every step fueled by this burning desire. The snow crunches beneath my boots as I make haste toward the village.

My heart pounds in anticipation. I can almost taste the despair. Oh, how beautiful will the snow look when it's covered in red. Will they scream? Will they fight?

I fucking hope they do.

As I make my way further into the woods, I stumble upon an unexpected scent. It's sweet and warm, with a side of spice...

Beeswax? No. It pulses like an open vein. It's not beeswax. No, it's alive and hot, and it smells sweet and addictive, and...

My eyes widen at the sight of a pale body, hanging from a tree. I skid to a halt.

It's a human. And it's not hanging, but *tied* to the tree.

A young human, exposed pale legs and arms in too-flimsy garments. Its body trembles from the cold. It's barely dressed; its pale skin flushed red and purple with the freezing temperature.

What the fuck?

This is new. Is this some animal's new way of eating humans?

When I flare my nostrils to search for the predator, the human's smell invades my lungs. I shake my head. No, no predator around. And why does this creature smell so damn good?

I cock my head to study it. Hair as white as snow topples down the human's back. Smooth skin. Shapely thighs... It's a female. A woman. Yes. Her breasts move with shallow

breaths, and the shirt too thin to conceal the hard knots of her nipples.

Her fragrance mixed with the fresh snow, the glowing sight of her beauty against the cold background. An unexpected feeling coils inside me.

It can't fucking be lust.

Darkness presses in, the cold air pregnant with a flurry of snowflakes dancing around me. My breath forms ghostly clouds as I approach the tree. The wind sings, rustling the leaves.

The woman stirs, her blue eyes fluttering open and widening in surprise as they fall upon me. Oh, yes. It's been a while since I last saw fear on the face of a human. I wait for the scream.

Her chest heaves with labored breaths. Her struggle is fierce, yet futile. Poor little creature. She's halfway frozen, the tips of her toes purple.

I hear a mumble, but I understand nothing. Can the creature speak? When I tilt my head to glimpse at her face, I see the gag, stopping her from screaming.

This was intentional. And this gag is ruining my fun.

I reach one hand toward her gag. She flinches, but I press on. I grab its corner and yank it out.

She grunts, the skin around her plump lips turning angry red. Then she stares, her eyes glazed over. Why isn't she screaming? Is she already frozen?

I move my hand to the bind around her hands. She squirms beneath my touch, her body writhing like a snake while she tries to elude my grasp.

"I don't make good food," she mumbles, her voice dragging. "Really. I eat a lot of instant noodles. Too much salt."

The creature is hallucinating. I ignore her and keep going at the binds. She gives up arguing and changes tactics.

Did I expect her to scream? Because I was wrong.

The little creature *fights*. She doesn't land often. A swift kick connects with my shin, and I grunt. She's too small to make any actual damage, but it's still annoying. She aims at my groin next, but it's too far up for her little legs. She goes for the side of my thigh.

Glaring at her, I wonder if I should leave her to die. The villagers put her here for a reason.

The fire in her eyes refuses to be snuffed out. She widens the orbs and opens her mouth.

Ah, there it comes. The fear.

"Ow!" she howls. "My foot," she gasps, her face contorted with pain.

I roll my eyes. Humans are weaker than I remember.

And much, much *softer*. She's small, but curvy, her garments clinging to full breasts, revealing creamy thighs. I thought wrath was all my body could feel now, but she's made me feel anger, annoyance, and desire in less than one minute.

It's more than I've felt in a long time.

On a whim, I grab at her binds. The ropes snap. She's free. I'm about to take a step back, to let her go, when her body drops. Like a puppet cut from its strings, she collapses.

My instincts are faster, and I grab her before she hits the ground. Gathering her in my arm, I let her hair drop away from her face.

She's passed out. Are human lips supposed to be blue? No, no, I'm pretty sure they aren't.

Fuck. The barrier is finally open, and this happens. Do I abandon her to the merciless elements, or do I help her? The snowy landscape offers no solace; the isolation and danger are only magnified by the relentless night.

She's so small compared to me; I could snap her body in two if I wanted. Yet, the thought doesn't appeal to me.

She was left here for a reason... And maybe, if I save her, I'm thwarting the village's plan.

My traitorous body weighs in on the question, too. One hand curls around her waist, cradling her close. The curve of her hip digs into my stomach.

And this fucking smell... She's beeswax and herbs and cinnamon. *Why?* No smell has ever beckoned to me like this.

I must understand the reason.

Every human is trouble, but this one? This human could prove useful to my plan. Perhaps even instrumental.

CHAPTER 6



OLIVIA

I wake up disoriented, my body aching with every trembling breath. Am I dead? Death sucks. Death is hard, and it hurts. I open my eyes.

The fire burns orange, the heat licking at my face. My heart stops.

Fuck. I didn't expect to go to hell. It's my Kindle history, isn't it? I knew it.

Then I blink again, and my brain kicks in gear this time. No hell, just a fireplace. The warmth caresses my face. Cool. A fireplace.

Why am I on the floor?

There's a thick cover over me, but I'm still *on the floor*. I raise a hand to my throbbing temple and gasp at the sight of my arm. I wince at the raw redness. My wrist is chaffed. Both of them.

And why does this cover smell like pine and damp earth?

A shadow catches my attention from the corner of my eye, and I turn toward it.

A person stands near a window, a sculpted dark figure standing in the shadows. The yellow light of the fire can't conceal the shade of blue on their skin. My heart races. They change the weight between their feet, and I get a better look.

The creature standing there is ripped straight from a twisted fairy tale—a creature of myth. Blue skin, white hair

falling to his shoulders, and horns curling away from his face. It flexes a too-big hand. Wait... Is he really that huge?

He must be eight feet tall or more. A giant next to my five-seven. And he's broad, too, with a muscular back and biceps as thick as my thighs.

He could snap me like a twig.

And yet... he didn't.

"Am I dreaming?" I ask, sitting up despite the pain. "Are you some sort of hot paralysis demon?" Oh, wait. Of course not. I'm not paralyzed. My brain is so slow.

The creature whirls around, burning eyes swirling in my direction.

"Paralysis demon?" He narrows his eyes, gray irises against dark scleras. Haunting and cold and, somehow, hypnotizing. "I don't know what kind that is, but I'm no demon."

His voice is deep and resonant, sending shivers down my spine as he walks closer. I had guessed he was a male because of his broad shoulders, but the defined chest and abdomen make it obvious. Definitely a male.

I grasp the covers tighter around me, fully comprehending how much bigger than a regular human he is. The fire glints off his teeth—sharp like a piranha's.

A carnivore. Of course.

"Are you... Krampus?"

He raises his chin. "Indeed."

"Are you going to eat me?" I blurt out, aware of my vulnerability.

He snorts. "No. Humans give me indigestion."

"Oh." I exhale, relief washing over me. Good. Then I'm safe. Safe-ish. He doesn't look like he plans to kill me. He could have done it already if he wanted to. "I'm Olivia."

Krampus ignores my introduction, his mysterious black-and-gray eyes studying me as if I were an oddity. He remains silent, creating a tension that wraps around me like vines.

He strides towards the only chair in the vicinity, a tall-backed piece that looks like a throne. Settling into it, he watches me with a stern expression. My hesitation is a knot in my throat.

He's balancing options. Which ones? Is one of them going to get me killed?

"What were you doing tied up in my woods?" he asks in that deep and rumbling voice.

I curl my nose. "You make it sound like I wanted to."

He leans forward, an elbow on a knee. "Explain."

I clench my jaw. My heart races in my chest as I stare at those eyes. He's inhuman. He's nothing like me. Krampus is big and muscular, and those teeth of his could tear through my flesh in a blink.

But it's not like looking into the eyes of an animal. Of a predator.

For some reason, I don't fear him.

I take a breath. "I was left as a sacrifice. In exchange for the children. They made it sound like this wasn't the first time?" I thought he knew why I was here.

But the irritation is clear on his face. He narrows his eyes and pulls his upper lip, baring those sharp teeth.

"Lies," he snarls. "Sacrifice? For what?"

"For you."

"For me?" He shakes his head. "I don't take sacrifices."

"Well, the town thinks you do. It's in exchange for the children. So you stop killing them."

Wrong thing to say. He bares his teeth and *roars*. I grind my teeth together. He's not very happy about being accused of eating children.

“I wasn’t even able to reach that site or the town before tonight. Tell the truth, human. Or don’t you fear for your life?”

I cross my arms. “Why would I lie? I have no way to defend myself. That’s what they told me. I’m a victim of all this. I had no choice. Or do you think it’s my life’s aspiration to be dragged into the woods, under snow, only in my pajamas?” I shake my head for emphasis. “Of course that’s not my plan.”

He straightens his back, his eyes studying me, baffled. As if he’s wondering if I’m insane.

“Are you not afraid?” he asks, his eyes narrowing.

“Of course I am. But—”

“Clearly not enough,” he interrupts, scrutinizing me. “You either lack sense or self-preservation.”

Well. This *is* the first time I have seen any nonhuman sentient creature like him, and I *am* dealing with it better than expected. Maybe I’m dissociating?

I shrug. “What matters is that I’m telling the truth. Small towns have strange beliefs, and, apparently, their belief in Krampus living in the woods is true.” I meet his eyes. “Children are dying. They said that if they sacrificed me, you would stop killing the children.”

“You were lied to, human. I do not kill children.”

“Well, that’s what they believe that’s happening. Maybe the children’s deaths were indeed accidents. Small-town people are superstitious.”

Krampus shakes his head in disbelief. “You’re excusing them.”

“They had a reason.”

“You were going to die.”

“They were desperate.”

Krampus keeps staring at me as if I’ve sprouted a second head. It’s not flattering.

I shift my position, wincing at the lingering pain as I sit cross-legged. The sheet covering me—which strongly resembles an old rug—drops to my hips.

The living room around me is half shrouded in darkness. It's a large space, but apart from the fireplace, chair, and window, I can't see much. It looks almost abandoned.

"You know," I say, rubbing my sore arm, "a couch would've been nice."

His brows jump up. "Ungrateful as all humans," Krampus grumbles, his voice a deep rumble that resonates through the room. "I haven't heard you thanking me for saving your meaningless life."

"What if you brought me here to eat me later? I can't be sure." I twist my mouth. I'm starting to understand why New Oberzell's people didn't want to see this guy.

My knee aches. I need to get up. Planting my hands on the ground, I push off until I stand up. I wiggle my toes. It's nice to see they're still part of my body.

When I take a step toward the windows, Krampus moves. He leans *away* from me, a curl on his lip. Warmth inundates my face. Wow, rude! Do I stink this bad? I turn my back to him and take a moment to sniff myself.

Things don't make any sense. He doesn't want to eat me. He dislikes the sight, presence, or smell of humans. And he said he couldn't reach the town until tonight, so maybe there's some bad blood.

Why did he save me?

My gaze fastens on the snow falling outside. I won't be able to go back tonight, will I? He could have left me behind. I lick my lips.

"Why did you save me?" And I spin to face him.

The firelight hits his angular face, burning orange on his hair. Krampus looks away, dismissive, as he sinks into his chair.

“Despite how you humans treat me, I am no animal. There was no reason to leave you there.”

I stare at his profile. His face is as angular and sharp as his answers. Krampus is truly huge. I’m only a few feet away from him, and he’s taller than me *while he’s sitting*.

He could eat me if he wanted to, and though he says he’s not an animal, I don’t want to believe him this soon.

Something tells me there’s a reason for him to know humans give him indigestion.

My limbs are heavy, still tired. At least the fireplace makes the room warm. I mentally prepare to sleep for another couple of hours on the cold, hard ground. My gaze searches for any indication of the time.

“What now?” Krampus grunts.

“Don’t you have a clock?”

“Clock.” He arches one eyebrow.

“For... time keeping.”

“Ah. No. Timekeeping is for humans. I care not about time.”

“Are you immortal?”

“Of course.” And he tilts his chin up so he can look at me from above. “And to prove my generosity and magnanimity, I will allow you to have my bed.”

“Oh.” My brows shoot up in surprise. Unexpected. Maybe he’s not as bad as I—

“You’ll serve as my pawn to claim revenge on the village, and you can’t do that if you’re dead,” he adds, almost as an afterthought.

Ah. That’s the reason. I clench my jaw to stop myself from complaining. Bed. Focus on the bed. Tomorrow, I’ll ask him the important questions. “Mm, thanks anyway. Is there a bathroom I could use?”

Krampus crosses his arms and stretches his long legs closer to the fire. "I'll find you a bucket."

"Wow. So generous."

Krampus shoots me a glare, his fangs flashing in a snarl.

Oops. That wasn't supposed to come out loud. I hurry down the only hallway after the promised bed. Better not inflame his temper. At least he hasn't eaten me.

Yet.

CHAPTER 7



KRAMPUS

The workroom is dimly lit, with shadows dancing on the walls as I focus on the task at hand. The fire crackles as I run a thumb down the soft wood.

The activity comes automatically, with my hands moving on their own. My body enters a flow, and my mind cannot help it.

It wanders to the little human sleeping on my bed.

She mentioned a name. Olivia. Her cinnamon scent lingers in the air, crowding my senses.

So peculiar, that one; she doesn't fear me like others do. I wonder if she's mad. Humans aren't supposed to be this fiery with someone so much bigger and stronger. Does she have no sense of survival?

She's not only short but also small. I picked her up with one hand, my fingers almost meeting around her waist. And the kicks she landed were not strong at all. She should fear me.

Why doesn't she?

The memory of her plagues my thoughts. Her pale skin and white hair contrast against her expressive blue eyes. Smart mouth, plump lips. A curvy body, soft under my fingers. She seems so fragile, yet her spirit is anything but.

My pants tighten. Fuck. Not again. Confusion grips me as I try to understand this reaction. Never has my cock hardened because of a human, and I refuse to consider it any further.

And here I thought coming into the workroom would help.

My thoughts are interrupted by an unwelcome intrusion. Green and blue sparkle in the corner of my eye. Shit. Should have closed the door.

Matilda flits into the room through the crack in the door. I scowl at the tool in my hand. There's no stretch of peace in this place. I've tried to send them off a thousand times, and it never works.

"Master," she greets me in her tiny, high-pitched voice.

"What?" I grumble, irritated by her presence. My erection subsides, replaced by a simmering frustration. I keep my eyes on my task, but it's hard to ignore Matilda when she's flying around my head, astride her hummingbird.

Fairies were created to annoy. I have no doubts about that.

"Master, there's a human." Matilda's excitement is indisputable. "I don't know how that happened. It must have been in the evening, when we were asleep. She must have come through the front door; otherwise, we would have heard her from our lodgings. A human woman! She's sleeping in your bed!"

"Unfortunately."

Matilda halts midair. "You are aware!" It's not a question. Her hummingbird flits perfectly still in front of me for a second before landing on my hand. Matilda forces my attention to her. The three-inch fairy has almost as much sass in her tiny body as Olivia.

"Of course I am aware. Do you think humans break into my house and lie down next to me against my will, Matilda?"

She stares. "No, I don't think that would happen, but it's as unlikely that you would allow a human inside, Master."

She's right. I clench my jaw. "She's not staying long. She's merely a tool."

Matilda squeals. "Finally, a guest! It has been so long since we had company." Her hummingbird flies up and hovers, its wings beating rapidly.

I scoff. “More like a nuisance.”

“Come now, Master, she can’t be all that bad,” Matilda insists, her red hair bouncing as she speaks. “Let me help her. I could ask the house-elves to make more food. We’ll tidy up the place a little. It’s been quite abandoned.”

“Matilda.” I meet her gaze and scowl at her. “She’s human. She deserves nothing, and you will do nothing.” My voice drips with disdain.

“Master, you can be so harsh sometimes.” Matilda sulks, shaking her head. “There’s a reason she’s here, isn’t there? A human, after so many years! And with the first snow, too!”

“Enough,” I snap, my patience wearing thin. “Do whatever you want. She is a means to an end. A pawn. I care not.”

“Very well, Master,” Matilda replies, her voice softening as she senses my frustration. “I’ll make sure your *pawn* is well-fed and comfortable. Leave it to me.”

Before I can hiss at her, she flies out of the room, leaving me alone with my thoughts once again.

Her annoying persistence only serves to fuel the internal conflict raging within me. One part of me wants to keep my distance from the little human. Lock her up, come up with a vengeance plan, and then put it in motion.

Another part of me is drawn to her. Curious about her scent, her lack of fear, and her sass.

It almost makes me believe in Matilda. That she’s here for a reason.

Almost.

CHAPTER 8



KRAMPUS

*B*lood races down my fingers. It pools on my palm, then trails down my wrist. I catch it with my tongue before it hits the junction of my elbow. Then I take another bite.

I sit at the dining table, gnawing on a hunk of meat, the juice staining my hands. It's good meat, but I'll have to go hunting soon. The possibility of new hunting grounds thrills me. After so many years stuck in the same barrier-enclosed area, I can barely wait to burst into the woods and chase my next meal.

Ah, the way my heart pulses when I run. The way my body reacts to the motions of prey and to its warm blood. It's exquisite.

Talking about scents.

The sweetness comes first. Beeswax. It makes my mouth water even when I'm already eating. Then come the cinnamon and the chamomile. I swallow and brace myself for Olivia's intoxicating scent.

The sound of approaching footsteps follows. The human enters the room.

She doesn't look at me first. Her blue eyes search for the windows. A knot tightens in my chest, but it disappears a moment later, too fast for me to understand.

I seize the moment to let my gaze travel over her. Olivia's still in those flimsy garments—I wonder how humans can

wear such things without falling dead more often. The fabric brushes her thighs with every step, her creamy skin catching the warm glow of the fireplace.

Her chest swells with her breathing, the mounds of her breasts pressing against the shirt. Tiny peaks make my fingers itch. Why do I want to touch this nuisance of a human so much?

I force my attention away, but my gaze touches her wrists, still red. Still chaffed. That knot tightens in my chest again.

I had forgotten how fragile humans are.

“Krampus,” she calls, breaking my reverie. I snap my attention to her face. Did she notice? “I have to go home.”

I scoff. “First, you’re staying here until I understand why you were left there. Second, if the town hates you, then I might have use for you. Third, have you gone blind? There’s a storm outside, woman.”

“Well, I can see that...”

“You’d die out there, making my efforts worthless. If you’re so keen to have yourself killed,” and I put a grin on my face, “you can offer yourself as dinner. I’m almost running out of meat.”

Olivia curls her nose and opens her mouth to complain. Surely, she’s going to complain. It’s one of the few things she knows how to do—along with annoying me and demanding.

Her stomach growls, cutting her in. She glances at the table, laid out with a meal. Matilda did well on her promise. She and the elves outdid themselves.

Too much for a small human, but I warned Matilda against it.

I turn back to my food. “Eat,” I order.

“Thank you,” she *murmurs*, as if she’s not keen on being polite. But of course. Humans can only demand.

Olivia walks to the only other chair and pushes herself up. It’s a bit too big for someone her size. It was not made for a

human, after all.

A memory flashes—another person once sat there, but I push the thought away. It doesn't matter. He doesn't live anymore. Humans have killed the memory of him long, long ago.

Picking up some ribs, I tear into them, juices dribbling down my chin. My long tongue slides out to clean up the mess. A growl of satisfaction rises in the back of my throat. The elves outdid themselves today.

For a human, which couldn't be more disrespectful.

The human hasn't moved. I shoot my attention up at her, arching an eyebrow.

Olivia's lips part, and her body quivers with a shiver. She stares *at me*.

My stomach clenches. She's disgusted, I assume. Humans are animals like all others, but they have nonsense *rules* that I never cared about.

I bare my teeth at her. "Stop gawking and eat," I growl.

Olivia jerks and reaches for the food. Then she stops. Her hand hovers. Her blue eyes widen.

I grunt, closing my eyes. "What now?"

"Um." She clears her throat.

I refuse to open my eyes. Something tells me I won't like what comes next. "What?"

She waits for another beat. "I'm a vegetarian."

All right. She has my attention. I open my eyes and stare at her. She stares right back at me, so small in that chair, with fire in her eyes. She hesitates, but in her face, I see challenge.

Why?

"Am I supposed to know what that means?" I ask, arching an eyebrow.

Olivia cocks her head as if she doesn't believe me. "It means I don't eat meat."

Oh. “Like an herbivore. Like a deer.”

“Well, yes...”

“Like a *lamb*.”

She tucks her hair behind an ear. “I mean, I don’t eat *grass*. There are plenty of options out there. Even for protein.”

“Your point is?”

Olivia huffs. “I don’t mean to be a burden...”

“Too late for that.”

She glares at me. I can’t deny her anger is amusing. “You could have left me in town instead of bringing me here. They had food I could eat there.”

“Where you would have been killed,” I snap back. “Your human fellows seemed quite intent on ending you.”

“They fed me and treated me well until that moment. And it wasn’t *all of them*.”

“So they fed you.”

“Yes.”

“Good. Fattened you up before you were eaten by the villain.”

Olivia hesitates, her mouth hanging open as she searches for words. “You said you don’t eat humans.”

“I don’t.” I take a bite out of the meat in my hand. “Usually. But you are proving yourself quite a challenge.”

She grunts, rolling her eyes. “Because I’d rather not have to kill animals to survive if I have another option?”

I wave at the table. “These are your options. I won’t force you to eat, but I won’t go out of my way for your strange habits.”

Olivia groans in frustration and shoots to her feet. “You’re so frustrating!”

“And you’re ungrateful!” I bark at her, watching her storm out of the room.

Her selfishness is infuriating. Humans always take, never give.

I watch her stomp away, leaving a cloud of her alluring scent behind. I lock my lungs. She's maddening. No matter how alluring she might be, with that smell, her fire, and those curves, her human nature will always overshadow it.

CHAPTER 9



OLIVIA

I stomp down the winding hallway, irritation crackling through my veins like lightning. I have always been a patient and tolerant person. Why is there a fire inside me now?

Why does Krampus do this to me? And *how*?

He's *so* annoying! But people can be annoying all the time, and I never react like this. The people of the village literally tied me up in the woods during a snowstorm, and I'm not as angry with them.

I shake my head and run my fingers through my hair. Chill out, Olivia. Krampus doesn't know how to communicate with humans, and he's not interested in learning.

He's not human.

What a strange thing. Krampus is huge, blue, and monstrous. He has literal *horns* coming out of his head.

Why am I not scared of him? I should be. I should be running. He could break me with a hand and eat me for dinner. The only reason he hasn't done this yet is because *humans give him indigestion*.

I shudder when I wonder how he knows that.

The clink of metal pans and ceramic beckons to me. I follow the sound to a large doorway, a yellow light spilling from the inside. I make a beeline there, my bare feet scraping along the hardwood floors.

The kitchen comes into view, and warmth floods over my skin. I descry a long stone counter to the right with buckets of soapy water waiting under it. A sort of stone cabinet is pushed against the very end of the kitchen.

To the left, there's a table covered in plates and pans. Pushed to the end of the kitchen, there's a huge wood-burning stove. The rest of the house is curiously warm even away from the fireplaces, but the stove makes the kitchen extra toasty.

And there's something else. Something that zips along my skin like electricity, raising the hairs on my arms. It even has a strange taste, like there's something in the air.

Something zips past me, and I focus my gaze, searching for it. It's a hummingbird. Green and blue and shimmering in the fire light. My lips curl into a smile. Then they freeze.

There's something on top of the hummingbird.

Another hummingbird flies across, and a third. They don't seem to be lost. All of them have tiny *things* on their backs. I step inside the kitchen.

A small person scurries across. They shoot wide eyes at me, then squeal.

No. That's not a person. It's too small, like three feet tall. But it's not a child.

Long, flappy ears, beady black eyes, leathery skin. My heart races as I stare. I'm gawking. My jaw drops.

What in the world did I walk into?

There's another of those same creatures perched near the stove, taking care of a pan... But there's no one mixing the food. Instead, the creature perched there just twirls its forefinger in the air, and the spoon moves by itself.

The bucket with soapy water bubbles and a soaked dish flies out of it and into the clean water bucket. By itself.

A broom scrubs the stone floors as a bowl stirs itself. With no one touching them.

Ah. Turns out I am dead. I have to be.

A hummingbird darts toward me. My gaze snags on the tiny creature astride the bird, its red hair catching the orange light and its tiny body dressed in a jumper of woven leaves.

“You aren’t eating!” the creature squeals, a tiny, high-pitched voice that makes itself heard over the clattering of dishes. “We tried many sauces today! Didn’t you like any of them?”

“Um...” It speaks. The creature speaks.

“The elves did their best this time; I know it. They’re not that dedicated to cooking Master’s meals, but because Master doesn’t care.”

The creature standing next to the stove shoots a glare at the red-haired one talking to me.

“An... elf.”

The red-haired bird flies even closer. “Oh, how rude of me. I’m Matilda.”

I lick my lips. “Nice to meet you. I’m Olivia.”

“Olivia! What a pretty name! You’re such a pretty human, isn’t she, Acorn?”

One of the elves grunts—I don’t know which.

“I’m sorry, I’m a... A bit confused. An elf?”

“Yes! House-elves.” She points at the elf perched near the stove. “That’s Acorn.” Then to the elf near the dishes. “That’s Cricket.”

Acorn does nothing; he is focused on his work. Cricket half-turns to me and bows his head once. I wave at him.

“Aren’t there elves in the village anymore?”

I swallow. “No. I can’t say there are. I’ve never seen one, at least.”

Matilda leans forward, crossing her hands under her chin as she lies down on her bird. “What a pity! The world has indeed changed. What about fairies? You certainly have fairies in your garden.”

I tilt my head. “No, I can’t say I do. But I don’t have a garden, so...”

“What!” She throws her little hands up. “No fairies! We’re not all red-haired. Maybe you saw a yellow-haired or a green-haired?”

A chuckle escapes my lips. So, that’s what she is. A fairy. “The world has become quite boring. No fairies, and no elves,” I tell her. We stare at one another. I wonder if she finds me as curious as I find her. “I thought fairies had wings.”

“Wings?” She shoots up, sitting straighter. “Nonsense. We don’t have wings. We fly on birds.”

“Of course.” How silly of me.

“Say, Olivia.” She maneuvers her bird, so she’s flying next to my face. “You can be honest. Did you hate the food? The elves are too used to cooking for Master, and Master has no standards.”

I laugh. It’s funny to see someone talking about Krampus like this. “To be honest, and I mean no offense, but I don’t eat meat. So, I wanted to ask if you have something else.”

“No meat!” And for a moment, I fear she’ll mock me or complain like Krampus did, like so many did through the years. “Like us fairies!” Matilda chuckles, drifting around me. “I don’t eat it either. We’ll get along splendidly, Mistress.”

Mistress. The word sends a curl of warmth through me as I think of Krampus. I bat the traitorous thought away.

“I’m so glad I’m not the only one who avoids meat. I didn’t want to bother.”

“No bother at all. Master is very much a carnivore, but we’re not.” Matilda gestures to the table. It’s laden with cakes and tarts. “Honey and almond cakes if you’d like. Would you like some tea? We plant our own herbs, but if you want something else, we’ll ask Master to arrange it.”

Arrange it? I wonder what that means. “Tea sounds great, please. Whatever you have.” I sidle over to the table, parking myself on a short-legged stool.

The table, which I only glimpsed at when I walked in, is littered with plates. There are small cakes, tarts, and pies. Cups, mugs, and plates, all colorful and intricately painted.

One teapot looks especially ornate, painted with birds and vines. I reach for the lid as Matilda flies away, ordering the elves around.

Peeking inside the teapot, I stifle a gasp. Two tiny birds cuddle in a nest, their chests rising and falling with each deep breath amid their sleep.

I slide the lid back on. What a strange, lovely place!

Krampus looks monstrous and behaves like one, too, but this part of his house is much more magical than I could have ever expected. I had no idea this sort of thing existed outside of fairy tales.

I glance at the elves, who are working so hard. They're dressed in scraps of fabric, their feet slapping against the floor. Acorn, by the stove, wears a leather apron. Poor things. I wonder how Krampus treats them.

If it's half as bad as how he treats me, then I pity the elves.

Acorn points a finger at a boiling kettle, and it hovers off the stove and lands at the edge of the table. Cricket rushes over, climbs a stool, and pours the boiling water into a teapot. Cricket wiggles a finger, and a bunch of leaves fly off a bowl in the back and into the teapot.

"Thank you," I say when Cricket pours tea into a dainty cup. He bows his head, speechless, then pushes a plate piled high with cakes toward me.

I pick one up and bite into it. Cricket sticks around, moving plates closer as I chew into the sweet pastry. I hum in delight.

"Your cakes are delicious," I tell the elf. He blinks twice, then drops into a low bow, the corners of his mouth pushing up. The elf shows off pointy teeth, but I think this is a smile.

"Thank you, Mistress," he squeaks.

“Did you teach yourself how to cook?” I ask, taking another bite of the cake.

“Yes. The fairies like it.”

“You’re doing an excellent job.”

“Thank you, Mistress.”

I smile back. “Olivia is fine.”

He bows again, then steps back to his work. I watch them go about their duties. Matilda and the fairies fly back and forth as the kitchen cleans itself after the meal.

This is much cozier than I expected. It *is* magical. The snow falls outside, but it’s warm in here, and the food is savory, and the tea is delicious. For the first time in a long while, I let myself relax.

My gaze falls on a back door nestled in the corner. It’s half-hidden behind sacks of potatoes and onions. My heart jerks in my chest.

Matilda and the elves go about their kitchen tasks, too busy to pay attention to me.

I can’t tear my eyes away from the door.

Is it unlocked? Could I leave the house through there? The question hangs heavy in the air, my heart pounding as I consider the possibilities.

It’s still snowing, yes, but we can’t be that far from New Oberzell. The people believed Krampus would find me, so we have to be close enough for that to be possible.

Krampus doesn’t look like he wants to eat me, but wouldn’t he? He obviously detests humans. Besides, he sounded like he wants to use me for something villainous, and that can’t be good.

This might be my way out. How long can I go running in the snow barefoot? Losing a couple of toes can’t be as bad as being eaten by an eight-foot-tall, grumpy monster. I could run back to the city, find Violet, and ask for help. I could even run straight to the road and ask for a ride somewhere.

Adrenaline floods my veins. This might be my only chance.

CHAPTER 10



KRAMPUS

“*F*ucking humans,” I spit and sink my teeth into the meat. What did I have in my head when I rescued that annoying little thing? Should have left her for dead.

I narrow my eyes, glaring at the empty chair across from me. No, I wouldn't have left her to die. That's what those pesky humans wanted, and the last thing I desire is to give them what they want.

This fucking dilemma.

Grinding my teeth, I flare my nostrils. Her intoxicating scent floods into me and sinks into me. My eyelids shut. This fucking scent. It muddles my head. If it wasn't for it, I wouldn't be having such a hard time.

I chew on the greasy flesh as I struggle against the way my body reacts to her smell. The tightening of my pants is undeniable. This is ridiculous. I snap my eyes open.

My irritation simmers. Her chamomile-and-cinnamon scent lingers on the chair. I should burn it. She sat there, and now the smell won't come out, and...

My body tenses. A part of me wants to stalk over and bury my nose in the seat. Inhale her. Drown in her. Would it still be warm? The image of my nose buried between her curvy thighs flashes in the back of my mind, and my balls grow heavier.

Matilda flits in, her bird's wings buzzing in a panic. “Master!” She hovers in front of me, throwing her arms up and stopping me from eating. “Mistress has escaped!”

“Who?” I spit.

“Mistress! Master’s human!”

“She’s not your fucking mistress!” What is this now? Will my servants turn against me? Just because some human female walked in?

Her tiny hands curl into tiny fists. “Master! She ran out the back door!”

I slam a fist on the table, rattling the plates. “How did you lose her, you foolish creature? She’ll freeze out there!”

Matilda winces but holds her ground. “I apologize, Master. She was sitting down, and I was distracted telling the elves what to cook for her, and then she was gone.”

Humans are such stupid creatures. Couldn’t she see how hard it’s snowing? She’s going to freeze before she hits the trail. What’s wrong with her head? She truly has no survival instinct.

Letting her die would solve one problem. No more of her annoying chattering and naïve notions. Most of all, no more of this gnawing hunger for her.

A small part of me wonders about letting her go now. I wouldn’t understand why her smell appeals to me so much. I would never understand why she moves me like this. And I wouldn’t have a chance to use her for my revenge.

There’s also the trouble of her dying on my front step, her body freezing because of the winter, then thawing during the summer and rotting away. I can’t let her die and go rotten at my front door. The foul stench would ruin my mood. And then who would take the corpse away? Not the elves. They’re too small.

With a growl, I shove off the table and stalk to the back door. I warned her against running off, but no. Humans are too proud. They just don’t learn. I stride to the kitchen and step outside.

The cold hits me, snowflakes touching my bare chest. Olivia’s scent fades under the crisp bite of snow and pine. I

peer at the snow, following the footsteps leading away into the forest.

Each step hardens my resolve, even as unwanted concern rises. She won't survive a night exposed, and while her death would grant me some peace, losing her scent so soon...

I grind my teeth and plunge into the woods, muttering curses with every heartbeat. If I find her frozen and dying, it's her own fault for running.

But I will find her. And when I do, there will be consequences.

I follow her trail until the footsteps veer to the right. A smirk plays on my lips. There's a ditch just ahead, and it fills with snow in the winter. A perfect trap for a little lamb.

There. A flash of pale skin and hair so blond it's almost white.

Olivia huddles at the bottom, shivering violently, her lips already turning blue. But she glares at me through chattering teeth, arms crossed over her chest. Still defying me. She's still pure flame, even when the cold tries to put her fire out.

My pants go tight.

Damn her. I told her not to run. But here she is, ready to freeze to death out of sheer stubbornness.

"You should have listened," I say, staring down at her.

She juts out her chin. "I'll find a way out. Humans are persistent."

I snort. "You think you can escape on your own? Then do. I have eternity. I can wait."

"I won't need anywhere near that."

My irritation wars with admiration. Even now, even like this, she refuses to give in. Were she not human, I might respect such dignity.

She stares at the walls of the ditch, wet and cold from the snowstorm. She searches for roots, but none stick out enough for her to hold on to. Olivia is seven feet under the surface, an

easy depth for me to climb out from but impossible for her, with her lack of muscles, talons, or fur.

I fold my arms, looming over her. I give her a moment, then smile. “Beg, and I’ll help you.”

“No.” Her voice emerges strong despite the circumstances.

Very well. If she wants to be difficult...

I settle in to wait, watching as she shivers and shakes, her skin going red. Snow piles on top of her head. The knots in her breasts peak under her thin shirt. As snow soaks into her clothing, the white shirt goes translucent.

A darker patch of skin circles the tight knots on each breast. Humans use those to feed children, I’m aware. I understand their anatomy after spending so long amongst them. But my body never reacted like this.

Why does the sight of her breasts make me so hard?

Arousal stirs in me, and heat gathers in my groin. Curse this woman for affecting me so much. I don’t know if I’ll maintain control if she ever grows aroused too.

Not that she ever would. Humans have always made it plenty clear that we’re not the same. That I’m a monster. And it never bothered me. *We are* not the same.

I watch her struggle, her fingers going brown with the wet earth. Her shirt goes dark, too. Her hair gets wet. My mind wanders to the feel of her warm, curvy, soft body against mine. I would rope her hair around my knuckles and tug her head back. I would stick my fingers into all the places that felt good, and I would feel her flutter around me...

She pauses to catch her breath. I shift my weight between my feet.

“Will you beg now?”

She shoots me a fiery glare. “No.” Her lips barely move, but her refusal comes through loud and clear.

Rage and lust war within me. She’ll pay for this defiance. I want to punish her for her pride, but lust muddles my thoughts.

Finally, she sags. Her lips are blue, and she stumbles back, nearly unconscious. Fucking human. She'd rather die than ask for help.

I take a step forward and drop into the ditch. Olivia is so slow now that I have a hand around her waist before she notices I'm next to her. She gasps in surprise. I throw her over my shoulder.

"Enough," I growl, my hand closing behind her knees to stop her from falling.

She curses and struggles, her fists pounding against my back as half-words spill past her numb lips. I don't feel it. She's too small, too weak to hurt me. I climb out of the ditch, her warmth seeping into my shoulder.

Up close, her scent is intoxicating. My head goes light. Beneath my fingers, the softness of her curves makes me twitch. I grind my teeth against the arousal that threatens to consume me.

This is madness. Her smell is much stronger between her legs, barely hidden by her garments. So close to my face. So fucking close to my fingers. I could put her down, stick my face between her legs, and learn if she tastes as good as she smells.

Would that be too much?

I stride back to the house, the glow of the open kitchen door calling me back inside. I have always enjoyed the cold—I was born to thrive in it, but I can't deny that the warmth of the house is much more comfortable.

The house is a sanctuary. From the biting cold, from this human-infested world. I carry Olivia inside and close the door.

Tightening a hand around her waist, I pull her off my shoulder and place her on the ground, near the stove. She's wet and filthy, and the warmth makes her shiver.

I stare down at her. "Humans aren't very bright. I'm aware of that. But you are on a whole new level." I narrow my eyes. "Have you no survival instinct? All animals do."

She tilts her chin up. Her lips are blue, but her eyes burn. “I *have* a survival instinct. That’s why I’m trying to leave. I have to go home! Do you expect me to stay until winter’s end?”

“You will die if you leave.”

“You could have taken me to town or anywhere close to other people, and—”

“And risk them spelling me into a cage again? No. I’ll only approach a human settlement now to have my revenge.”

She swallows, but she doesn’t back down. “So, that’s your plan. Someone locked you in the woods, and you want revenge. But the people who live there now think you’re a villain who eats children. The people who did this to you aren’t even alive anymore.”

“Then the ones who live will have to face my fury.”

“This isn’t fair!”

“Fair?” I snarl at her. “I have lost count of how long I have been stuck in the same area in these woods. *My* woods. *You* were given away as a sacrifice. How can you talk about what’s *fair*?” I shake my head once, closing in on her. Olivia drops her arms, her eyes widening. Good. She has to fear me. “I *am* fair. And I will be fair when I enact punishment.”

The fire in her eyes flickers. I’m not sure if I want to put it out, make her submit, or if I want to stoke it into an inferno.

“If you do that again,” I say, lowering my voice as I jut a thumb over my shoulder, pointing at the door. “I might let you freeze, then use what’s left during the summer as food.”

She frowns. “You said you don’t eat humans.”

“No. But you’ll learn that I’m very fond of punishment. I might make an exception.”

CHAPTER 11



OLIVIA

Sinking further into the plush velvet armchair, I release a sigh. Yeah, I get it. I get why Krampus has only one chair. He lives alone—apart from the elves and the fairies, who have their quarters—and I wouldn't ever need another chair if I had this one.

Large enough that I can tuck my legs beneath myself comfortably. So soft, I could sleep in here. And it's in front of the fireplace. There's no way it can get better than this.

Oh, wait. There is. I wish I had anything to do other than stare at the fire.

The elves won't even let me think about cooking. No chores, either. Krampus looks like a beast, but he doesn't have a secret, gigantic library. And I don't have my backpack, so both my phone and my knitting needles are lost.

It almost makes me want to see Krampus. At least, arguing with him would distract me. But after dragging me back, he locked himself in a room, and I have no idea what he's up to.

Matilda was mortified when she saw the state I was in, but they don't have a bathroom in the sense that we, humans, do, so I can't shower. The only thing the elves could do was wash my nightshirt.

And Krampus was so very generous. He gave me not one, but *two* buckets. One, the elves filled with water, and I cleaned myself.

My shirt is now drying near the stove. Matilda bullied Acorn into brewing more tea for me, and Cricket warmed the water so I could clean off.

Still, I don't have an extra change of clothes. All I have is one of the thinner pelts from Krampus's bed. It's wrapped around my body as I wait for my nightshirt to dry enough so I can put it back on.

Being this exposed and vulnerable is the worst feeling ever. It's a good thing Krampus locked himself up. Maybe if he saw me like this, toasting near the fire, he might have second thoughts about not eating me.

A knot tightens in my throat. Heat coils between my hips, and it has nothing to do with sitting too close to the fire.

Apparently, I'm so needy for attention that I'm lusting after a literal fairy tale monster. But the way Krampus jumped into the pit to rescue me?

The way he grabbed me around the waist with *a single hand*? He threw me over his shoulder as if I weighed nothing, his big palm like hot coals against the back of my thighs. And he's so damn bulky. Kicking him hurts me more than it hurts him.

Scratch that. I don't think it hurts him at all.

Somehow, Krampus also smells good. For someone who has no indoor plumbing, I would expect him to stink. But of course not. He's a magical creature, and he smells like one.

He's the scent of burning wood, grass after rain, cloves, and pines. I don't know how he can smell this good, but he does.

And that ridiculous tongue? Can't he have a normal tongue? Why does he need an extra-long tongue tracing a hot, wet line up his wrist?

Another shiver races down my body. It takes physical effort to push the memory of his tongue away. The scorching image of him holding me up with one hand to lick between my legs flashes in the back of my head. My body goes hot. Deep inside, I yearn for the crush of his powerful body.

No. Be gone, evil. I will not lust after him. I force my attention away.

The living room now bathes in daylight after I tugged open the curtains. Flames crackle in the fireplace, casting a cozy glow across the space. Two raccoons curl up near the hearth, their fur glistening with each flicker of light. In all honesty, this place looks lovely—unlike its monstrous occupant.

Tugging the pelt closer, I flutter my eyes closed and soak in the fire's warmth.

It doesn't last long.

A door slams open. I almost jump out of my skin. Heavy footfalls make the wood floors creak.

Krampus walks into the living room. His eyes flash when they see me. "Out of my chair, woman."

"Where else am I supposed to sit near the fire?" I snap back, refusing to let him intimidate me. "I'm cold, and I have nothing to wear."

"You should have thought about that before leaving the house. Get up," he commands, his deep voice resonating with authority.

I roll my eyes but stubbornly remain seated.

He strides over to me, his tall frame eclipsing mine. Just like he did in the ditch, he curls a hand around my torso and manhandles me out of his chair. I gasp in surprise as he lets me go.

"Where am I supposed to sit?" I insist, resisting the urge to stomp in place.

He takes my spot, leaning back, showing off how *he* has the chair and I don't. Krampus arches an eyebrow, the curl of his lips telling me he's more amused than I am. "I care not."

I grind my teeth together. "Can I at least bring a chair from the dining room?"

He lifts a shoulder in a shrug. "I doubt you can carry it."

I doubt it, too. The chair was huge, fit for a man like Krampus, and made of solid wood. I glare at him.

“Well, you could bring it for me.”

He freaking *grins*. “Of course. All you have to do is *beg*.”

Anger tightens in my throat so hard that I choke. My eyes sting. “You have a weird fixation on making me beg,” I spit at him.

He merely cocks his head, his white strands tumbling down his chest. “Only because you don’t accept your rightful place.”

“Which is?”

“Obeying. Being grateful. Not annoying me.”

“Oh, nothing else? Do you want me to lick your boots, too?”

Krampus’s lips twist into a lopsided smile, and he hums as if he were thinking.

Jerk. What a massive jerk.

“You know what?” I ask, turning around and pretending I’m giving up. “You can have your precious chair.”

Krampus makes a grave sound that might be amusement, and I hear the chair creak as he relaxes his weight into it.

Just as he thinks I’m leaving, I take his distraction and approach again. I push myself into his lap, perching on the edge of his thighs.

My heart races, exhilarated. I scream at myself, asking if I’m mad. What am I doing? Am I really challenging a monster whose only reason not to eat me is *indigestion*?

Yes. Apparently, I am.

His muscles tense beneath me, and he lets out an irritated huff.

“Get off,” Krampus snarls, but I make myself comfortable, nestling into the hard planes of his body.

It's a bold move, and my stomach squeezes as the heat between us intensifies.

"Make me," I challenge, tugging the pelt closer and staring at the fire.

With his heavy body against mine, my pulse races as I try to ignore the growing ache between my legs. Krampus's body is all hard muscle. And he's so damn big. I can lie on his torso, and I'm not a short girl.

With a huff, Krampus ignores me, flexing the muscles in his thighs as if trying to shake me off. But I hold steady, determined not to be swayed.

He's obstinate. But I am, too. I refuse to give in.

Krampus growls against my hair. I clench my teeth together and pretend I feel nothing.

But as the moments pass, I can't help but notice the hard bulge pressing against my lower back.

Holy fuck. Am I making him aroused?

I should *not* be enjoying this.

The awareness of his enormous bulge opens the gates. I pass straight from *slightly damp* to *soaking wet*, my body betraying me as it responds to our proximity. I press my knees together, cursing myself.

My breath catches as I feel Krampus tense beneath me, and I wonder if he's battling the same urges that are clawing at the edge of my self-control.

Shit. Have I gone too far?

CHAPTER 12



OLIVIA

*M*y eyes snap open. There's nothing. It's dark. My heart pounds, and adrenaline surges through my veins. Where am I? Slowly, the silhouette of furniture comes into shape. A table. A counter. Windows.

A sharp poke in the right thigh startles me. A squeal locks in my throat. My gaze shoots down.

"Mistress, are you awake now?"

Cricket stares up at me, beady eyes glinting in the semi-darkness. He pulls his arm back and lets it rest on his side. I blink, rubbing my eyes, my vision adjusting to the dim light of the kitchen. Empty pots and pans hang from under the table, shadows dancing across the stone walls.

"I'm so sorry," I stammer, cheeks flushing. "I didn't mean to surprise you."

What am I doing? It's been so long since I last sleepwalked. I curl my toes, expecting the floors to be cold. They aren't, though. Like magic, the house feels warm even away from the fire.

"I didn't know humans could sleep while standing." Cricket's brow furrows, his wrinkled face etched with concern. "Isn't it dangerous, Mistress? You could hurt yourself."

A smile stretches my lips. "It's a condition. Not all humans do that. And you're right, I could've gotten hurt. Thanks for waking me up, Cricket."

The elf's ears twitch. He seems taken aback. "Mistress remembers my name."

I tilt my head. "Of course I do."

He takes another beat, as if unsure.

"What about you?" I ask. "Trouble sleeping?"

Cricket nods. "Then I heard footsteps, and I feared Mistress would walk out into the snow again."

How darling. It's a new thing to have someone worry about my safety.

Cricket turns on his heels and rushes to the stove. "Shall I warm some milk and honey? It will help you go back to sleep."

"Oh no, don't bother." I wave him off, not wanting to be a nuisance. "I'm fine, really. You don't have to."

He narrows his eyes as if he's studying me in the dim light. Cricket says nothing as he lights the fire with a literal flicker of his hand. Warm, cozy light inundates the kitchen. He goes to the stone cabinet in the corner and opens it. Cold air rushes out.

Ah. It's some sort of fridge. Icebox. Something like that.

Cricket picks up a metal jar that is almost as big as he is. I'm about to offer help when he wiggles a forefinger, and the jar floats from his hands to the table. He walks back to the stove and picks up a pan. With another wiggle of his finger, the jar tilts and pours milk inside.

Cricket pauses, the jar hovering in half-tilt. "You do drink milk, yes, Mistress? I should have asked before."

Warmth spreads over my chest. It's nice when people ask me things like this. "Sure. I just don't eat meat."

Cricket goes about warming milk and pouring a generous spoonful of honey into two mugs. I wander over to the table, still littered with many plates, pots, and bowls.

I trace the mismatching cups, then lift the lid of a jug. A furry creature snoozes inside it, its round ears twitching. I bite

my lip to contain a giggle as I lean to peer closer. A chipmunk. How adorable.

I replace the lid, not wanting to wake it up. Cricket uses some more magic to pour the warm milk onto the two mugs. He perches atop a stool and pushes one mug closer, his eyes watching me expectantly.

I take the other stool and curl my fingers around the mug. The warmth seeps through the ceramic and into my skin. The sweet scent of honey wafts up to my nose. It settles me instantly, calms me.

“Thank you, Cricket.”

“It’s a pleasure, Mistress.” He sips from his milk. “I’m glad you’re not walking out into the snow. Master was very worried.”

I tilt my head, opening a smile. “Worried? He wasn’t worried; he was mad. I thought he would watch me freeze to death down there.”

Cricket shakes his head, his ears flapping. “Master was worried. If he were angry at you, he would have left you there. Master never cared about someone like this.”

My face blooms with heat as I stare at Cricket. He keeps sipping his milk as if he had said nothing important, his feet dangling.

There’s no way he means that. Maybe he has a twisted understanding of Krampus. No, that makes no sense. Cricket has known Krampus for a while. He *works* for Krampus. There’s no way Cricket *likes* him.

“Do you enjoy working for Krampus?” I ask, crossing one leg over the other, tucking my nightshirt between my thighs.

Cricket nods, eyes brightening. “Very much so. Master Krampus is one of the last great lords of old. I have served him for many years. It makes my family very proud.”

Ah, so Cricket is like me. Doing things he doesn’t want to just because he wants to make his family proud.

“Would you still work for him if your family didn’t care?” I ask, arching an eyebrow.

Cricket nods without missing a beat. “Of course. I’m very honored. And Master is very easy to work with. He never complains.”

That I cannot imagine. Krampus *only* complains. I drop the subject. There’s no way Cricket will say shit about his lord. Maybe with Matilda I can trash talk.

I comb the table with my gaze. “What about the baking? Do you bake for him too?” I can’t imagine Krampus enjoying sweets. “I’ve only seen Krampus eating meat.”

Different meats with different sauces, etc., but still. Only meat.

Cricket shakes his head as he puts the mug away. “Master doesn’t like sweets, but he allows me to do whatever. I bake for the fairies, pixies, and brownies. To bring them cheer. They like it very much.”

My heart squeezes in my chest. This is so nice of him. I smile. “What’s your favorite recipe? If you bake so much, you must have one.”

“Oh yes!” Cricket clasps his hands together. “Lemon cakes with lavender icing are always a favorite. The fairies say the aroma alone lifts their spirits for days. And chocolate hazelnut tarts—the brownies cannot get enough. Baking brings me joy, Mistress, to see the delight on their faces!”

His enthusiasm is infectious. I find myself smiling along with him. Cricket goes on explaining how Krampus allows them to dip into his magic. This way, they can easily do the housework and conjure up the ingredients they don’t have here. I can’t hide I’m impressed.

Either way, there’s a gap between the master Cricket honors and the beast that plucked me out of the snow. Something tells me Cricket is not telling me the entire truth.

There’s more to Krampus that I don’t know.

CHAPTER 13



KRAMPUS

She stares at me. I stare back. I'm locked in this stupid, silent, staring contest with Olivia, neither of us willing to look away. The fire flickers and dances, casting shadows that accentuate her curvy figure beneath the white nightshirt. The way it clings to her body, revealing more than it hides, stirs something within me—an unsettling mixture of arousal and annoyance.

Olivia straightens her spine from her spot between the fireplace and me. She keeps her legs crossed under the pelt, but no matter how uncomfortable it looks, she doesn't blink.

“Have you nothing else to do other than stare?” I grumble, trying to shake off the unfamiliar sensations.

Olivia rolls her eyes. “No. That's exactly my problem.” She releases a dramatic sigh. “I wish I had my backpack. Change my clothes. Grab my knitting needles. Since you won't let me leave, I'd have something to do.”

Shit. I'd forgotten about her belongings. The sac smelled so strongly of her that I brought it with me when I carried her here. Where did I put it?

Matilda flutters into the room, her hummingbird's tiny wings buzzing, saving me from the human's temper.

“Mistress!” she chirps, flying to Olivia and landing on her knee. “Master, Acorn and Cricket have prepared a snack for you both.”

The two house-elves enter, each carrying a tray. Acorn, with his old breeches and leather apron, presents a mug of eggnog and a plate of pumpkin bread to me. I take the eggnog but wave off the bread, preferring the rich, spiced drink over the sweet baked good. Cricket offers the same to Olivia, only with much smaller utensils.

“Thank you,” she says, accepting both items with a bright smile. My heart lurches. She takes a hearty swig of the eggnog and bites into the pumpkin bread, savoring each mouthful. My eyes follow her every move.

Her lips curl as she hums in delight. Her little tongue comes out to gather the eggnog on top of her lips. Frustration and fascination war within me.

Matilda and Olivia chat as the latter eats, and I can’t help but watch her. Her laugh brings a strange, lurching feeling to my chest over and over.

I’m halfway through with the eggnog when Matilda leaves. Olivia turns back to me, and her eyes go half-lidded.

“I have to say,” she starts, her voice sultry, “your horns are not as frightening up close.”

Arching an eyebrow, I stare back at her. “No? I think they strike quite an imposing figure.”

“I don’t know...” Olivia puts her empty mug down and gets to her feet. She sways a little. “They seem almost elegant to me.”

“That’s not very intimidating.”

Olivia chuckles. “I didn’t mean it as an insult!” She takes a step closer, tilting her head to study my horns. “When I saw you the first time, you know... You’re so big, and the people down in New Oberzell feared you so much... I expected something that made me shake in fear. But your horns have a certain grace.”

Twisting my lips, I narrow my eyes as she takes another swaying step toward me. “I suppose I should be flattered. It’s not often humans don’t tremble in fear in my presence.”

“Mm, I don’t know. You’re quite charming. Annoying, but charming.”

Charming. That catches me off guard. I glance toward her abandoned mug. “Are you *drunk*, woman?” A click of my tongue. “The elves must have used my measure of alcohol for your drink, too.”

Olivia shakes her head, stopping a foot away from me with her hands on her hips. “Just a little tipsy. It doesn’t change what I think. You *are* quite attractive.”

“For a monster?”

“No. Just attractive.” She blinks. “Do you think there’s something wrong with me for thinking that?”

A smile stretches my lips. “Yes.”

Olivia rolls her eyes, curling her little nose. “Of course you do. Of course you’d insult me when I complimented you.”

“You do think I’m a monster,” I reply, unable to stop grinning. “Then let me play monster for you.” I put the mug away. “I’ll admit I find your lack of fear curious. Do you make a habit of pursuing monsters? Or am I just special?”

“You’re the first.” She walks between my knees, her soft skin brushing my legs. Her cinnamon scent wafts over me, and my pants tighten in response.

My voice drops much lower as I meet her blue eyes. “And you’re not afraid you’ve gotten in over your head?”

Olivia shakes her head. She’s close. She’s too fucking close. I curl my fingers around the chair’s arms, struggling against the urge to touch her. To race my hand through her silky hair, to grab her round hips...

“No, not afraid,” she replies in that sultry voice. Her nipples are hard knots against her shirt. “Just curious. I had no idea a world like this existed. Or a creature like you.”

“Such confidence for a mere mortal facing the unknown. You tread where others fear to go.”

Olivia leans forward. “I’ve always been a good girl. You make me sound like I’m insane.”

A growl escapes my lips. She doesn’t pull back. “You might be a good girl with your human peers, but you’re a bad girl with me. And you’re always teetering on the edge of deserving punishment.”

Her cinnamon and beeswax scent grows stronger. I flare my nostrils. Fuck. Fuck, don’t tell me she’s getting aroused...

She’s so close to me. Within arm’s reach. I could pull her to my lap, drag her little pussy against my throbbing hardness, then bury my face between her thighs...

Another growl leaves my lips. The bulge in my pants is impossible to conceal now. The chair creaks under my grip.

Olivia straightens her spine and looks down. Straight at the bulge in my pants. Her plump lips drop, and her eyes glint with something I refuse to analyze. She gasps once.

“Stop gaping at me unless you plan to do something about it,” I say with a warning growl.

Her cheeks explode in red. She whirls around too fast. Olivia loses her balance and drops on my lap. Her shirt flies up as her ass lands on my bulge.

All my blood rushes south. The desire rushing through my veins makes me dizzy. Fucking hell, what is this woman doing to me?

Olivia shoots to her feet so fast, it’s like she’s been shocked. She strides away from me, stopping so close to the fireplace that she almost burns herself.

I clench my jaw and slam my eyes shut. Control. I need control. Several breaths later, once lust is reined in, I open my eyes again.

Olivia’s standing on the same spot, her body taunt. I need to get her away from me. Now.

“I brought your belongings with me,” I burst. That gets her attention. “They are in my workroom.”

Olivia raises an eyebrow. “Why didn’t you say so earlier?”

I shrug as I get to my feet. Her gaze drops to my groin again, but she’s fast to look away this time. I stride to the doorway at the same time she does.

“Let’s go get them then,” Olivia says, turning to the hallway and swaying. She stumbles as she tries to maintain her balance, her hands landing on my stomach.

The touch of skin-to-skin sends my head spiraling again. I close my hands into fists to stop myself from touching her. Olivia pulls her hands back as if burned.

“Careful,” I growl, my body tensing with the effort not to react.

“Sorry,” she mumbles, blushing again.

We stride to the workroom—or I stride, and Olivia runs to keep up. I tell her to wait at the door, then enter by myself. Olivia gasps when I walk out with her backpack, coat, and boots.

She huffs, picking them up. “You could’ve given these to me earlier, you know. I’m tired of wearing the same clothes.” She takes a beat. “Thank you, Krampus,” she sighs, her gratitude evident despite her annoyance.

“Come on, let’s go to the bedroom so you can sort through your things. You should get the elves to wash your nightshirt.”

Olivia nods and follows my lead. Once inside the bedroom, I watch her empty her backpack onto the bed, separating clothes and making a small pile of the dirty ones.

I have no idea how long has passed since I last saw a human, but things have changed. Her garments are wildly different from what I was used to. I pick up a triangle of fabric.

“What’s this?” I ask, holding it up.

Olivia snatches it back, cheeks flushed. “It’s my underwear. Don’t you know what humans wear?”

“The humans I knew dressed differently. They certainly didn’t expose their bodies like that.”

She shoots me a glare. I hold back a smile.

“Well, we have underwear now. For our... intimate parts. Women wear panties. Men wear underpants.”

“Underpants. As in pants under the pants.”

Her lips tilt up. I like the sight of it. “Yes, and no. They’re smaller and tighter than pants. Just to keep men’s parts in place.”

I nod. “But panties? Women have no parts to keep in place. Or is my human anatomy knowledge out of date?”

She laughs openly now. “No, we still don’t. Not biologically assigned females, at least.”

“What?”

“Never mind. I’ll explain some other time. The panties are to keep your intimate parts protected from your overclothes. Hygiene, you know?”

I stare at the side of her head. “Not really. What else?”

Olivia smiles and tells me about different fabrics and protective clothes, and she shows me how her coat is rather thin but very warm.

If there’s one thing humans are good at, it’s developing technology.

As Olivia continues to rummage through her belongings, she holds up a pair of long needles and a bit of yarn. She smiles, running her fingers over the smooth wood.

“I’ve always wanted to improve at knitting. But I never seem to find the time. Maybe now I will, since I’m stuck in here with you.” She shoots a mock-annoyed glance my way.

“What keeps you so busy? Humans always had the evenings free. You couldn’t work after the sun went down either way.”

“We have electricity now.” She looks up at the ceiling. “You have light without fire or electricity here.”

“It’s magic.”

Olivia smiles. “Of course. Well, now *we* have some sort of magic. We use electricity to have light after the sun goes down. Between working hard to help my family and doing several small favors for them, I hardly have any time for myself,” she confesses, her expression turning somber. “I don’t know why I persist. They don’t care.”

I furrow my brow, confused by her blind dedication. “You’re odd for a human. Most humans only think of themselves, yet you think too much of others.”

She grins at me, and that tug on my chest gets worse. “Thank you. That’s nice.”

“It wasn’t supposed to be,” I tell her, but she ignores me.

As Olivia continues to rummage through her belongings, an unexpected object tumbles out and lands on the floor with a soft thud. It’s a long, curved, smooth pink item, smaller than my hand. My curiosity piqued, I pick it up before she reacts.

“What is this?” I ask, intrigued by the foreign device. I turn it in my grasp, and my thumb lands on the drawing of a circle. It springs to life, buzzing in my grasp.

“Um,” Olivia stammers, her cheeks flushing a deep shade of crimson. She snatches the object from me, hitting the circle drawing until it stops buzzing. “It’s just a... toy.”

“A toy.”

“Yes,” is her breathless answer.

“What is it called?”

“A... a vibrator. You know. Because it vibrates.”

It makes sense. But why is she so bothered by my finding it? I detect her scent on it, stronger than usual, causing my body to react involuntarily. My pants tighten again.

“What exactly do you hope to achieve with this vengeance of yours?” she asks, clearly wanting to change the subject.

“What motivates you?”

“Justice,” I reply. “The villagers have wronged me, and they must pay for their actions.”

“And what’s my part in it?” Olivia asks, her blue eyes searching mine for answers.

“You’re already presumed dead by the village, which makes you the perfect instrument for my plan.”

“I don’t want any part in this.”

“Your participation is non-negotiable,” I insist, my voice unwavering.

She shoots me an annoyed glare, curling her nose.

Maybe I’m approaching this from the hardest side. Maybe I can convince her. She was, after all, wronged, too.

“Come. Let me give you something as motivation,” I say, walking back the hallway.

I halt in front of the small room she uses to clean herself. Raising my hand to the door, I concentrate on my magic. Olivia’s footsteps pause behind me.

Once I’m done, I open the door. Her buckets are still inside, but now I created a bucket-like tub large enough for her to sit inside. It’s already filled with steaming hot water.

Olivia’s face transforms from annoyance to pure delight. Her jaw slackens. She squeals and throws her arms around my waist. The sudden contact leaves us both stunned, and I freeze in place.

Olivia pulls back, her eyes wide in disbelief at herself. “Thank you! I can’t wait for a long, hot bath!”

As Olivia disappears inside with her belongings, I return to the bedroom and sit down on the edge of the bed. Her intoxicating scent still lingers in the air, and I find myself unable to stop thinking about her. Why am I so drawn to this human?

I close my eyes and let my thoughts drift.

A familiar buzzing sound breaks the silence. I get to my feet and approach the door. A soft moan spills from the room across the hallway. It sends a shiver rolling down my body.

My feet stick to the ground. I can't move away from the door. The sounds intensify: wet, slick motions accompanied by Olivia's breathy moans.

I close my eyes to focus. My hearing is better than a human's, so it's easy to imagine the inside. Easy to imagine Olivia inside the tub, a hand grabbing the edge, one leg flung over it. Her head thrown back, her whimpers filling the room as she tries to hold back.

Her hand underwater, holding her toy against her pretty pussy.

Fuck. My pants go tight, tighter. I go so hard, I'm afraid I'll ruin the pants.

And then the unthinkable.

"Krampus," she whimpers, her voice filled with lustful longing. The intoxicating sound echoes through my veins like a siren's call. "Oh, yes!"

It almost fucking ends me.

I bite down on my tongue so I won't growl out loud. My heart pounds as I retreat from the door. An inferno of desire threatens to consume me, and I know I must release this building tension before it drives me mad.

I'm so hard now it's painful. It might be the alcohol speaking, but my body doesn't give a shit.

And if I stay here another second, I will burst into this room, and I will take this little human, no matter how much she hates me.

CHAPTER 14



OLIVIA

With my face pressed against the glass windows, I watch Krampus stalk into the forest. His heavy boots crunch over dead leaves and snapping twigs. The snowstorm hits his naked chest and back, but it doesn't bother him. Krampus has a one-track mind.

And he's off to hunt.

I wait for him to reach the tree line. His huge, blue frame approaches the woods, the color of his skin so stark against the white background.

Once his hulking form disappears behind the trees, I shove myself away from the window. Something has been eating at me, and I *need* to satisfy this curiosity.

What is behind that door Krampus keeps shut the entire day? Whenever he's not sitting on his chair and grumbling or eating, he's locked inside this room. Even when he came in to pick up my stuff, he wouldn't allow me inside.

It's obviously not his bedroom, since I'm occupying his bed. Then what is it?

Does the monster have a sex dungeon?

My fingers curl around the knob, and I pray the door isn't locked. My heart races in anticipation. The knob turns, and the door opens without a sound. I step inside.

It's something like a studio. There's a worktable pushed against a window, a large chair fit for Krampus, and shelves.

So. Many. Shelves. All of them filled to the brim with *masks*.

Hundreds of masks gape at me, their empty eyes seeming to follow my every move. Intricate swirls and patterns decorate each one, evidence of the care and skill that went into their creation. They are painted in red, green, and gold. Black and purple swirls. White dots. All of them are different. Unique.

Some look like humans. Others, like supernatural creatures I don't recognize. The majority, though, mimic animals.

My fingers trail over the smooth contours of a wolf's snout. These must take so long to create. There's an almost complete fox-like mask over the table, and tools and brushes rest next to it.

Even if Krampus used magic to acquire the woods—something I don't think he does—he carves and paints them himself.

I pick up the fox mask and bring it against my face. It fits. These masks aren't made for elves. It's not Krampus-sized.

They're all human-sized.

My heart squeezes hard. I remember seeing news of Neopagan parties where people wore masks to ward off evil spirits. Halloween came from such a tradition.

Is this the same? Was Krampus responsible for whittling masks for the people down at New Obernzell? Or did he do that because he enjoyed giving them away?

And to be betrayed by them... I wonder what it would be like to be caged like Krampus was for so long. Years and years locked in my house, only able to travel to the nearby woods, with only a handful of creatures serving as company.

Would I crave revenge as deeply as he does? Or would the solitude drive me to madness?

Oh, to keep carving masks for no one to wear... It sounds so painful. So lonely.

The floorboards creak behind me. I whirl around, my heart pounding. The mask drops from my fingers, clattering back to the table.

Krampus looms in the doorway. Oh, shit. I didn't see him coming back from the woods. Why is he back? Why so soon?

His shoulders take the doorway. Krampus releases a growling breath. His eyes blaze with fury.

I'm dead. If there's a moment when I was sure he would eat me, it's now.

Krampus kicks the door closed. He stalks toward me, a predator cornering his prey. Adrenaline fizzles in my veins. I back up until I'm trapped against the wall, acutely aware of his strength and size.

Krampus slams a hand on either side of my head. He's too close for me to escape under his arms. He leans in until his hot breath ghosts over my face.

"Don't humans know what a closed door means?" he asks in a grave, raspy voice. His muscular chest rises and falls with his breath.

I swallow hard, torn between fear and something far more dangerous. "I didn't mean any harm."

He gives a harsh laugh, the sound scraping over my nerves like sandpaper. "Your intentions do not matter. You have trespassed."

"I'm sorry," I murmur. Is it getting hot in here? "But I was curious and bored, and..."

"You have violated my privacy, woman. You have finally crossed the line." His voice rumbles through me, stirring an unwelcome heat. "There must be consequences."

I shoot my gaze up, meeting his gray eyes. "Consequences?" My stomach *should* bottom out. This is where he eats me, right?

My breaths come faster as he presses closer still, instincts warring within me. Part of me recoils from his proximity while another leans into his touch, craving more.

I must be out of my mind.

Krampus bares his teeth, growling low in his throat.
“Consequences. You must be punished.”

CHAPTER 15



OLIVIA

*H*e moves fast. Krampus seizes my neck, his big hand curling around my nape. He drags me across the room, forcing me to stumble back towards the cluttered worktable. My heart races with panic and anticipation, but I don't dare resist him.

Not that resisting would help me.

Krampus shoves me against the table. With a hand, he pushes his tools away. They rattle when they hit the ground. The heat of his hand lingers on my neck.

He bends me over the table, his grip on my neck unyielding as I gasp for breath.

“Let me go!” I shriek, clawing at his hand, but it's useless. The thrill of fear mixes with an unexpected arousal, intensifying my heartbeat.

There's no way I'm *actually* getting aroused, is there? The lust for him in the distance is one thing. I can excuse it as loneliness, the fact we're stuck together, or insanity, I don't know. I even understand the drunken flirting from yesterday.

But *this*? Krampus is manhandling—monsterhandling?—me around, and my panties are *wet*.

He presses my face down onto the hard surface. My heart is a loud drum, beating in my ears.

“What are you going to do?” I ask, breathless.

Krampus bends over me, his body hovering an inch from mine. I slam my eyes shut. He can't know that the heat irradiating off him makes my knees buckle.

He puts his lips on my ear. "I knew you would burst in here, so I came back. Do you know how I knew? Because you have no respect, woman. Because you're clearly out to annoy me until you drive me crazy."

My nipples tighten hard against the surface of the table. I curl my toes, fighting against the lust rushing through my body. His warm breath against my ear sends shivers down my back.

The good kind of shiver. The kind of shiver that makes me clench.

"And you do that," he continues, "because you know I won't kill you. Not now, not after I've put up with so much. You know I have a task for you. You know I won't eat you. So, you think you won't be punished." He straightens. I open my eyes, trying to see what he's doing. "But I thought of something."

He pulls something from his pants' pocket. I can't see what. He holds me down, unmoving, no matter how much I struggle.

"I don't understand much about humans. I never cared. But I learned enough to know that humans are selfish about their pleasure. Gluttony, pride, lust. It's always about pleasure."

Oh shit. Oh shit oh shit, what's happening? What is he talking about?

A sound of clicking. Then the buzz. A well-known buzz. Krampus brings my vibrator close to my face. My cheeks flush with shame as I remember what I did with it before bed yesterday. As I remember *who* I was imagining.

Krampus leans again, his lips brushing my ear. "I think I know exactly what you use this little toy for. This is covered in your smell."

Oh no. Oh yes? My heart beats so hard that it's impossible to breathe, and I have no idea what to feel. Regret? Should I

ask for forgiveness?

Why do I want him to touch me so much?

“Krampus,” I whisper, but my voice is so throaty I know I’m not fooling anyone. “Don’t do this.”

Ignoring my plea, Krampus keeps my feet apart. There’s no tease, no foreplay. He’s rude, even aggressive. The hand on my nape never leaves.

Without further warning, Krampus forces the vibrator between my legs. I gasp. A mixture of curses and moans slips past my lips.

The toy pulses against my folds, pressing hard on my covered core. Krampus moves his wrist. The vibrator skims along my outer lips, prods lower. It’s powerful enough to send strong pulses through my pants and panties. Finally, Krampus hits my clit.

It’s like a shockwave. My hips buck on their own. I choke out a gasp.

Krampus growls, victorious. He’s been searching. He was searching for what made me feel good, and now he attacks me with no mercy.

The vibrator buzzes furiously against my center. Every nerve ending lights up. My eyelids fall closed as a long moan escapes my mouth. I forget I’m supposed to pretend I hate this.

Pushing myself to the tip of my toes, I arch my hips to the pleasure. Krampus gives me more, following my lead and circling the vibrator around my clit.

Just there. Perfect. Perfection.

Wetness covers my panties, soaks through my leggings. Krampus’s heavy hand keeps me immobile, but that just makes it hotter. I imagine him pushing into me. Spearling me with his cock.

A man his size? He must have a huge cock, too. I imagine the blissful pain of being stretched by him. Krampus growls again, a deep rumble that tells me nothing.

Is he reacting to the sight of me? Does he like it? Would he fuck me against the table and lift me off my feet with one hand as he took me from behind?

Krampus tilts his wrist, pushing against my clit harder. The sensations build, and my body betrays me as it responds eagerly.

“Oh fuck. Oh yes,” I whimper, unable to form more coherent words. My knees quiver hard. I grab onto the table. A fire burns between my hips, pressure growing with every second.

Just as I’m about to reach climax, Krampus rips the vibrator away. I gasp, my eyes flying open. Panting with desperation, I try to turn to glare at him, but he keeps me down.

“What are you doing?” I ask, my voice so high-pitched I don’t recognize it.

“It’s a punishment,” he roars. “You’re supposed to learn a lesson.” He takes a beat. My pussy clenches, empty. I’m one second away from bursting into tears. “Beg for it,” he demands, his voice rough.

My jaw drops. What a bastard!

“Never,” I spit, refusing to give him that satisfaction.

Krampus teases my inner thigh with the vibrator, taunting me with its proximity. I circle my hips, trying to touch them to my core, but Krampus is much faster. He moves the toy away every time.

I grunt, tearing up with frustration. A sob escapes my throat. His feverish body presses against mine, his weight making everything so much worse.

“Beg, little lamb,” he urges in a low voice. “Beg, and I will let you come apart.”

I shake my head against the table, but my entire body trembles. There’s so little fight in me. Every cell in my body pleads with me.

Krampus presses his chest against my back. His heat makes my head light. His sharp fangs trace a line up my ear, and a full-body shiver shakes me.

“Beg, little lamb.”

My need for release is overwhelming. My mouth moves before I give it permission. “Please, Krampus. Please, let me come,” I plead, hating myself for giving in. I slam my eyes shut. “Please!”

I feel his twisted grin against my ear. Krampus doesn’t step away as he relents. His body is still pressed to mine when he returns the vibrator to its previous position.

Krampus massages my clit for all of a second before I explode.

My orgasm crashes over me, first like a bomb, then in waves. I cry out, my mind going blank. Lust floods me, and my hips move on their own, prolonging the bliss until it’s the only thing I feel.

For a couple of minutes, I even forget my wounded pride.

But as soon as Krampus releases his grip on my neck, shame swallows me. He turns the vibrator off and steps away just as I push myself up from the table.

My body shudders with the lingering sensations coursing through me. I sway, but I move out of the way he makes to grab my arm to keep my balance. My throat burns with a mix of anger and humiliation.

We glare at one another.

“Out,” Krampus snarls, and I don’t need to be told twice. I rush out of the room, determined to bury the memory of this deep within me.

This never happened.

CHAPTER 16



KRAMPUS

The snowflakes pile outside my windowsill, mercilessly blanketing the world in silence. Sinking into my chair, I try to focus on the storm still raging outside. I cross a leg over my knee, but the storm doesn't hold my attention.

So, I turn to the fireplace, the flames licking at the thick logs and at the stone mantle. The crackling of the fire is the only sound in the house.

Late night used to be my favorite time of the day. There's a deep, bone-seated silence. The elves are asleep, and the fairies are asleep. Even the animals—since they're well-fed, they don't need to hunt or scavenge under the moon.

But my thoughts are far from silent. They rage like a storm, swirling around the woman asleep under my roof. A *human*, more challenging than any other creature I've ever met.

How did a mere human come to consume me so completely? There is nothing extraordinary about her, nothing that should set her apart from the rest of her pathetic species. And yet...

Her spirit is indomitable. Fierce. She looks at me without fear, those pale blue eyes piercing and curious. She laughs in the face of danger, her melodic voice like bells chiming. Her soft curves fit against me as if she were made for me, and her scent is an intoxication I can't escape.

And then she had to break into my workroom.

I had no choice—I had to punish her. That’s what I do; that’s what I’ve always done.

Just not like this.

Fuck. Why did I have to use that thing on her? I knew she enjoyed it, but I had no idea it would affect me this much.

With a snarl, I squeeze the bulge straining against my trousers. This constant ache for her is maddening. It was supposed to be a punishment for her, not for *me*. I need relief, if only for a moment.

Pushing to my feet, I stride as quietly as I can to the washing room. Thankfully, the elves haven’t washed these yet. It’s easy to find them amid the rest of the kitchen linens.

Her scent saturates the threads of her panties.

My body moves on its own. If I stop to analyze what I’m doing, I won’t go through with it.

Because it’s absurd. Insane. Absolutely ludicrous for a lord of my power and of my station to lower myself to this.

The cold bites at my skin as I step outside, but I hardly notice. There’s a fire burning inside me. I close the front door and stride into the woods. I put as much distance as possible between the house and me without leaving the barrier.

I’m consumed by her, drowning in the essence of her as I lift the panties to my face. Fuck. It’s inebriating. Cloves, pumpkin, and cinnamon, all multiplied by a hundred in the thin fabric. My head goes light as I take it in, as I fill my lungs.

This is a fucking obsession. This is sick.

I tear open my trousers. Thick drops of precome drip onto the snow. Closing my fingers around my knot, I grab and yank at the length. I race my fist up and down a couple of times, shivering with delight. My fingers massage the relaxed skin at the base, where my knot will swell when I’m about to come.

I wrap the flimsy panties around the head, the softness of the fabric against my sensitive flesh drawing a groan from my throat. My hand finds a rhythm as I stroke myself.

I close my eyes, my memory flashing with memories of her. The way her body fits mine. Her scent. How fucking amazing her cunt smelled when she got wet. The way her arousal tasted when I licked it off her vibrator after she had left.

My imagination flies. I picture Olivia spread out on the bed. I imagine my tongue darting around her cunt. My large finger deep inside her. I imagine her feisty mouth wrapped around me as I guide her head up and down.

Fuck. That. That image will do. It jumps into my hold. More precome leaks from the tip, through her panties. Now, there's the fragrance of her mixed with the scent of me.

Fucking hell, I want to come all over her. I want to fill her pussy until her stomach swells. I want to fuck her until she can't walk. In my imagination, I don't care about the size difference. We would fit. I would fit just right.

I imagine the way she would scream her ecstasy when she came around me. Would she squeeze me hard? Would she cry out?

Olivia's scent and the memory of her body against mine send me hurtling toward oblivion. My release comes fast, hot spurts covering her panties as I thrust into their softness. I'm lost in the pleasure, my mind blissfully blank as my come hits the snow.

I take one breath, then two. The cold kisses my skin again. As the haze of lust clears, annoyance rises, sharp and bitter, in my throat.

My lips curl as I glare at the garment in my hand, heavy with my load. I throw the soiled panties away and kick snow to cover them, frustration battling with satisfaction in my veins.

I make my way back into the house. Before I know it, I'm standing before Olivia, sleeping on my bed.

Fuck. This woman will ruin me.

Olivia's chest rises and falls, her eyelashes casting delicate shadows on her cheeks. She looks peaceful, utterly unaware of

the torment she's causing me. Her parted lips send my head spinning, and I'm frozen to the spot, staring.

As if sensing my presence, her eyes flutter open, blue as a winter sky. Shit. I don't move. Maybe she'll turn on her side and go back to sleep.

But of course not. She's challenged every expectation I had of her until now. She sits up, the pelts dropping to her waist. Fuck. Those little tight knots in her chest. I want to pinch them until she mewls.

"Krampus?" she whispers, confusion lacing her voice. "What are you doing here?"

I have no idea what to say. As if I could tell her I'm obsessed, so my body brought me here without my knowledge.

I'll have to improvise. Schooling my features, I step closer to the bed. "I'm here to reclaim my bed," I demand.

"Your bed?" Olivia scoffs. "*You* said you barely sleep. *You* said I could keep it."

"I changed my mind. This is my room, my bed, and I want it, so you're going to give it back."

Olivia's jaw drops. "And where am I going to sleep?"

"That's not my problem."

Her jaw works. "Is this... part of your punishment?"

Fuck. She shouldn't have mentioned that. My pants go tight again. Fucking hell, this woman gives me no peace. Thankfully, it's too dark for her to see it.

"No. I merely want my bed back." And I stride toward her.

Olivia holds the pelts against her chest. "I'm not leaving!"

"Then I'm going to lie on top of you," I say as I sit on the edge of the bed and kick off my boots.

"No, you're going to kill me!"

"Then you better move."

Olivia jumps to the other side of the bed, but she doesn't get up. I stare at her.

She glares back at me, her hair a mess and her shirt slipping down her creamy shoulder. “I refuse to sleep on the ground. You will not bully me into it.”

I clench my jaw. Fucking woman. I’m two, almost three heads taller than her, much bigger, and she still challenges me at every corner.

“Suit yourself,” I hiss back at her and stretch out on the bed. It’s big enough for the two of us, but Olivia grumbles as she turns her back to me, resting her body at the very edge.

I take a breath and close my eyes. No, I’m not going to fall asleep. It’s been years since I relaxed enough for it.

Her scent wafts to my nose, and it takes every inch of my self-control not to bury my face into her neck. The heat of her body comes off in waves. She’s so close and so damn far at the same time.

This woman will fucking destroy me.

CHAPTER 17



KRAMPUS

I wake up. What? My eyes open, and it's morning, watery sunlight struggling to push past heavy snow clouds. I stare at the ceiling. When did I fall asleep? What happened? A rare sense of relaxation washes over me, my muscles loose and pliant against the bed. How strange, this sense of tranquility.

Turning my head, I glimpse Olivia, still sleeping. But she turned during the night. Her body is dangerously close, her calm face turned to me.

We're mere inches apart. Her scent is not overwhelming anymore, but something else. Relaxing? No, that can't be.

The scent of sizzling meat wafts from the kitchen. My stomach rumbles, hunger awakening at the promise of food. For a couple of minutes, I don't move.

Did mere proximity to her do this? Did her presence make me fall asleep?

Olivia groans in her sleep. Her blond hair spreads out on the pillow, and I watch her face. Breathing. Plump lips parted. The small frame my body aches to protect.

I freeze. What insanity is this? I get to my feet and stride out of the bedroom, putting as much distance between us as possible.

I need to take a walk in the snow before I see her again. Shit, I need to cool down.

When I enter the house again, Olivia's voice fills the hallway. She chats with Matilda in the dining room, her voice like a stream, her laughter making my stomach tight. Her mirth fills every inch of this house.

I can't help the warmth.

I walk into the dining room, forcing my gaze away from her. With the corner of my eye, I take note of how she looks.

Olivia sits at the table, her pale hair spilling over her shoulders, creamy skin glowing in the morning light. She glances up at the sound of my footsteps, her eyes lingering a second too long before flicking away. A blush stains her cheeks.

I can't help myself.

"Sleep well?" My lips quirk into a smirk as I take my seat across from her.

Olivia narrows her eyes at me. Her cheeks go a shade redder. She nods, nibbling at a piece of bread. I watch the path of each crumb, mesmerized by the slide of her throat as she swallows. My gaze drops to the dip of her collarbone, the swell of her breasts.

Heat pools low in my gut. I clench my jaw and drag my eyes away, focusing on the food laid before me.

Focus. Fuck. I thought the walk outside would cool my head off. Apparently not. One look at her, and I'm spiraling again.

I grab a piece of meat. The memory of how she winced at the sight of me eating flashes in the back of my head. I swallow hard before I start to eat. Each bite is slow and careful.

Not that I have anything to prove to her, but I'm done with her treating me like a savage. It was the humans who locked me up when they were the animals.

Olivia eats in silence, then clears her throat. "Is there any way I could have a proper toilet?" she asks, her voice tentative. "And a shower?"

I raise a brow, amusement flickering. “Is the bucket not to your liking?”

She huffs out an exasperated breath, her cheeks flaming anew. “Of course not! It’s so uncomfortable.”

I hold back a smile. “Perhaps I can help.” I shrug. “If you ask nicely.”

The change in her face is exquisite. First, her eyes go wide. Her cheeks go bright red. She remembers what happened last time I made her beg. Then her lips twist down.

“I will not beg.” Her eyes flash, her spine straightening. “Not for something so basic.”

A chuckle rumbles in my chest at her indignation. Stubborn girl. I like it. “Very well. You’ve done enough begging.”

The redness on her face runs down to her neck. “Jerk,” she shoots back, burying her face into a mug to hide from me.

It’s oddly pleasing to watch her struggle and fight to maintain her pride. And it’s especially amusing to see her bare her teeth when I can undo her so easily.

“Come.” I motion for her to follow me. There’s something about her that feels new and refreshing, like a gust of crisp winter air.

“Where are we going?” she hisses as she stands up and trails behind me, her blue eyes narrowed with suspicion.

“Calm down. As I said, I will not make you beg again. Not now, at least.” And I can’t help but pat her head. Just to see what she’s going to do.

“Stop it!” she snaps, batting my hand away. She looks up at me with wide eyes filled with mortification, but her cheeks turn pink again. And I know she remembers her begging quite fondly.

It’s fascinating how someone so feisty could also be so vulnerable. “You’re a curious creature, Olivia.”

She glances up at me with an arched brow. “I’m surprised you know my name.”

“You underestimate me.”

“Then why do you keep calling me *woman*?”

“You *are* a woman, are you not?” I ask. She glares. I smirk. “Shall I call you *little lamb* then?”

“It’s worse! It sounds like you think I’m your food reserve or something.”

An amused hum leaves me as we stop in front of her washing room. “Eating you is not a bad idea.” The words come out before I can bite them back. Olivia takes a breath, but before she says anything else, I grab the doorknob. “Describe this bathing room you desire so much,” I say, emptying my voice of feeling. “Let’s see what we can do.”

I know what I can do. I know I can do pretty much anything I want. But I’m eager to see the look on her face.

Olivia hesitates before launching into her description of a modern human bathroom. Her voice warms as she speaks, and I find myself envisioning the space. She takes pain explaining how plumbing works, even though I don’t need that.

I raise a hand. “Stop. That’s not needed.”

“What, plumbing? You’ll think twice after I use it.”

I twist my lips at her attempt at a joke. “We don’t need plumbing because I’m a magic wielder, little lamb. Simple.”

“Oh. Of course. How sustainable.”

As I channel my magical abilities, I feel the room transform behind the door. The walls shift and mold, the floor morphs, and the fixtures materialize.

Once I’m done, I open the door to let Olivia in. She gasps.

Pristine white tiles, gleaming faucets, and soft lighting. A fixture for water from the ceiling, a drain underneath, walled by glass. The showering space is big enough even for me. There’s a porcelain toilet, a white tub, and a sink with a mirror over it. Her eyes widen in amazement as she takes it all in.

“Krampus! This is amazing!” she breathes, her voice filled with awe and disbelief.

A strange, warm feeling spreads across my chest. Pride? I push it back, but it fights to surge.

“Thank you,” she says, and she smiles at me. It’s bright and open and honest.

And it reminds me that I should keep my distance.

Without another word, I stride back to the dining room so I can finish my food. Olivia doesn’t follow me. Once I’m done, I make my way to the back of the house.

And I fucking hate how I slow down in front of the bathroom door, hoping to catch a tiny moan and a whimper again.

I keep telling myself I’m keeping her around to figure out this attraction. That I only want to use her as a tool for my vengeance.

The truth is that this woman has consumed me. There’s no way out now. I tried to keep my distance, but it’s impossible.

A wicked grin takes my face. Things have changed. She’s not a tool anymore—she’s a challenge.

She has already driven me insane. Now I’m repaying the favor.

CHAPTER 18



OLIVIA

Sleep peels away, but my head swims when I blink my eyes open. Through the window, snow drifts in pale ribbons. It's still night out, darkness pushing into the corners of my eyes. The fire is almost gone, the light dim. My body is so heavy.

“Olivia.” Krampus’s voice emerges from the shadows, low and rough with demand.

I jerk out of sleep, completely awake. The dim light doesn’t let me see much, but...

Why am I sitting?

Sleepwalking. Yeah, it has to be it. But I’m still inside the room.

There’s warmth beneath my body—strong and unyielding flesh. I reach out and place my hand ahead of me, between my knees. Hot flesh clenches beneath my fingers.

Oh shit. Oh no.

Realization dawns as my eyes get used to the weak lighting. Reality is so painful, I don’t want to look at it. No, I can’t accept it.

There’s no way I’m straddling Krampus.

“What’s happening?” I blow out in a whisper, my face going hot.

A low growl makes his body vibrate between my legs. “I’m the one who should be asking this,” he shoots back.

“I swear it was an accident.”

“You *accidentally climbed on* me while you were sleeping.” There’s mockery in his voice, but there’s something more. There’s a slight strain, as if he’s holding back.

I glare at him. Can he see in the dark? I hope he can see the glare. “Oh, do you think I’d abuse you in the middle of the night?”

“You’re still sitting on top of me, so I don’t doubt it.”

Jerk. I roll my eyes and shift my weight, moving to get down. Then I feel it. Hot, pulsing between my legs.

Of course Krampus would be *well-endowed*. He’s huge. It’s simple anatomy.

But this is ridiculous.

I freeze, the absurd thickness under me throbbing. His rigid cock rests between my thighs, twitching. All air escapes my lungs.

It’s *huge*. So, so big. Warmth spreads down my face to my neck. His cock twitches again, pressing against my center. I’m hyperventilating. Pretty sure my brain has short-circuited.

Dizziness washes over me. I should get down. I should go back to sleep and pretend nothing ever happened.

But my hips move on their own accord. Once, so slightly. My clit lights up, and I grind my teeth together. Oh fuck. This is too good. I can’t help grinding against his length again.

And his cock pulses, responding to my motions. It’s like both his body and mine decided to betray us.

“What are you doing?” he hisses, his gravel-like voice rasping.

“I don’t know,” I breathe, shaking with pent-up desire. Heat floods my body. My nipples tighten, aching for his touch. Every inch of my skin is electrified, waiting for the touch of his big hands.

Krampus’s hand climbs my arm, roughly. His fingers curl around my neck and shoulders. His other hand curves around

my hip. For a second, I think he'll shove me off.

Instead, he guides my body back and forth over his length. Dragging me. So slowly. "You know exactly what you're doing, little lamb."

I rock against him, heat spiraling through me. He's right—my body knows his, craves the slide of skin on skin. My panties are past damp now, and the glide of my most sensitive parts against his hard cock is making me dizzy with heat.

He guides my body, grinding along his cock. His low growl reverberates through me, and I gasp, an orgasm threatening to crash over me. My eyelids flutter shut, and I drop my head back.

Krampus picks up his pace, using my body to jerk off. He's rough, his nails digging into the flesh of my hips. My clit throbs with need, pinpricks of light flashing in the back of my eyes.

I open my mouth, moans spilling out as my nerves set off like fireworks. His hardness is the perfect size to fit between my legs. He touches every part of me. Pleasure coils, then snaps. I come undone, my hips bucking against his.

"Krampus!" I gasp, desperate to feel more of him. My hands fumble at his waistband, and I shove his pants down just enough to reach his cock.

I'm desperate now. I need him, fuck the consequences. Just once. Just this once. I curl my hands around his thick member.

But as my fingers wrap around it, I pause in confusion.

There's a second cock right under the first.

"Wha—?" I stammer, dazed by this unexpected discovery. My hands search his body, tentatively curling around not one but two thick lengths. "You have two cocks?"

"One works for reproduction, the other for female pleasure," Krampus growls, his voice heavy with lust. "They're meant to—"

I don't care. The thought of experiencing both of them sends a thrill of desire through me. I'm giddy and breathless as

I raise on my knees and shove my panties down my legs.

This is the chance Krampus has to push me away.

He doesn't.

One hand closes around my waist. He raises me with one swift motion, supporting my weight effortlessly. For a moment, I think he'll impale me on one of his cocks, and my body clenches with anticipation. Wetness runs down my leg, and I tremble with need.

Instead, he positions me between them—one beneath me, pressed against my slick folds, and the other nestled between my ass cheeks.

"Keep grinding," he orders, his voice strained.

I whimper. "But—"

"It won't fit. I'll rip you apart."

Oh. Is that supposed to be a threat? Lava fills my veins, and a moan spills past my lips. I circle my hips, new wetness covering his thick cock.

As I move, I make the most amazing discovery.

His cock is fucking ribbed. Like the perfect vibrator, but warm and thicker than anything I've ever seen. The ribbed texture of his cock rubs my clit deliciously. I had no idea it could get better. Each ridge sends shivers down my spine, and I can't help but moan in pure ecstasy. This sensation is unlike anything I've ever experienced—raw, primal, and utterly intoxicating.

"More," I whimper, my senses overwhelmed by the pleasure coursing through me. Krampus continues guiding me, his strong hands ensuring I don't lose balance or focus.

I reach behind my back. My fingers explore the second cock nestled between my ass cheeks. It's thick and smooth, not ribbed, but it pulses nonetheless, demanding attention just as urgently as its twin.

My nipples tighten painfully at the thought of having both cocks inside me. I have little experience even with humans, so

I tried nothing beyond vanilla.

Krampus makes me want to try *everything*.

“Krampus!” I gasp, unable to contain myself.

“Do you like this, kitten? You purr so nice when you’re grinding on my cock,” he growls in response, his voice heady with desire.

My eyes roll to the back of my head. I’m so wet that I glide over his ridges. “It’s so good. It feels so good.”

My heart races as I relish the heat and weight of his lower cock. I slide my fingers up and down its length, gradually increasing the pressure. Krampus groans, the sound sending a fresh wave of arousal surging through me.

It’s good to know I have the same effect on him as he has on me.

My clit throbs, and I’m about to go again. My body trembles, teetering on the edge, desperate for release. The anticipation is electric—an exquisite torture that heightens every sensation.

“I’m almost.” I moan.

“Beg for it, kitten.” His hand slides under my shirt, his thumb brushing along my breast. “Let me hear you.”

“Please,” I beg, panting with absolutely zero dignity. “Please, let me come.”

Krampus growls, a sound that shakes my entire body. “Cream my cock, Olivia,” Krampus grants, his voice rough and strained.

As soon as the words leave his lips, my orgasm crashes through me, shattering my senses. My vision goes white, and my body convulses as pleasure consumes me. I can feel my arousal gushing onto Krampus’s ribbed cock, making our dance even slicker.

He doesn’t stop. He keeps moving me, heightening the bliss and dragging it on.

“Fuck!” I scream, the intensity of the orgasm leaving me breathless.

I squeeze Krampus’s cocks with my hands, and he roars. His body shakes, then tenses, and hot, thick spurts shoot all over me.

The cock in front of me spurts on my hand, over Krampus’s stomach. It keeps coming. It’s *a lot*.

But it’s the cock behind me that does the real work. Krampus comes hard, thick ropes hitting my back under my shirt, running down to my ass, covering my hand. I had no idea someone could come this much.

Only then does Krampus stop moving me. Our bodies quiver against one another. My head goes empty, and my body is heavy and limp. I quiver with aftershocks.

What’s left of my mind expects Krampus to drop me on the bed. Instead, he spreads a hand behind my back and slowly puts me down. Gently, as if he were afraid of breaking me.

Krampus is careful to lie me chest-down. In the back of my hazy mind, I tell myself I should clean up, or I’ll mess up the pelts. But my eyes are heavy, and I’m so satisfied and utterly spent...

Krampus lets me go. I feel his gaze on me even as I drift off. He leans closer, the warmth of his body touching my back and his lips brushing along my earlobe.

“What are you doing to me, kitten?” And the way he says it doesn’t come across as questioning, insulting, or aggressive. It comes off almost...

Almost sweet.

CHAPTER 19



KRAMPUS

The crackling fire casts shadows dancing across the ceiling. I try to watch them and force myself to focus on the flames, but it's impossible with her sitting there. With her tempting scent, that small smile, and her light blond hair going orange with the fire.

Olivia sits curled in her own chair, her feet tucked under her body. She hums something under her breath, knitting needles clicking a soothing rhythm.

Giving her a chair was a good decision. I told myself it's so she'll stop complaining. The truth is, I enjoy the look on her face when I give her things.

Olivia straightens up in her seat. Her eyes light up. She holds out a sweater in front of her. I arch an eyebrow.

“Are you sure that will fit you? It looks too small.”

She shoots me an amused glance, her smile broadening. “It's not for me, *Krampy*.”

I grunt, rolling my eyes. “Never call me that again.”

She laughs and springs to her feet. “Yeah, it felt weird to me, too.” Olivia grabs another identical sweater from the chair. “Acorn, Cricket! Could you come here, please?” she calls out loud enough that they'll hear her from the kitchen.

The elves rush in, their small feet tapping on the hardwood floors. I lean back into my chair, watching. Olivia bends at the waist and offers the sweaters.

“Here. I made something for you. I hope you like them.”

The elves look between themselves and then at me. I nod slowly.

“For us, Mistress?” Cricket squeaks, stretching out his hands, his eyes wide with surprise.

Olivia beams. She almost glows under the firelight as she straightens, hands on her hips.

Cricket slips the sweater on. It fits him. He stretches his arms out, grinning as he spins in place.

Acorn clutches the sweater to his chest for a moment. His expression is unreadable. Finally, he slips it on.

“Good. It fits both of you,” Olivia says before plopping back onto her chair.

Acorn drops into a low bow. “Thank you, Mistress.”

Cricket follows him. “Thank you! Thank you, Mistress!”

The corner of my mouth tilts up. *Mistress.*

I like it. It means she’s mine.

After another flood of *thank yous*, the elves scurry off, leaving us alone before the fire once more. Olivia sinks into the chair with a sigh, gazing out at the snow.

“So,” she starts, her eyes pivoting to mine.

“So.”

She opens a smirk. “Admit it. You’re getting used to me.”

“Mm...”

“Admit it,” she repeats, leaning forward on the chair. “Humans are not so bad.”

I stare at her, studying her face. Olivia arches an eyebrow in expectation, her lips tilting into a broad smile.

The sight of her tugs at my gut in a way I don’t mind.

“Humans are not so bad. Some of them, anyway.” I cross an ankle over my knee. “Just the same way not all nonhuman creatures are interested only in eating humans. You lot are self-

centered, and you can't deny that. There's much better meat out there."

Olivia chuckles. "I can't argue with that. I was pretty sure you were going to eat me."

"Not with my teeth, anyway."

Olivia's face blooms with red. I bare my teeth at her with a smirk.

She rolls her eyes. "You're teasing me."

No, I'm not. "I enjoy seeing you react like that."

Olivia sticks out her tongue. "So, you don't eat humans, but you like to make them die of embarrassment."

"Nonsense. You wouldn't die from that."

"It's a saying."

I shrug. "My reaction to humans didn't come out of nowhere. I thought we had a good relationship. Hence the masks. It was humans who gave me a reason to hate them."

"Wait. Why the masks?"

I stare at Olivia, wondering if I should tell her. How much I should tell her.

But there's no reason not to. Not when I enjoy having her around, not when she could still take my side in the revenge plan.

"I'll show you," I say, raising my feet. Before Olivia follows me, I offer a hand. She blinks twice but takes it before she stands up.

It's but a second, but the softness of her small fingers around mine makes my blood buzz. She lets go.

We walk side by side to my workroom. This time, I open the door and let her in. Masks line the walls, take every shelf and every surface. Olivia ambles inside, her fingers tracing the masks' contours.

I let her explore. I take my seat at the workstation and pick up my tools. Wood shavings curl around my knife, a mask

taking shape.

Olivia inches closer, watching in silence. She says nothing as I curl a hand around her hip and guide her closer. She lets me bring her between my legs and down onto my lap.

Her breath catches. She perches on my knees, and I wrap my arms around her.

With the tool in hand, I carve the mask, softening edges and adjusting angles. I put the tool down and put a file against the wood, making it smooth.

Olivia leans closer, watchful eyes on her face. Sawdust clings to her hair when she bends at the waist, mesmerized by each cut and scrape.

My body thrums with hers so close. I place the knife in her hands, almost too big for her, and then I fold my fingers over hers. I guide her hand, teaching her to whittle. She relaxes into me, the motions almost meditative.

“Why don’t you use magic to do them?” she whispers at me, her hair brushing my chest.

I shake my head. “Magic comes easy to me. True gifts are not meant to be easy. Or do you think the elves would have been as happy if you had given them some old shirts?”

Olivia leans against my chest. “You’re right.”

“Mm, that’s a first,” I breathe into her hair. “I can’t believe you admitted I’m right.”

She chuckles. “I can’t believe that either.” She pushes her hair out of the way, exposing her little neck.

Her scent is strong here, where her pulse flutters. I lower my head and touch my nose to her jaw, where it meets her neck. My eyes flutter shut as I soak up her scent.

Olivia continues working on the mask, softening the edges. I turn my face and rub my cheek against hers, mixing her smell with mine. Covering her in my scent.

Mine. She’s mine.

CHAPTER 20



OLIVIA

A tide of warmth caresses my body, cocooning me close. For a hazy moment, I think I'm back home, wrapped under my duvet. I snuggle closer and hope I fall back asleep.

Then the tide moves. An arm the size of a tree trunk tightens around my waist, and I tense as the fog in my mind burns away.

I'm in Krampus's bed. And Krampus is squeezing me.

My cheeks flame hotter than the coals in the fireplace as I realize I'm curled into his chest, his arm draped over me. Our legs are tangled together under the pelts, and I can feel the steady thump-thump of his heartbeat against my back.

I don't dare move, praying he'll think I'm still asleep. My own traitorous heartbeat gallops in my chest, betraying me.

He stirs behind me, the arm around my waist flexing. I squeeze my eyes shut, willing my breathing to stay slow and even. It's so hard to pretend when his *cocks* dig into my backside.

"I can hear your heart racing, little lamb." His voice rumbles against my back, a sound like a low chuckle. "No need to pretend."

I groan, burying my face in the pillow. "I didn't mean to... *cuddle*. I was cold, and you were warm, and—"

"Hush." He squeezes me once, and I fall silent. We lie there for another moment, the only sound being the crackling fire.

This is so strange. I was kidnapped, and I've been kept against my will in this place. Krampus was never *nice*. On the contrary, he's rude and has an ego bigger than his—

My face gets warm. I shouldn't be thinking about this. I shouldn't be *cuddling* with him. He made it quite clear he has no interest in humans—not even to eat us for dinner.

What changed? And when?

A part of me insists I should go home. I'm a responsible adult; there's my job and the place I rent, and my family must be going mad with worry. Mom has always been negligent, but *this?*

I've been missing for a few days now. A week? I'm not sure. Time stretches out in here. It flows gently when I'm not rushing to work harder, make more money, or be more successful...

In here, there's only the snow falling, the warmth of the fireplace, and knitting. There are the elves to chat with and have coffee with cake. Matilda rushing about, giggling.

Life is strangely pleasant in here.

"This is nice," I breathe out, almost without noticing it. I don't turn to Krampus, my eyes still closed. "It feels almost like a vacation."

He takes a beat. "A vacation?"

I smile against the pillow. "Time away from everyday life. From work. A chance to relax and enjoy simple pleasures."

He shifts, his muscular chest pressing against my back. "What do you do on vacation?"

"People usually travel to pretty places. Not me. I don't have the money."

Krampus grunts. "Money. Such a strange concept."

I chuckle against the pillow, then let my face relax. "My idea of a day off is more like... A soak in a hot tub. Nice food. A book or a movie."

“Hmm.” He’s quiet again, then, “I can’t help with the movie. I don’t know what that is. But I might conjure up some books.”

I sit up so fast that my head goes dizzy. “Really?” I ask, whirling around to face Krampus.

The sight of him catches me off guard. He’s stretched out on his half of the bed, his white hair draped over the pillow, his blue skin catching the soft light from the last embers. Krampus’s muscular chest rises and falls with his breathing, and for an embarrassingly long moment I stare at how ridiculously buffed he is.

Did he even need to be like this? Of course not.

Krampus tilts his head, the corner of his lip angling into a smirk. Shit. He caught me staring, and he’s about to make fun of me.

“Which ones?” I blurt out. “Can I give you the names or the genres, and you’ll bring them? Or are they only books from before they locked you here? Or books you know?”

“Calm down,” he says with a smirk, pulling me down to the bed. I let him, but it doesn’t stop the surprise when he pulls me to his chest. “You’ll give me the names, and I’ll see what I can do. Just not now.” He takes a beat. “Or are you going to jump me again if I refuse?”

I can’t believe the way he acts. He thinks he’s so hot. I mean, he *is* hot, but does he need to act like this? He thinks I’m about to pounce on him at any time.

I just did it *once*, and it wasn’t even on purpose.

Looking up, I catch Krampus staring. He doesn’t seem fazed at being caught. His gaze starts a fire between my hips. I clamp my thighs together and turn away from him. Krampus merely follows me, cradling me to his chest again.

I inch my hips away so his cocks don’t press against my backside again. There’s no way I’ll fall asleep with that.

“Tell me about you, little lamb,” Krampus says, breathing against my hair. “Tell me about your family.”

I blink a couple of times. How odd for him to be interested in a *lowly human* like me. Why is he trying to be nice now?

“Mm, it’s my mother, my sister, and I.”

He waits, then says, “No father?”

“He passed away a couple of years ago.”

Krampus nods once. “Did that make you sad?”

I could use the usual answer I give to people—of course, losing my father broke my heart, I still miss a part of my soul, that I cry about that often.

But I know I don’t have to give him the easy answer. I can give him the truth.

“Honestly, not as much as I expected. I mourned more the *what could have been*. The relationship I wish we could have had, and we didn’t. I can’t say I miss him, because we barely talked. After Mom and Dad divorced, he treated my sister and me as *his ex’s daughters*, not his own.” I take a shaky breath. “I tried to make him love me. Everything I did was to make my family happy, proud.”

“But you can’t *make* people love you,” Krampus says. “They’re your family. Aren’t human families supposed to love you naturally?”

I shrug. “Yeah, I guess. Technically.”

“But you don’t sound sure about it.”

“I feel like it’s supposed to be this way, but...”

“But if it were, you wouldn’t be trying to make them love you, of course.”

Chewing on my bottom lip, I stare at the snow falling outside. “Yeah. I can’t stop myself from wondering what I’m doing wrong.”

Krampus takes a beat, his fingers tracing the outline of my sleeve. Every time his fingers brush my arm, I shiver. “It used to be my responsibility to punish misbehaving children. Some of those children, though, were clearly doing things as a cry for attention or for help. No child is born bad. There’s always

a reason behind things. What I mean by that is... Human parents are still human. And humans are, as a rule, selfish. Self-centered. They make the choices that interest *them* the most. Sometimes it's not about what's best for their children or families. It's about what they want for themselves. And others suffer because of that."

His words are heavy. Heavy as a rock sinking into my stomach. I take deep breaths, but each of them makes my eyes sting. His fingers trail down my arm to my waist.

I force a smile onto my face. "That may be for most humans, but not all. I'm pretty sure Mom is worried about me. I mean, I'm days late. She'll call, and she won't reach me. And then she'll call the cops."

"The cops."

"Yes. The authorities."

"If she did, then why haven't they come looking for you?"

I bite my lip. "Well, there are rules, you know? The cops must wait a few days to start a search party, and maybe they don't even know I'm in this town. Perhaps they'll come after me once the snow has stopped."

"Perhaps," Krampus echoes, his warm breath on my neck, his massive hand closing around my hip. "You're a peculiar little lamb. Stubbornly clinging to hope even when you've been abandoned."

"Hope is powerful," I say with a small smile as I turn my head to meet his eyes. "Sometimes it's all we have left."

"Indeed," Krampus murmurs, his gaze lingering on me as if seeing something I don't. As if he sees inside me, darkness and light, and isn't bothered by them.

CHAPTER 21



KRAMPUS

Olivia stomps into my workroom, rage twisting her pretty features. I turn the chair to face her, not hiding my amusement at how adorable she looks when she's angry.

She halts in front of me, planting both hands on her hips. My nostrils flare, drinking in her anger-spiced scent. Her cheeks are flushed, and her chest heaves.

I have developed quite an obsession with her. The mere sight of her close to me tightens my pants. My cocks stir, hungry to plunge into her.

But I'm nothing if not a patient creature.

"Pervert!" She throws the accusation like a dagger. "How dare you go through my things! You changed all my clothing to dresses!"

Usually, I would be insulted. This time, it's the truth. I did magically change all her clothes into dresses. Last night, when I curled my hand around her hip and felt the sheer fabric bunching under my hold, I wondered about how easy it would be to bury myself inside her.

But not really, because most days she wears pants now, and there's also the problem of her panties...

So, I solved that. I won't deny that I enjoy the sight of her juicy thighs, too.

To top it off, all the dresses are one size too small. It's worth it to see her like this.

The dress she's wearing now shows off her pale shoulders, creamy arms, and the swells of her breasts. It hugs her curves, then flares out around her thighs.

"And what did you do with my underwear?" she spits.

This time, I can't help but grin. No underwear means it's much easier for me to touch her. To smell her. The scent of her cunt makes my stomach groan.

"I can do as I please." My voice rumbles. "You belong to me while you're in my house. And you can't leave without my permission. Not that you would survive long."

Her eyes flash with cobalt fire. "I don't belong to anyone! Especially not a beast like you."

Shooting to my feet, I stride to her. Surprised by my speed, Olivia stumbles back until she hits the wall. In an instant, I'm looming over her, caging her between my arms. She tilts her chin up in defiance, though her pulse flutters in her throat like a trapped bird.

"Try to leave, and I will hunt you down." I lean closer, my lips brushing her ear. A shiver makes her tremble. "You cannot escape me, little lamb. You are bound to this place, bound to me, until I choose to set you free."

She shoves against my chest, but I do not budge. "Let me go!"

"When you admit that you are mine." I grasp her chin, forcing her to meet my gaze. "Say it."

Her lips press into a mutinous line. "Never," she grinds out.

I chuckle. Stubborn little thing. One of the things I like the most about her.

My fingers trail down her neck, tracing the pulse in her throat before sliding lower. Slowly, I line the hard knot of her nipples with the tip of a sharp nail. Her breath hitches, and her eyelids flutter.

I trace down her ribs, over her arm, and to her wrist.

My hand curls around her wrist. So small. So breakable.

I grab the other wrist with the same hand and lift both her arms over her head, pinning her to the wall.

Olivia gasps, a glare snapping at me. “What are you doing?”

“I’m making a point,” I blow against her hair. “You know you belong to me. Your body knows it.”

With my other hand, I trace down the same path. Her pulse, her collarbones, and the swell of her breast. I line her hard nipple with my nail over and over.

Her breath hitches again as I cup one full breast in my hand, kneading the soft flesh.

“Your body betrays you,” I murmur. Her nipple is a pebble against my palm, so hard, so sensitive. I pinch it between my thumb and forefinger, relishing her gasp.

“Stop,” she protests weakly. But she arches into my touch, her words and her actions at odds. Her eyelids flutter shut, and her pretty lips drop open.

“Why?” I rasp. “When you’re so eager for my hands on you?”

“I’m not. You’re delusional,” she breathes, her words breaking with pure lust.

Fuck, and she looks so fucking *needy*. Her cheeks are bright red, her plump lips parted. She looks so fucking ready to be impaled by my cocks.

My reproduction member twitches, desperate to be inside her. To stretch her to the max and beyond, to fill her completely. Fucking hell, to have her take my knot. To pour myself inside her until it dripped out of her cunt.

My blood sizzles, and I grab the cleavage of her dress and yank it down. The flimsy thing rips open, her breasts bouncing free.

Olivia gasps. “What are you doing, you brute!” But her eyes glaze with desire, burning with need.

I grab her breast and lower my head. The fragrance of her skin inebriates me. I reach my tongue out and lap at her soft skin, wrapping the tip of my long tongue around the nipple.

Olivia moans—the most delightful sound. Ah, so she likes this. She likes it when I tease her little nipple.

Tightening my hold around her wrists, I pull her higher until she's standing on the tips of her toes. I flick one nipple with my tongue while my hand twists the other, yanks it, and pinches it.

Olivia's whimpers fill my head. They're all I hear. I lap and lap, committing the scent of her skin to memory. And there's more. Her arousal is fucking heaven. It's sweet and powerful and just a little spicy, just like her.

I slide my hand down her body, under her dress. No barrier of panties, just silken skin and damp heat. Exactly like I wanted.

Olivia whimpers as I stroke through her slick folds. I cover two fingers in her arousal, freely running from her. They make her even slicker. And, fuck, this is my favorite smell. She's cinnamon and chamomile and beeswax and pumpkin... She's delicious.

“Admit you want this. Admit you're mine.”

She shakes her head, biting down at her bottom lip as if she's stopping herself.

I push a finger between her folds. She's so much smaller, I'm not sure she can take more without the proper preparation. Olivia shudders. Being mindful of my nails, I find her entrance and press against it.

Olivia's knees quiver. A full-body shudder shakes her. She squirms, but I still have her arms pinned.

She takes my finger in. Her mouth drops open as I enter her to the first knuckle.

“Oh, God!” she cries out.

I growl. “No. No gods here. Just you and I.” And I press the rest of my finger into her wet, wet heat, crooking it just so.

A broken cry escapes her lips. She shudders again. "Say it," I demand, stroking deep within her clenching cunt. "Say you belong to me."

Olivia shakes her head, but her brows bunch together, and she tilts her hips, pressing herself against my finger. Her wet heat squeezes me, pulling me deeper.

I work a second finger inside her. It's not easy. Olivia gasps and cries out, but she bucks against my hand, taking me in. I have to take it slow, using her arousal to ease it inside her.

She's so fucking tight. My balls get even heavier at the thought of how she would milk me.

I nuzzle into her neck, licking a path up to her ear.

"You're close already, aren't you?" I whisper. "Going to come all over my fingers like the greedy little thing you are."

Olivia whimpers, rocking herself against my hand. I can feel her walls flutter. She tilts her hips further, dragging her slick folds and that hard pearl atop her folds against my hand.

Is that what she wants? Then I'm giving it to her.

Moving my hand, I pull my fingers out, then plunge them back in. The motions make my hand drag along her little clit, massaging it. Her breaths come fast. I curl my fingers again, stroking a spot deep within her that makes her cry out.

"Are you going to come for me, kitten?"

Olivia nods. "Fuck. Yes. Yes. I'm about to..."

I pull my hand back. Olivia's eyes snap open, pure fury in her orbs. I grin.

"You know how it goes, kitten." I give it a second, then drag a fingertip along her throbbing clit. She shivers. "Say you're mine."

"No."

"Say you're mine, and I'll let you come."

"No." And she squirms again, but I notice the way she tilts her hips, searching for contact, for friction.

I drop to one knee, so our faces line up. Spreading my hand on her lower stomach, I pin her against the wall. Her hands shoot up, pushing at my shoulders. “Do you want me to walk away, kitten?”

I see the struggle inside her. The way her eyes burn, how her lips tremble as she fights herself.

Her hands stop pushing. Her nails dig into my shoulders as she pulls me in just an inch. Finally, she whispers, “No.”

“So, you want me to make you cream my fingers?”

Her cheeks go even redder, if possible. It’s too amusing to tease her. “Yes,” she says in a tiny voice.

Burying my face in her hair, I soak in her smell. “Then say it, kitten. Say you’re mine.” I pull back and stare at my work. I part her soft folds and circle her little clit without touching it. She’s so wet. She fucking glistens with need.

Olivia whimpers, and it almost makes me give up. My restraints are worth it, though. She blows a shaky breath.

“Please, please, let me come. I’m yours. I’m yours, Krampus.”

I growl. “Such a good little kitten.” And I plunge my fingers back inside her. Olivia screams out in ecstasy, and she moves against me, desperate bucks of her hips against me. I purposely drag the heel of my hand along her clit, working on it, too.

Her body quivers. She drops her head back. Goosebumps rise along her skin. More wetness gushes out of her, covering my knuckles.

My cocks are so fucking hard, I can’t take it. I move my hips in time with my hand, imaging I’m thrusting my cocks inside her instead of my fingers. I rub myself against her leg like the animal the villagers think I am.

“Come for me, Olivia,” I growl, my balls so fucking heavy, my pleasure barreling down my spine.

Her inner walls clamp down on my fingers as she shudders through her orgasm. Her mouth drops in a silent scream for a

solid minute, then she explodes. She screams, and she moans, and her body convulses beautifully. Her breasts bounce with every move, and I'm hypnotized by the way they beckon to me. I work her through her orgasm, prolonging the waves of bliss, my own cocks aching where they're trapped in my trousers.

As her tremors fade, I withdraw my fingers. Olivia whimpers at the loss. I bring my fingers to my lips, licking her essence from them. She tastes sweeter than anything. My cocks throb, demanding release.

And for a second, I'm enough of a fool to think she's going to give me what I want.

Olivia glares up at me, her chest heaving. "You're a pervert."

I let her go. She pulls the ruined dress over her chest.

I grin, leaning to whisper in her ear again. "And yet you came so prettily for me." I nip at her earlobe. "Imagine what I could make you do if I sank into your tight cunt."

Olivia gasps in offense, but I see the way her eyes glitter just before she turns on her heels and marches out of the room. I watch her go. I have time.

But now, I have a problem to deal with. I squeeze my cocks over my pants and sigh. This woman is going to ruin me.

CHAPTER 22



OLIVIA

The crackling fire warms my cheeks as I sink into the plush armchair, soft wool slipping through my fingers. Krampus magically created this yarn for me, with midnight black fibers finer than silk. It's a color I could never find in stores. It glints like the midnight sky, peppered with stars. My needles click in a steady rhythm, shaping the inky strands into a sweater.

Contentment settles in my bones. When Krampus whisked me away to this remote cabin, I expected terror. Death.

Instead, I've found... peace. A peace unlike anything I've ever experienced. One day passes after the other, and, for the first time, there's no rush.

I keep telling myself it's Krampus who won't let me leave, and the snow makes it all more difficult. I keep telling myself that Krampus went from a grumpy bastard to a grumpy pervert and that I shouldn't stay close to him.

But do I even want to leave?

The thing about knitting is that your mind wanders. Shaking my head, I push the thought away. This longing has been coming up more often now, but I don't want to look at it too closely.

I've been away for days now. Over a week. Matilda said the time in the forest passes differently, and I believe her. I remember what Mr. Horner said after my trekking that first day.

Still. I can't stay here forever.

Breathing out, I hold up my work, eyeing the progress. The neckline is done, and the shoulders and the beginning of the sleeves, all the way to the top of the chest. I think it's going to fit, but I didn't have an item to base myself.

After all, Krampus has never put a shirt on since he dragged me across that door. That's been a distraction ever since.

Who needs meditation to learn focus when there's an eight-foot-tall blue monster ripped with muscles walking around shirtless? I could never get anything done if I let myself watch him as much as I wanted.

As if summoned by my thoughts, Krampus walks into the living room. The floorboards creak under his weight, and I can't help but look up at him. His gaze locks with mine, those gray eyes seeing into me.

I clench my teeth so he won't notice the shiver that races down my body. This isn't only about lust anymore. There's a magnetism to Krampus that I can't escape. I don't know if it's his natural authority or if he's the only person who has listened to me while I ranted about my problems, but I'm *drawn* to this man.

No, not *man*. *Monster*. I keep forgetting that.

Krampus holds my gaze every step of the way until he reaches his armchair and sits down. He leans into the chair and crosses a leg over his knee, manspreading and making me want to curl myself on his lap.

I finally manage to look away. No matter how much he knows my body on instinct, no matter how much he listens to me, and how interested he is in what I have to say, he's still a monster who wants to obliterate a small town.

Am I dying to know what it's like to be fucked by those two cocks? Yes. Absolutely.

But I get attached. I love and I lose, and people let me down. I don't need this pain.

“What are you doing?” Krampus asks in that boomy voice, a thunderstorm contained within flesh.

“A sweater.”

“Obviously. It looks the same as the elves’, just bigger.”

“That’s because it’s for someone bigger.”

“Indeed.” He takes a beat. “Are you aware I’m the one who regulates the house’s heat and light, little lamb? You can *ask* if you want it warmer or brighter.”

My gaze shoots up to meet his again. Warmth spreads across my chest, and then I notice the emphasis he put on *ask*. Ah. He wants me to beg. I’ve never seen someone who liked that so much.

I roll my eyes and pretend my face is not on fire. “No, thanks. It’s not for me, anyway.”

Krampus’s eyes go wide for half a second. I almost miss it. He schools his features after a moment. “Who?” he asks, his voice getting ever hoarser.

It’s impossible to stop the spread of warmth this time. The jealousy on his face is undeniable.

A smile stretches my lips as I stare at him. “Are you *jealous?*”

Krampus narrows his eyes, but he doesn’t reply. He just waits, leaning forward.

I shrug and raise the wannabe-sweater so he can see it. “Of course it’s for you. Why do you think I asked you to make me yarn in your favorite color? I didn’t expect it would be black, but this one is so pretty.”

Krampus doesn’t reply again. When I put the sweater down and look at him, I can’t stop the snort that escapes me. Very lady-like.

His brows are all the way up his forehead. I’ve never seen him this surprised.

“You’re making *me* a sweater?” he asks, as if he’s heard me wrong.

“Yeah. Do you think this will fit?”

Krampus works his face into the empty expression he usually has. “Haven’t you noticed I have no use for these?” His lips quirk despite the complaint, a hint of fang peeking out.

I hop up and stride over, holding the half-finished sweater against his broad shoulders. “Just making sure it’s the right size.” My hands linger, tracing the firm muscles beneath the soft wool. “For your Christmas present.”

He catches my wrists with a low rumble. “As I said, I don’t need it. I don’t feel cold, and I certainly wouldn’t die from it.”

I try to free my wrists, but he’s much stronger. “Well, but it’s a present, so you have to accept it.”

“Since when?”

“Since always! I like to knit, and I want to knit you something!”

“Knit something for the elves,” he insists, still holding my hands aloft.

“I’ve already done that. They have three sweaters each and some socks. Let me measure it!” I struggle and squirm, but there’s an unstoppable smile on my face. Krampus growls in frustration, but it’s obviously fake. The quirk on his lip has tilted even higher. It’s almost a lopsided smile now.

“Fine,” he relents, but he doesn’t let go of my wrists. Instead, he pulls me closer, smirking as I realize the only way to put the sweater on him is to climb onto his lap.

Well, two can play this game.

I straddle him without a second thought, feeling the heat between our bodies. I try to ignore the desire tightening between my hips, but I have to spread my legs to fit around him, and the movement sends a breeze between my thighs.

Oh, yes. I still only have dresses, and I’m still missing my underwear. And now I’m straddling him. Nice.

My face goes extra-warm. I raise the sweater to hide behind it and pretend I'm measuring it against his frame. It's because of that position that I notice it.

Crap. The sweater might even fit around his neckline and shoulders, but it won't pass his horns. Shit, how could I have forgotten those?

I grunt. "There's no way I forgot you had horns," I grumble, dropping my hands.

Krampus smirks. "Of course. Because my horns are so discreet."

"I can't believe I'll have to undo everything!"

Krampus forces my hands apart until the sweater falls from them. He picks it up and throws it over his shoulder. I gasp at how nonchalant he is after abusing my things.

"Kitten," he says, his hand now curling around my thigh. The heat of his palm on my exposed skin makes me clench. "If you want it, I'll just spell it into a fitting sweater."

Pouting my lower lip, I shake my head. "The whole point of a gift is the effort, right? You said so yourself."

Krampus's brows raise again, then his gaze softens. "If you want to give me something, there's something else I would like." He releases my wrist, that hand closing around my waist.

"And what is that?"

Krampus holds me in place, not letting me get out of the chair. He pulls me even closer, our faces lining up. His pine-and-pepper scent washes over me. Krampus leans forward, the tip of his nose brushing up my jaw to my ear. A major shiver rocks my body. My hands shoot out to grab his shoulders.

"I'm obsessed with the sounds you make when you come on my fingers," he murmurs. His hand slides under my dress. "Let me hear you moan my name."

CHAPTER 23



OLIVIA

Remors of need pulse through me as I feel Krampus's cocks hardening in his pants, pressed against my thigh. His thumb teases the sensitive spot under my breast, sending shivers down my spine. Back and forth, he moves without touching me where I need it most. My nipples grow taut, and my breath hitches.

"Someone's eager," he murmurs, his voice low and husky.

"Someone's cocky," I reply, my voice wavering as arousal courses through me.

Krampus grins and curls his hand around my thigh, reaching between my legs from behind to touch me. He slides a thick finger along my pussy folds, gathering my wetness before skating his fingers over my clit.

Slowly.

Torturous circles, first around my clit, then small circles right on it. My eyelids flutter shut, pleasure swelling between my thighs.

He knows how I like it, being careful with his long nails while applying just the right amount of pressure. I'm helpless to my desires, scratching at his broad shoulders and bucking into his hand.

It's impressive how thick his fingers are—two are the girth of a fat human cock—and yet how he manages to be so careful with me. He picks up his speed, gathering more of my arousal to make the gliding easy.

“Always so needy,” Krampus teases, a wicked grin on his face.

“Can you blame me?” I gasp out between moans.

His other hand finally closes around my breast, twisting my nipple between his fingers. My body shudders, growing heavy. I arch my back, my head dropping. Krampus holds me in place with a hand around my ribs. He hooks his thumb around the cleavage of my dress and pulls it down until he exposes my breast.

“Krampus!” I cry out, glancing over my shoulder and covering my breast with one hand. “The elves...”

“They won’t walk in here. I would know, and I would stop them.” He forces my hand away and gapes at my exposed breast. He grunts his appreciation. “You’re so pretty. So soft. Fuck, how can such a small body hold such fire?”

“Just because I don’t take your shit?” I retort, trying to maintain some control in our banter. I peer at him through heavy-lidded eyes, but Krampus has a smile on his face.

“Yes. I love to watch you fight, kitten.” He bends and captures my nipple with his lips. Krampus sucks it into his mouth, and I shudder with the pressure, a lustful moan escaping me. His tongue wraps around my nipple, flicking, teasing.

I keep waiting for him to stick his fingers in me, but he never does it. He focus solely on my pleasure, solely on massaging my clit, following my lead as I shift my hips.

Krampus pops my breast free, then tilts his head up. His tongue trails a path up my neck to my chin, stopping at my lips. My heartbeat races. We haven’t kissed yet. We did worse things, but we haven’t kissed. This feels much more intimate.

He traces a line across my lips. I give him entrance, twisting my tongue around his. It’s strange, but not bad. The tip of his tongue is thinner, and it takes some getting used to. Besides, I keep darting my tongue back to my mouth when I touch one of his sharp teeth.

Krampus isn't fazed. He explores every inch of my mouth, tasting me, his nostrils flared as he drinks me in. He closes his teeth around my bottom lip, teasing without hurting me.

Then he's back to my nipple, wrapping his tongue around it, tugging, sucking. The image of him doing the same to my clit flashes across my mind.

"Krampus," I moan, the word coming out languid, sultry.

Krampus's growl vibrates through me. "Fuck, I want to fill you up, kitten. I need to watch you come on my cock."

His dirty words make me tremble, my body swelling with desire. As waves of lust threaten to consume me, I let go. I lose myself in the skillful ministrations of Krampus's fingers, my body tightening as I near the edge.

"Krampus," I moan, surrendering to the pleasure only he knows how to give me. "Krampus, I'm coming. Let me come, please, please." The pleading comes out on its own, without Krampus even teasing me.

His cocks bulge in his pants even harder. The growl coming from his chest is much deeper. "Cream my fingers, kitten. Let me see you come apart."

And I do. My body just *obeys*, no hesitation. The explosion sets off fireworks inside me, lights popping in the back of my lids. I cry out, only then thinking of the poor elves back in the kitchen. My body doesn't care. It quivers in ecstasy.

Krampus pulls his hand back and guides me to sit on his lap. He folds an arm around me, keeping me safe and warm against his chest.

Then he brings his shining fingers to his lips.

"Such a good little kitten," he purrs, lapping up my juices from his fingers, savoring the taste.

I can only smile at him, the afterglow making me float. Krampus cradles me against him, keeping me close, his nose pressed to my temple. In this moment, I yearn for time to stop, to savor this strangely delicious connection between us forever.

CHAPTER 24



KRAMPUS

Olivia is not in the bedroom, nor is she in her bathroom. A lord of my station should never follow a human around like this, so I make it look like I'm just bored, walking around the house.

There's no denying the way Matilda looks at me when I walk into the kitchen. She knows I never go there, and there's only one reason for me to enter the place.

For a heartbeat, I feel mocked under the surprised stare of the fairy.

Then I remember that they all live here because I let them. One roar sends them all scattering. Of course, the fairy *grins*. She's irritating like that. I whirl around and leave the kitchen.

I enjoy having Olivia nearby. Even if she's sitting with her knitting and I'm merely watching her. That already brings me a sense of peace. All these years, I've been daydreaming about vengeance...

Now, I only care about spending every minute with her.

Flaring my nostrils, I search for her scent. It comes from the half-open door to my workroom.

I slip inside and pause, struck still as stone. Olivia stands bathed in the golden glow of magical light, utterly engrossed in examining an intricately carved mask.

The mask is a vision of sharp violence, pale wood shaped into a wendigo's snarling visage. Olivia traces a fingertip along one curling antler, her gaze distant, her lips parted.

I have this ever-burning urge to touch her. Slowly, I close the door and approach the table.

Olivia stirs as if she feels my presence. She doesn't turn.

"Krampus," she says, her voice dreamy. "Are there many other creatures like you in this world?"

My heart squeezes. After humanity claimed this world, the rest of us were meant to fade into myth and legend.

Yet here stands a woman who makes me yearn to shred those stories to ribbons.

I close the distance between us with a few swift strides. "There are," I say. "Or at least, there were. That is a wendigo. You've seen the elves and the fairies. All the legends humans tell are based on reality."

"What else is out there? Werewolves? Orcs?"

"Yes and yes. And many others."

"Why didn't I know about this?"

"Humans always feared what's different," I tell her, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "Your numbers now are too big. You'd easily annihilate the weaker creatures."

Frustration boils in my veins. Humans have been hunting others since the very beginning. I've been adored as a protector for generations, then feared as a spirit of punishment, but they would not hesitate to end me if they wanted to.

They could try. There's only one human whom I would keep safe. And she's standing right in front of me.

Olivia's eyes flash, brighter than the moon. "A whole secret world," she breathes. Olivia's lips twist. "It's so strange, isn't it? I've always felt so out of place with other humans and with you... I mean, the elves, Matilda, and all." Her cheeks go pink, and her voice drops to a murmur. "I really enjoy spending time here."

A growl rumbles in my chest at her words. I pluck the mask from her fingers and put it down. Olivia turns to face me, and I cage her against my worktable. My hands curl

around her hips, and I haul her up. Olivia lands on the table, spreading her legs so I can fit between her knees. Her pulse flutters in her throat. I lower my head until my cheek brushes hers, being careful with my horns.

I move my head down, nuzzling the crook of her neck. The delicate scent of her skin fills my senses, drawing me in like a moth to a flame. My heart hammers with the force of a thousand storms as I press my face against her, marking her with my scent.

I do it again, from cheek to neck, down her collarbones, then back up.

“Krampus,” she whispers, shivering under my touch. “What are you doing?”

“Marking you,” I murmur against her tender flesh. “In our world, we mark our chosen mates with our scent. It’s a way to claim them, to show the world that they belong to us and we to them.”

Her eyes widen, then soften as understanding dawns. Olivia smiles, her blue eyes sparkling with mischief. “Why are you so anxious about making me yours? Are you that obsessed with me?”

“You have no idea,” I growl. A wave of possessiveness washes over me, surging through my veins and setting my entire being alight.

“Good,” she purrs. “Because I’ve never felt so wanted or so alive before.”

The tension between us grows thick, a palpable energy that crackles in the air. I can feel the heat of her desire matching mine; the pull of our connection is impossible to resist.

Like the first bloom of spring pushing against snow, this feeling inside me is new. Unlike anything I’ve ever felt.

With one swift motion, I bring Olivia up in my arms, her legs flinging around my waist. She gasps in surprise, her small hands pausing on my shoulders.

“Where are you taking me?” she asks in a sultry voice that makes my cocks twitch.

I breathe her scent in. “A mate should be mated, don’t you think? Where is your little vibrating toy?”

CHAPTER 25



OLIVIA

K rampus kicks the door closed behind him, vibrator in hand. A part of me regrets telling him I left the vibrator in the bathroom. There's a new sort of thrill rushing inside my veins as I see this huge, muscular creature prowling toward me with a gigantic bulge in his pants and a vibrator in his hand.

Krampus means business. We've been circling this, with him teasing me, pleasing me, making me feel good... But I know it's about time I repay the favor.

It's about time we had other kinds of fun.

My heart pounds. How will I ever handle someone so massive?

Krampus climbs onto the enormous bed as I scoot toward the pillows. Shit, he's so big. Broad and big and muscular, and he has *two cocks* that I don't know how I'm supposed to take.

I'm not sure I can take even one of them. The man is eight feet tall, after all.

As if reading my mind, he drops the vibrator next to us and covers my body with his. His lips crash into mine, hunger clear in his probing kiss. That wicked tongue of his slips between my lips, stroking, teasing—I shudder at the skill behind each caress.

I grow more confident with every passing second. My arms fold around his neck, and my tongue tests every pointy tooth. He's patient. He's always been so patient with this.

Krampus pulls back and wraps my hair around his knuckles. He strokes the strands with his thumb as he nibbles along my jaw and down my pulse.

There's something so powerful about surrendering to him. In giving in. He could rip through me with those teeth or break me in two with a hand, but I trust him so much that I know he would never hurt me.

Krampus finds my nipples, and I gasp, arching into his rough touch. He kneads one breast, then the other, his tongue lapping at my collarbones, eating up my taste. I pant harder the closer his tongue gets to my sensitive nipples.

He grabs the cleavage of my dress and shreds it with one yank. I gasp, a filthy smile spreading across my face. Turns out I enjoy having him rip my clothes apart. It's like he needs me too much, too hard.

My breasts bounce free, but only for a second. Krampus pinches one nipple between two fingers and closes his mouth around the other. He sucks hard, his eyes fastening on my face as I moan with delight.

His rough palm rakes down my sides, igniting my skin. He works the dress out of my body, then brings his lips down my torso. Krampus traces circles with his tongue around my nipples, down my stomach, and around my navel. He explores every part of me with the patience of a saint and the curiosity of an explorer.

Krampus curls a hand around my thigh, spreading me as his tongue teases the inside of my leg—every inch receives lavish attention from his tongue until I'm writhing beneath him, desperate for more. My pussy weeps, getting slicker and slicker with every passing second.

"Please," I whimper, threading my fingers through his shaggy hair.

A low chuckle rumbles through his chest. "Patience."

Krampus picks up my vibrator and clicks the power button until it hums softly. His eyes dance with mischief as they lock

with mine. The rhythm of the buzz intensifies, sending shivers of anticipation up my spine.

I'm so desperate for his touch that I'm trembling.

Krampus finally touches the vibrator on my pussy. I jump out of bed, crying out. He moves his hand until it's sprawled over my hips, holding me down.

"You like this, kitten?" he asks with a hungry smirk.

I nod frantically, my fingers digging into the pelt as his big hands paw at me, and his tongue teases the spot just over my pussy. I arch into the sensation, groaning.

The vibrator slides between my legs, slippery with my desire. It's the most sinful feeling imaginable. I squirm under the intensity of the sensations. Still, he holds me down, keeping me still.

Krampus circles my clit in a teasing dance. I'm a puddle of need beneath him, begging for more. He watches, studying every move, every shift, and every cry. Krampus watches me as if he wants to commit every action to memory so he can undo me over and over again.

The vibrator tightens the pleasure between my hips. I arch into it, my entire body trembling with the threat of...

"Oh fuck!" I cry out.

And then, my whole world explodes.

A powerful orgasm rattles me to my core. My moans shudder out of me as another wave crashes. Colors wash over me like a kaleidoscope. Sweat beads on my forehead, and my breathing grows ragged. I'm still trying to catch my breath when Krampus turns the vibrator off and throws it off the bed.

Our gazes lock as Krampus nuzzles between my thighs. I can barely believe what he's doing before his tongue curls around my clit.

My hips jump off the bed again. The pleasure is almost too much. Krampus holds me down with one hand, no matter how much I squirm.

His tongue is fucking amazing.

It flicks my clit, then curls around it in a way that no human ever could. He sucks on the bundle of nerves, then circles it, then vibrates the tip of his tongue like a snake. My moan is long and full of bliss.

Nothing will ever compare to this.

Blindly, I grab his horns. Krampus falters for a second before I steer him against my pussy. He doesn't complain. He opens his mouth wide and French-kisses my pussy with such fervor I'm melting.

Unlike the men I've met, Krampus devours my pussy with hunger. As if I have the sweetest nectar, the only thing that could feed him. Krampus rubs his face against me, growls against my folds, and swallows my arousal, always watching me. His eyes are always on me.

Once I think there's no way it can get better, he slips a finger inside me. One finger of his is almost as thick as an average human cock. And unlike most men, Krampus knows exactly what to do with my body. He cocks his finger inside me, gently dragging the tip along my inner wall.

It's only then that I notice his nails are much, much shorter. Shit. Did he trim his nails *just to make me come?*

There's no time to comment on this. Krampus pulls back, sitting up. He still holds me down with one hand, the other between my legs. I grab the pelt again.

He picks up the pace, driving me to the brink once more. He pumps his finger into me, stretching me and pushing me closer to the edge. Krampus's eyes lock onto mine, and suddenly there's an unspoken understanding between us.

He's no longer the frightening creature from winter nightmares but someone intent on pleasuring me beyond my wildest dreams. I surrender to the feeling, giving in to the desire that pulls me towards him.

"You're so fucking beautiful," he says in a low growl. "Spread on my bed. Naked. All flushed from the orgasm I gave you."

“So... possessive,” I breathe out.

“Yes. You’re mine, kitten. All mine.” He grabs my breast, still pumping inside me. “This pretty tit is mine.” He pushes two fingers past my lips and touches my tongue. “This feisty mouth is mine.” Krampus slides a second finger into my pussy, stretching me wonderfully. My eyes roll to the back of my head, and I suck on his fingers. “And this pretty, tight pussy here? Who does it belong to?”

I moan against his hand. Krampus crooks both fingers now, pushing against that spot inside me. I frown in concentration, chasing my orgasm.

He slows down. My eyes snap open, and I almost *sob*.

“Who does this wet, needy cunt belong to, kitten?” He drags his fingers, teasing me, until my legs quiver and my heart is on the verge of bursting through my chest.

“You,” I mumble around his fingers. “I’m yours, all yours.”

“Who does this pussy belong to, kitten?”

“To Krampus. It belongs to Krampus.”

With a wicked, possessive smile, Krampus doubles his speed. My hips fly off the bed, and he keeps me there, hovering as he fucks me into oblivion with *just his fingers*. My mind focuses on this moment, the place we connect. My body tightens, tightens impossibly.

With one final thrust, I feel myself falling apart in the most glorious way possible. My body quakes as I scream his name, my release washing over me in a tidal wave of ecstasy.

And there’s more. Pressure grows inside me as he keeps pumping, right behind my clit, and I burst open. I squirt on his hand, my feet digging into the pelts, searching for purchase. Krampus growls, loud and hoarse, but he doesn’t stop.

“That’s it, kitten,” he praises me in a warm voice. “Give me everything.”

I bite down on his fingers, but he doesn’t seem to care. He keeps pumping until my legs give out, and my mind goes

blank, and I can't take anymore.

Krampus rests me on the bed. I pull gulps of air in, shaking. He pushes my hair away from my neck, then leans and rubs his cheek there again.

He's marking me. It's a primal thought.

And I love it. I love belonging to him.

Struggling against slumber, I reach an arm for Krampus's bulge. He's already made me feel so good—better than I've ever felt. I didn't even know I was a squirter. Now, he deserves some love.

I move for his cocks. Will it fit inside me? I don't know. But I'll try my best. My fingers graze it, but Krampus pulls back.

When I open my eyes, he's hovering above me with one of those wicked smirks.

“Do you want my cock so bad, kitten?” He smiles as if he isn't affected, but his voice is sultry with need.

I nod. “I do.”

Krampus undoes his buttons. “Then beg for it, kitten.”

CHAPTER 26



OLIVIA

K rampus has a thing for me begging, it's obvious. And I liked to think I'm an independent girl who works hard to help her family and maintain herself, but the second he calls me *kitten*, I'm dumping feminism out of the window.

Maybe it's because I feel small, protected, and cherished. It should be shameful, but I'm so full of desire that there's no space for shame.

I whimper as I arch my back, reaching for his bulge without touching it. He keeps himself an inch too far away.

With a wicked, knowing grin on his face, Krampus pushes his pants down. His cocks bounce free. The upper cock taps his lower stomach, twitching with need, the head leaking precome. But it's the lower that has me shivering with lust.

It's ribbed, the thick body tapering to a fat head, leaking so much precome it runs down his length. The blue of his skin makes it look like the perfect vibrator, but I know it's going to be warm and silky when I touch it.

"You look like you're dying to put your hands on me, kitten," Krampus says, his voice thick. "Beg for it. Beg for my cock," he growls.

Before I can complain, he drags one long finger along my swollen pussy, teasing me. For someone so big, he has perfect control of even the smallest of his motions. The tip of his finger barely grazes my clit, and it still sends a shock through my body.

I whimper. “No more. I’m too sensitive.”

He chuckles, arching an eyebrow. “You only came twice. What male leaves his female with such few orgasms?”

Laughter chokes in my throat, but I’m buzzing all over, and the sound becomes a mewl when it leaves my mouth. I brace to scoot away from Krampus. Once I’m on my knees, I’ll manage to keep his hands away from my pussy long enough for me to grab his cock.

Krampus is faster. He grabs my ankle, dragging me back. The primal show of strength makes me clamp my thighs together. If he sniffs how wet I am, he’ll never let me touch him. He’ll keep teasing me until I’m nothing more than a bundle of nerves.

I slam my knees closed. “Please, let me touch you.” I meet his eyes, the gray burning like metal. “*Please.*”

His shoulders tense, squared, his muscles tightening, barely restrained. “You can touch me, kitten. Put your little paws all over my cocks.”

My fingers curl around his thick, ribbed cock, precome slick against my palm. Too thick to close my hand around. The bumps along his flesh are smooth against my hand, as smooth as I remember.

Krampus jerks his hips, pumping once into my hand. It’s so easy for him to glide, my hand slick. He smells amazing—nothing like humans. My mouth waters, and I wonder about his taste.

Krampus pumps his hips again. He shivers, grabbing my thigh possessively, squeezing. “Pleasure me, kitten,” he demands, his eyes heavy with lust.

I trace my gaze down his muscular chest and stomach, admiring every ridge and plane. How can I find a monster so attractive? Krampus is too strong, too big. He’s literally blue.

A strange feeling grows inside my chest. I push it down as I focus on my task.

I pump my fist up and down, coating him in the sweet, musky precome. With my other hand, I force my body into a sitting position. Krampus doesn't let go of my leg. It's like he needs to touch me all the time.

Reaching out, I grab his second cock with my other hand. This one is less thick and looks more similar to a human cock, though still bigger than any I've ever seen. Also, there's this soft, flappy skin near the base. His precome is also different.

While his ribbed cock leaks a thin, oily precome, almost like lube, the other one weeps a white, thick precome that smells sweet.

I pick up my speed, marveling at how beautiful both cocks are. Maintaining a rhythm, I look up at Krampus. "What's the difference again?"

"Both give pleasure, but this," he grabs my right wrist, the hand pumping his ribbed cock, "is for you. The other, for breeding, though I know not if humans can bear my young. I never tried."

That annoying feeling swells inside me again. The thought of Krampus not knowing because I'm the first human who touches him... A fire starts inside me, something almost... possessive.

I push it all down, leaning closer and licking my lips. "Let me suck you." I look up at him through my lashes. "Please."

Krampus trembles with lust, his eyes filled with an animalistic hunger. He growls and snaps at me, his hand clutching my thigh and yanking me closer to him. I squeeze his cocks out of instinct as I hit the mattress.

Before I can say anything, he grabs both of my thighs and flips me into the air until I hang upside down in front of him. Blood rushes to my head, my hair piling on the mattress above me.

"Wha—?" I gasp, surprised by the sudden change in position. My breasts brush my collarbones, and a chuckle escapes my lips despite the awkwardness. "This is new."

Krampus's ribbed cock taps against my face, twitching with anticipation. I land my hands on his thighs to keep some balance.

"Fuck, I need to taste you again," he grumbles. "Your scent is driving me mad." His voice is so hoarse I almost can't believe it comes from him. Before I tell him he doesn't need to, Krampus devours me. He lowers his head toward my exposed pussy and closes his lips around it.

His long tongue wraps around my clit, pleasuring me with expert precision. Hypersensitivity makes me try to close my thighs, but Krampus doesn't let me. He spreads me as he laps at my wetness, tasting every inch of me. I shiver and shiver, my eyes closing in pure bliss.

Blindly, I move my hand down his body, searching for what I need. I grab the cock closest to me and guide it into my mouth.

It's so thick that I can barely fit the head past my lips. The sweet taste of Krampus's precome floods my senses, unlike any human's I've ever tasted. Its oily quality helps it glide along my tongue as I relax my jaw and take him deeper.

Not much. There's no way I can fit even half of him in my mouth. So, I take advantage of the position and spit on his cockhead, letting my saliva drip down his hardness. Then I bring it back to my mouth and suck half of it while my hand pumps the other half.

Krampus's body tenses as my mouth encircles him. A rumble vibrates through his chest, traveling to mine. I reach my other hand to his second cock and work my fist up and down, spreading his precome.

His nails dig into my thighs. Krampus's hips move as if he can't help it. I lap at the slit of his cock. More and more of his oily precome fills my mouth, and I have to open it often to let his precome slide down to my hand. It's getting sloppy in here, with so much saliva and precome. The smell of sex fills the room, and I can't get enough of it.

And his precome tastes as good as I expected. It's sweet and spicy, but not too much. And for some reason, the more I swallow, the hotter I feel. My skin feels like it's sparkling.

Through it all, Krampus doesn't falter. He moves his head, circling his lips around my folds, lapping at me. He brings me higher and higher, a new, strong orgasm tightening between my hips.

How is that even possible?

His attention becomes overwhelming, and just as that happens, Krampus changes.

Krampus pulls back enough that his tongue still whips at my sensitive clit, but the rest of me is free for his use. He inserts one finger into my pussy, slowly. He lets me adapt to it. It's easy and delicious, as if my body could take anything. Then he pushes one into my asshole, causing me to clench around him.

I moan against his cock, my eyes rolling to the back of my head. Krampus's fingers are thick, twice or thrice the girth of a human finger. This invasion stretches me far too much for comfort, but his attention to my clit makes it so enjoyable.

It feels so good that the orgasm growing in the back of my hips climbs even higher.

His cockhead swells in my mouth. Krampus is getting close, too. He's finally going to come. I can't believe how long he lasts.

My pumping fist hits something new. The skin at the base of his upper cock swells strangely, but I'm too far gone to pay it any mind. There are fireworks inside me.

Pleasure rocks through me, and my body catches fire. I cry out, moaning, salivating, and crying against Krampus's cock. My body tightens, lights popping in the back of my lids, and his tongue pushes me off the edge. I clench around his fingers, the most powerful orgasm I've ever had bursting like a supernova inside me.

Krampus growls against my pussy, the vibrations sending aftershocks through me. His hips pump now once, twice, the

head hitting the back of my throat. I gag. He growls again. With a final grunt, he reaches his own climax.

And it's unlike anything I've ever seen.

The cock in my mouth spurts a jet of oily come, thicker than his precome. It hits me in the throat, and I gag as I pull back, but it keeps coming, then hits me in the nose, and I choke.

His second cock unleashes a torrent of hot come that hits my stomach in thick, long sprays before running down to my chin. It keeps coming. Krampus covers me in his come, so much that the white liquid runs down my body, covering my breasts and dripping onto my face.

“Wow,” I laugh between gasps for air, “that’s a lot.”

Krampus catches his breath and grins devilishly. “Get used to it, kitten. I intend to keep you covered in it.”

CHAPTER 27



KRAMPUS

The blanket lands on my lap, soft wool brushing my thighs. The carefully woven knit threads have fibers of bright red, deep green, and soft white. The craftsmanship is undeniably well done.

Still, I don't understand what it's doing across my legs.

I glower at the offending item, then glare at the woman responsible.

Olivia stands before me, hands on her hips, pale hair falling over her shoulders like spun silver. She grins, and I can't help the tug in my gut.

I've lived long, but I've never had a human make me feel like this. It's not her pretty face alone, not even her curvy body, clad in that small dress.

Every single word that spills out of her mouth makes me *feel something*.

"What is this?" I ask, pulling my upper teeth as I pick up the *thing* between two fingers.

"A blanket, obviously. Your living room is too dark. There's only leather and stone. I thought you could use some color."

"Then you thought wrong. I need no such thing."

"Of course you do! It'll improve your mood."

I blink at her, arching an eyebrow. "My mood?"

Olivia grins back at me. “Too much doom and gloom, Krampus. Lighten up.”

My eyes flash, the familiar burn igniting behind them. “Kitten. You got it all wrong. *I* am the one who gives orders here. You plead, and you obey.”

Olivia tilts her chin up, refusing to back down. The fire in my veins intensifies at her defiance—and at the responding heat coiling low in my belly.

Fuck, I enjoy her defiance a little too much.

“And I thought your mood was improving. Guess I was wrong. If you’re going to be this grumpy all the time, maybe I should leave,” she shoots, crossing her arms over her chest.

Narrowing my eyes, I glare at her. Does she expect me to *ask nicely*? To thank her for this ridiculous thing? I didn’t ask for it, and I didn’t ask for her.

Do I enjoy her presence, her smell, and the way her pussy squeezes my fingers? Of course. But just because I scent-marked her, it doesn’t mean she’s going to order me around.

She should know by now that *I* am the one doing her a favor by letting her live.

“Then leave.” The words escape before I can cage them, bitter on my tongue.

I grunt, the sound more like a growl than anything else. Leaning back, I look away from her. Let her leave. She’ll come crawling back, her pride worn away by the raging storm outside. She’s no fool.

Olivia’s arms drop to her sides. My gaze moves to her again. Olivia’s eyes widen, her bravado faltering. Shit. I curse the traitorous part of me that sent her away.

She recovers, her shoulders squaring. Of course. Of course she’s a fool, and she’s going to defy me. *Again*. Isn’t that exactly what I like about her?

“Fine,” she shoots, clenching her jaw.

“Fine,” I echo, unable to keep the sarcasm from my tone. My fingers dig into the arms of the chair, the old wood groaning under my grip. I force my gaze back to the fireplace.

Olivia stomps out. The room goes silent, save for the crackling of firewood and the howling storm outside. I relax in the chair. Surely she’ll give up. Once dinner’s ready, I’m certain I’ll find her sitting at the dining table, pretending nothing happened.

Her feet march back into the room. I look up and grind my teeth together, not to say anything.

Olivia wears her boots and her coat, closed just under her chin. Her legs are exposed since she only has dresses. Her backpack is over her shoulder. It’s a struggle to keep my eyes from widening at the sight. Regret tightens a knot in my throat.

She pauses in front of me, her hand clutching the bag’s strap. Her gaze digs into my skin, as if trying to read my thoughts. She won’t find anything; I’ve spent too long perfecting this facade.

“Already said goodbye to the elves,” she says. The words are light, but I can hear the hurt beneath them. “Got all my stuff, too. So, I guess this is it.” She clears her throat. “Thanks for saving me and letting me eat your food. And...” She interrupts herself.

Something squeezes in my chest. I don’t like this.

“Good luck with the storm,” I reply, keeping my voice steady. I can’t let her see any signs of weakness. I’ve done that far too often since she arrived.

“Ha!” Olivia snorts, her blue eyes flashing with anger. “You think I’ll come crawling back, begging you to let me stay? Not in your wildest dreams, Krampus.”

“Suit yourself,” I mutter, clenching my jaw so hard it aches. “I don’t care if you die out there,” I lie, and it’s so ridiculous and tastes so awful that I’m sure she sees right through me. “Just do that away from my lands.”

Olivia’s face contorts in anger and pain. Shit, she looks even prettier with her blue eyes on fire. Finally, she snaps and

storms to the door, her boots stomping against the wood floors. She grabs the front door knob and pulls it.

As she opens the door, an icy gust of wind invades the room. It's nothing for me, but for her? I watch her, fingers tapping against the chair, my face empty. She has to give up. She has to understand that it's too cold for her to venture into the woods. My jaw works, gnashing teeth together as I suppress emotions clawing at my insides.

She pauses, her hand on the door knob, as if waiting for me to say something. To stop her. A flicker of sadness crosses her gaze, and I feel a pang in my chest. But I remain silent. I say nothing, even as my heart aches.

“Goodbye, Krampus,” Olivia shoots as she turns away.

And then she's gone, swallowed by the swirling snowstorm. The door slams shut, leaving me alone in the silence of my home. The fire crackles, its warmth mocking me as a coldness settles in my chest. My fingers close around the blanket, still stretched over my legs.

I refuse to go after her, even as my insides ache. Even as I regret every word.

Leaving was her choice. And I will not chase a human who doesn't want to stay.

CHAPTER 28



OLIVIA

*M*y biggest problem in life has always been that I can't stand up for myself. How I can't say *no*, how I can't impose boundaries. I've never been a proud person, quite the opposite, and that has brought me problems often.

I never thought I'd find trouble for being too stubborn.

Why did I leave the house? I can't believe I was this stupid. I can't believe I'm still stupid enough to trudge in deep snow, putting distance between Krampus and me, between his protection and warmth and my shivering body.

I can't believe I'm such an idiot.

There's something about Krampus that starts a fire I had no idea I had. He makes me want to stand up, to challenge him, to defy his orders.

It's fun when we're bantering and it ends up with me coming on his fingers.

Not so fun when I'm knee-deep in snow, my legs numb, soaked with icy water, snowflakes pounding against my face.

The trail vanished under fresh snow. I don't even know where I'm going. The best I can do is follow downhill, since I know the city is at the base of the mountain.

Icy branches snap under my boots. Breathing is hard, and breathing amid a snowfall feels like such a task. I flare my nostrils, but there's so much snow hitting my face that it's like being underwater. More flakes cover my eyelashes, and it's getting harder and harder to see.

Silence. Even the animals hide from this chill. The only sounds are the blowing of the wind, my boots crunching the snow, and my labored breath as I struggle to dredge ahead.

Why did I have to be so headstrong?

I pause, closing my ungloved hands around my eyes so I can try to find a trail. There's none. There's just too much snow.

Fear clutches at my heart. Am I going to freeze to death? My fingers are already chilled, unfeeling in the cold winter air. The snow that hits my hair and melts against my neck runs down my back in a trickle of ice. I shiver with intense cold as I glance up, searching for the sun.

If I don't make it to New Obernzell until nightfall, I'm fucked. Fucked as in *dead*. If I'm this cold in the morning, I won't make it through the night.

Pausing again, I wonder if I should turn back. That would be wise. Let this go. Swallow this stupid pride that only comes up when I want to challenge Krampus.

But when I look over my shoulder, I can't see my steps in the snow. The falling flakes are already piling up, covering my tracks. I won't find my way back, either. Fear sinks into my bones.

A branch cracks in the distance. At least there's another animal out, suffering through the storm with me. I imagine a deer huddled against the trees, trying to find food.

Another branch snaps, this time a thicker one that makes a shot-like sound. The animal must be quite heavy.

My stomach drops. Is it a bear?

My heart races. I peer between snow-custed firs, but shadows lurk too close together. How do I fight a bear? My breathing comes out fast. I rake my brain for the verse.

If it's black, you fight back; if it's brown, you... Fuck. Is a bear about to eat me? I can't stand a chance against a brown bear. Do we even have brown bears on this mountain?

A presence looms. I can't see it. I can't see what it is, but I feel it—every nerve in my body is alert and buzzing. I lick my dry lips, my gaze darting amid the trees.

“Krampus?” I call out, the wind swallowing my question.

No answer.

The eerie silence presses against my chest, suffocating me. The chilling wind whispers through the branches above, rustling the leaves in a sinister melody. Snow melts into my clothes, seeping into my skin as the cold stings and numbs my body. My fight-or-flight instincts trigger each nerve to fire.

I pick up my pace, my heart pounding in my ears. Whatever it is, it's not Krampus, so it might hurt me. My thighs burn as I struggle against the deep snow. My foot snags on a hidden root, and I stumble, catching myself just before falling face-first. I look over my shoulder in fear, sensing the creature's presence growing closer.

Something emerges from the trees, its hulking form lurking amidst the shadows. Confusion floods my mind—it isn't a bear.

No, it's nothing I've ever seen. It's no animal.

It's monstrous.

My jaw drops. The creature's terrifying appearance sends shivers down my spine—sharp claws, glowing eyes that pierce through the darkness, black fur draped over its shoulders like a cloak. Its enormous, muscular body is topped with a deer-like skull adorned with massive antlers, completing the nightmarish visage.

My mind rushes back to something Krampus said. How others like him existed, how they hid in the forest, away from humans' eyes. This is one of them. It has to be one of them.

Frozen in fear, I gape at the grotesque creature, my breaths shallow and panicked. My heart hammers against my rib cage, threatening to burst free. I take a slow step back, but the creature follows, studying me, a snarl escaping its lipless mouth.

It's a predator. And it's hungry.

A sudden thought races through my mind: if this is a predator and living so close to New Oberzell...

Could it be responsible for the deaths of the children? Is this the creature who has been killing them while the people blame Krampus?

It lowers itself, ready to pounce.

With a surge of adrenaline, I whirl around and run away, my survival instincts kicking in. My feet move by themselves, taking me away. I force myself to focus on finding a way out.

Should I climb a tree? Would it follow me? Can I outrun it?

As I sprint through the forest, I hear the creature's heavy footsteps pounding behind me, its growls and snarls echoing through the trees.

Desperation fuels me as I weave through the thick grove, trying to use the environment to my advantage. I push forward. My legs burn with exertion. It's so fucking hard to run in the snow. I wheeze, out of breath. Fear tastes bitter on my tongue.

I must escape; I won't be another victim. I refuse to die here after I survived becoming a sacrifice.

The cold seeps into my bones, making my movements sluggish. Time seems to slow down; each step is an eternity. The creature doesn't falter; its heavy weight crashes into the snow.

It happens fast, even as time slows down. My right foot hooks on a hidden root. My heart jumps to my throat. I try to keep my balance by throwing my arms out, but I was running too fast.

Gravity wins. I topple to the ground. My stomach plummets.

I'm going to die.

My chest hits the ground first, but there's so much snow that I feel nothing. I slam my eyes shut. Pain shoots through my head as it collides with a stone. It explodes in the forefront of my brain—white, hot pain.

Adrenaline still rushes through me. Dazed, I turn belly-up, searching for the creature. It skids to a halt, kicking snow into the air. A starved growl rumbles out of it, its rows of sharp teeth ready to sink into my flesh.

I can't escape. This is it.

I raise my arms to protect myself as the creature leaps towards me.

A blood-curling roar makes the woods tremble, and a second creature jumps out from the trees, pouncing on my chaser in mid-air. Snow flies everywhere, and I shove myself into a seating position.

Krampus's powerful form clashes with the monster. The creature is almost as big as Krampus is, but Krampus is relentless. He roars, landing a punch on the creature's skull. The creature is rattled, but not for long. It snaps its jaws at Krampus, threatening him for interrupting its lunch.

It swipes at Krampus with razor-sharp claws, but Krampus dodges the attack. Enraged, the beast bellows and charges Krampus, arms outstretched. I watch in awe as Krampus stands his ground, facing the oncoming beast without fear.

Something warm sticks to the side of my face. There's too much adrenaline rushing through me to allow relief to settle in, but I'm exhausted. My legs tremble with fear, and I can't stand up. Cold wetness sinks into my back, my legs, and my hands.

Darkness crowds my vision. Another roar shakes me to my core. I don't know who bellowed it. Blood splatters the pristine snow, staining it crimson. My head gets heavy.

Exhaustion weighs me down, but hope grows in my chest. Krampus is here. Krampus came for me.

He snaps off one of the creature's arms with a sickening crunch. I see him holding it in his hand, blood gushing out. My stomach roils.

My vision blurs as the frigid air drains my strength. I
topple back into the snow as I sink into the empty darkness.

CHAPTER 29



KRAMPUS

The wendigo lunges, claws raking toward my face. Blood gushes from the open wound where his arm was, but he doesn't stop. I snarl, grabbing his other wrist and twisting until the bones splinter. The creature shrieks, its fetid breath washing over me.

Wendigos are a fucking nuisance. They're hungry—always hungry, always desperate. Usually they're smart enough to keep a distance from my territory.

But between my place and the barrier, this one must have spent too long without food. And wendigos that go too long without eating change from a nuisance to a peril.

Wendigos go insane from starvation.

Rage burns through my veins, fury at this beast daring to threaten what's *mine*. If he had attacked any other human, I would understand. I would pity both prey and predator.

But not when he tried to attack Olivia. If I had left the house one moment later, it would have been too late.

Closing a hand around his skull, I bash the wendigo into a tree, feeling his bones crack under my grip.

He struggles, shrieking and spitting, but I pin him in place with one hand. I bellow against his skull and slash my newly-grown claws down his chest. Entrails spill into the snow as the creature wails. Still, he struggles and lashes at me with his useless arm.

Another roar. I push him down with a knee and rip his other arm out. His blood covers the snow. By leaving this much blood in the woods, I make sure others won't approach. The wendigo howls.

With the scent of Olivia's fear in the back of my head, I grab his head with both hands and break his neck.

The wendigo's shrieks fade. I stare into his empty eyes, watching the light leave them, and snarl with satisfaction. The beast goes limp in my grip.

I keep a hold around the head, and, with one yank, I tear it clean off his shoulders in a spray of gore. A warning to any other beasts foolish enough to trespass. My roar shakes the trees, echoing through the woods. The head tumbles into the snow, dead eyes gazing at nothing.

I glance at my hands, covered in blood. No use hiding these. Olivia should know exactly who I am. I turn slowly, searching for her.

First, I see the bright color of her coat. Then I see the snow piling atop her stomach. She doesn't move.

Fuck. She isn't moving.

Something lodges in my throat as I run closer. I crash to my knees beside her, brushing the snow away. Her skin is icy, and her breath is shallow.

A patch of red runs down the side of her face. She must have hit a rock when she tripped. Something very similar to despair clutches my heart.

I gather her close, holding her against me. She's so small in my arms, so tiny against my big body. I can hold her easily with one arm. "Olivia, wake up."

She doesn't obey. Her eyes stay closed, and her plump lips are going purple. I shake her again, then slap at her cheeks. My blood-stained hands leave a trail of blood against her white skin. She still doesn't move.

Panic rises in my chest. I can't lose her. Fuck. I can't bear to lose her. Fear tightens in my throat, new and burning and

unbearable.

What have I done?

With Olivia's limp form cradled in my arms, I race through the snow back to my house. Her body is frighteningly cold against my chest, and I fear the worst. The door slams open as I barrel inside, using my shoulder to push it wide.

"Master!" Matilda exclaims, her tiny voice sharp with worry as she flits over on her bright green and blue hummingbird. She takes one look at Olivia's unconscious form and gasps. "What happened to Mistress?"

"Out!" I bark as I rush deeper into the house, letting my magic wash over the place, warming it up.

"Her fingers are purple!" Matilda cries out, following me.

"I have eyes, fairy!"

Striding to the bedroom, I shoot a glare at the fireplace, and a furious fire flares, eating at the logs. Matilda follows me inside as I reach the bed, then circles me once before shooting back to the hallway.

"I'll have the elves prepare warm soup!" she says as she leaves.

"No meat!" I shoot back at her as I grab the pelts over the bed and pull them out.

I lay Olivia gently on the bed, then yank off her wet coat and boots. The snow has melted and sunk into her dress, and she'll freeze off if I leave her like this. Humans have frozen to death in these woods more than once.

My impatience boils over as I grab her cleavage and rip it open. I rip every shred of wet fabric from her, uncaring about her naked body. This is not the time for lust. This is not the time for desire.

She could die because I sent her out. Because it took me too long to kill the wendigo.

Her pale skin lies exposed, the orange of the fire dancing along her curves. Her fingers and toes are an alarming shade

of purple, and I fear frostbite might claim them if I'm not fast enough.

Wrapping her in pelts to preserve her warmth, I urge the fire to burn hotter, stoking it with my magic until it becomes an inferno. It gets uncomfortably hot, but I need her to live.

Misery like nothing I've ever felt clutches my heart.

Taking a seat beside her shivering form, I watch Olivia breathe, counting each shallow rise and fall of her chest. The fear that she might die chokes me, a dark cloud suffocating my thoughts.

Humans are so fragile. So breakable. Maybe because of her fierce personality and how strong she is, I have forgotten how easily they get hurt.

How easily I could lose her.

I've never felt like this for anyone, much less a human. This is a part of me I thought was long dead, and yet...

It hits me like a flash of lightning. How badly I want her. How I desire her body, her words, and her affection. The way I admire how fierce, how impressive she is. How I adore to watch her burn, defying me and challenging everything I say. How I'm obsessed with her laugh, her smile, and her scent.

Olivia is an infuriating, captivating woman. I admire her, I desire her, and I ache for her laughter, even as she glares at me. This is it. It's what humans call *love*, and it's something I didn't even know I could experience.

Closing my hands in fists, I let that truth sink inside me. I allow it to become part of me. I'm in love with a human. The most maddening, gorgeous, and annoying human ever.

But as I study her fragile figure, my heart aches knowing that she may never want me—not really, not forever. Not a monster, a creature of darkness.

That is... if she survives the night.

CHAPTER 30



OLIVIA

My eyes flutter open, blinking against the soft light reflected on the ceiling. The room is dim, with shadows dancing across the walls as a fire crackles in the hearth. My body is heavy and warm, and I stay there, unmoving, staring, cocooned.

A dull pain starts on the side of my head. I slam my eyes shut as my body awakes.

I hurt.

Every. Fucking. Where.

The side of my head throbs. My fingers and toes ache. I curl them, forcing the blood to flow. My fingertips brush wet, hot fabric. There's a heaviness to my limbs, as if I had run a marathon with zero preparation.

Memories flood back. Leaving. So much snow. The creature...

The creature. My eyes snap open again. This weird, menacing creature chased me, and I ran into the woods, then I stumbled, and there was...

Krampus. Krampus saved me. I'm back at his house.

Warmth spreads over me, and it has nothing to do with the heavy furs draped over my body. I snuggle against them, his scent of pine and clove inundating me and calming me. I turn to my side, raising my arms to tug the covers closer.

My hand brushes my breast. My bare breast.

Why am I naked?

A floorboard creaks, and I turn my head, my gaze drifting to the armchair beside my bed. Krampus sits there, elbows propped on his knees, staring into the flames. His chest and arms are matted with dried blood.

Panic spikes in my chest at the sight, memories of sharp claws and gnashing teeth flashing behind my eyes. I gasp and try to sit up.

“Krampus! Are you hurt?” My voice rasps, raw. The words come out almost unintelligible.

Krampus’s head jerks at me. He shoots to his feet and ends the space between us. “The blood isn’t mine,” he assures me, his eyes dancing as he studies my face. “How are you feeling? Does it hurt somewhere? I’ve stopped the bleeding on your head, but I wasn’t sure if that was enough.”

Relief is obvious across his features. Affection and confusion war inside me.

Krampus said he didn’t care if I left and died out there. But that was a lie. He went after me. He rescued me.

Now, he looms over me, all hard muscle and sharp horns backlit by the fire. One large hand brushes my hair back from my face, rough skin grazing my cheek.

“Are you in pain?” His tone is soft, almost tender, belying the worry etched into the lines of his face.

I clear my throat, so my voice comes out clearer. “Yes, actually. My head is pulsing. Everywhere hurts. It’s like a truck ran me over.”

He stares at me for a moment. “I don’t know what that is, but I take it’s nothing good.” He props a knee on the bed, making it dip with his weight. “Besides your head, is there anything hurting bad? Like a broken bone or something?”

I shake my head, but stop once my brain rattles inside my skull. I wince. “No. Just the head.”

Krampus covers the side of my face with a massive hand. I freeze at his touch, staring back at him. A warmth spreads

from his hand across my face, up to the back of my skull. Some of the pressure and most of the pain go away. I sigh.

“Better?” he asks, the warmth disappearing. His hand doesn’t move away. My heartbeat picks up.

“Much better. Thank you,” I tell him as I snug under the furs. Krampus sits back, his hand dropping away.

“What about your fingers and toes?” He pulls the edge of the pelts up to check on my feet. “Can you move them? I wrapped hot towels around your limbs, but I’m not sure how far gone you were.”

My eyes sting. I nod when he meets my eyes. “They’re okay,” I reply. “I can move them just fine.”

His gaze drops from my face. It takes a second too long for him to meet my eyes again.

A blush heats my cheeks as I become aware of my nakedness once more. I swallow, gazing up at Krampus through my lashes. “Um. Why am I naked?”

Krampus’s lips thin into a frown, his brows drawing together. “Your clothes were soaked through, and you were freezing to death. I had to get you out of them before you died of exposure.” He crosses his arms over his broad chest, the dry blood cracking. “I was aware you were foolish, but not suicidal.”

I huff out a breath, irritation prickling under my skin even as the memory of his touch refuses to fade away. “I’ve been here for an eternity, and the storm doesn’t seem like it’s going away. I thought we were getting along, but you’re obviously irritated with my presence. You told me you didn’t care if I died out there.”

My throat hurts, and some pain pulses on the side of my head again. I start to wince, then hold back, not wanting to show weakness.

Krampus reaches out and touches my face again. The pain goes away. “You have to rest. Go back to sleep.”

My head *is* heavy. “What was that thing out there?”

Krampus growls, the sound rumbling in his chest, but when he speaks again, his tone is soft. “Wendigo. He should have known better than to attack you.”

I glance at the blood smeared across his chest again. “Why? Because it’s your territory?”

“Yes.” He tucks the pelts under my chin. “And because you smell like me and no one can touch what I marked as mine.”

Drowsiness makes my eyelids weigh. “I don’t get it. You said you didn’t care if I died.” I close my eyes, soaking in the warmth of the pelts and the scent of him.

Krampus’s answer is almost a murmur. “I lied.”

* * *

When I wake up again, my head is much clearer. There’s almost no pain now as I search for Krampus.

He’s still sitting in the same chair, his chest still covered in dry blood. The only difference is that he’s staring at me now.

He sits next to me on the bed and leans forward, his colossal body shadowing me. “How are you feeling now?”

“Better,” I answer, my voice steady. I even manage to smile. This time, the warmth of the covers is too much. My back is slick with sweat. I raise my arms to push the pelts away, then remember I’m naked.

Oh. But I’m not. I’m wearing my nightshirt.

Grabbing the neckline between two fingers, I arch an eyebrow at Krampus. “When did this happen?”

Krampus cocks his head. “Obviously, between the last time you woke up and now. You weren’t freezing to death anymore, so I put it on.”

So, he saw me naked *again*. Wonderful. And he doesn’t seem fazed *at all*. I imagine he’s not that impressed.

“Thank you, Krampus,” I tell him, sitting up on the bed. “You saved me out there.”

“Are you cold?”

I shake my head. “No. On the contrary, I’m sweating.”

Krampus nods once but says nothing. He keeps staring. I’m about to ask him why when the room temperature drops a little, then a little more. It’s back to comfortable instead of hot.

Oh, yes. Krampus uses magic as his thermostat. I envy him.

“Hungry?” he asks. And I’m not done nodding when he opens his mouth again. “Cricket!” Krampus calls out, his voice colored in demand.

Within moments, the house-elf rushes into the room, carrying a steaming bowl.

“Master,” Cricket says, bowing awkwardly, his worry clear in his large, round eyes. He hands the bowl to Krampus before turning to me. “We’ve been keeping this warm for you, Mistress. I hope you’re feeling better.”

“I am. Thank you, Cricket,” I say with genuine gratitude, touched by his concern for my well-being. “I’m sorry for causing you any trouble.”

Krampus arches his eyebrow so dramatically that I can read what’s on his mind. He’s wondering why I haven’t told him the same thing. I meet his eyes and grin.

“Go.” Krampus dismisses Cricket, who bows before leaving the room. He turns to me, the bowl in one hand and the spoon in the other.

I hold out my hands, but Krampus ignores me. He dips the spoon into the vegetable soup, then brings it up to my lips. I stare. Krampus scowls.

“Eat,” he says with a growl.

I have a thousand questions, but he’s not in the mood. His eyes never leave my face, watching intently as I take small sips of the broth. It’s surprisingly tender.

As I eat, the warmth from the soup spreads through my body, just like the warmth that blooms in my chest from Krampus's attentive care. The crackling fireplace fills my ears, while the scent of burning wood mingles with Krampus's earthy aroma. Everything about this scene feels comforting, and I can't help but feel contentment wash over me.

I want to hold on to this feeling. No matter how short my time with him is,

CHAPTER 31



OLIVIA

*M*y bare feet hit the snow, cold rushing up my skin. I look back, but I see nothing. There's darkness, and the trees. No. No, there's something chasing me. Air puffs out of my mouth, and I widen my eyes, but there are just shadows.

Fear rushes through my veins, telling me to run. And I obey. I run, and I run, though I have no idea where I'm running to. Something jumps out of the trees, slashing claws ready to rip me apart. Air locks in my throat.

I'm going to die. I'm going to die.

A piercing shriek jolts me awake. My heart thunders, my pulse racing. Icy sweat dampens my skin. My fight-or-flight impulse boils in my veins, and my gaze darts left and right, searching for it, searching for...

I'm sitting in bed, and the pelts kicked to my feet. My nightshirt bunches on the top of my thighs, and my fingers curl tight around the furs.

A nightmare. Crimson eyes, jagged teeth, and the rancid stench of rotting flesh. I was just dreaming. But it was so real. My body reacted as if it were real. I tell myself it was a dream, but my hands shake.

Movement in the shadows next to me catches my eye. I jerk, snapping my attention to the silhouette near the window.

Krampus moves from the chair to the edge of the bed, his gray eyes moving over my face. There's a crease between his

brows. His white hair catches the light of the fire, burning gold as he approaches me.

“You’re safe,” he reassures me in a low rumble.

For some reason, my body relaxes in his presence. It’s like I naturally trust that he won’t hurt me. My heartbeat slows down. I close my eyes and sigh.

Krampus’s warm hands curl around me. Before I understand what’s going on, he’s pulled me onto his lap. I’m cocooned against a solid chest, nestled on a muscular thigh. A massive hand strokes my hair.

So gently. I had no idea a man this big could be so careful.

His size dwarfs me, a towering wall of muscle, but his presence grounds me. I press my cheek to his chest, my ear right over the thump-thump of his heart.

“What did you call that creature again?” I ask in a tiny voice.

Krampus doesn’t stop his stroking. “A wendigo. They’re bound to their hunger.” His voice rumbles against my ear and vibrates through his chest. “They respect my territory. They fear me, as they should. But that one was broken. Hunger drove him insane.”

“How can you tell it was a *he*?”

“I can tell. Also, I’ve never heard of a female.”

“Then how do they reproduce?”

Krampus doesn’t reply. He just squeezes me against his chest. After a minute, he tucks my hair behind an ear. “Was the dream about the wendigo?”

“Yeah,” I whisper. “He was chasing me again. It was cold. And dark.”

He pulls me closer, his eyes glowing in the dim light. “You’re here with me. I won’t let that beast near you. No creature in this wood will touch you.”

I never expected kindness from him. This creature of myth, a beast who punishes naughty children. Yet he’s shown me

more compassion than anyone ever has.

“I can’t get its shrieks out of my head,” I admit. He listens without judgment, grasping me like a steady anchor against my terror.

“You’re safe now,” he rumbles again. “Just... avoid running into a snowstorm.”

A chuckle escapes me. “I don’t know. It’s nice knowing you’ll chase me.”

Krampus tenses. What did I say? I glance up at him, and his eyes are darker, his pupils blown wide. He takes a beat, readjusting me on his lap.

Before it gets awkward—and because I’m enjoying his stroking a little too much—I decide to change the subject.

“You know, when I was a kid, I ran away from home twice. The first time, I was out for a few hours before I gave up. The second time, I had a whole plan. I hid in my friend’s tree house, and she’d bring me food. I was out of home for two days.”

“Why would you do that?”

“Because I was a silly child,” I say with a forced laugh. “I wanted my parents’ attention. They were always too busy for me. I think my mother didn’t want kids. And my dad just went along with it because he enjoyed having someone do things for him.” I shrug, stretching a fake smile. “Joke’s on me. None of them missed me for the whole two days. Dad said he thought I was having a tantrum or something in my room. Mom said she found it odd how peaceful it was, but that’s it. They didn’t miss me.” Another small laugh. “This is the first time anyone comes after me when I run.”

Krampus holds me away from his chest. He frowns. “Little lamb. Why are you telling me this with a smile?”

“Because it’s silly.”

“It’s not silly. Your parents are awful.” He bares his teeth, a harsh breath escaping his nose. “Why would you laugh when you tell me that?”

Warmth spreads across my cheeks. I shrug. “I don’t know. Maybe because I don’t want to... bother you. My friends hated it when I talked to them about my family problems, so I tried to make it sound like it wasn’t so bad.”

Krampus curls his nose. “*Friends*. Fuck, these people are awful even by human standards.”

This time, the laugh is real. “Do you really hate all humans just because a few fucked up? We’re billions out there, you know?”

He grunts. “No. Not all humans.”

The way he looks at me is equal parts fire and softness. Heat curls between my thighs, and my heart squeezes. I don’t know if I want to curl up and sleep or bounce on his cock.

Krampus captures a strand of my hair between his meaty fingers. “Don’t change your truth for other people, little lamb. If they can’t take you as you are, then walk away. It’s their loss.”

Tears prick my eyes. How come a monster understands me better than my family and friends?

“I’ve never cared for anything other than delivering punishment,” he sighs. “And I have only thought of punishing people for what they’ve done to me, yes. But you’re not the same.” He breathes out, his voice dropping even lower. “No, you’re nothing like them.”

My heart jumps to my throat. Krampus tightens his hold around my body, his fingers tilting my face up. His warmth cradles me. There’s only Krampus and I in the whole world.

Leaning back, I tilt my face up to see him, haloed by the firelight.

I smile. “This is nice,” I murmur.

Krampus smirks. His hand slips down my face and curls around my neck. “Nice? You think I’m nice?” He squeezes, just enough to make me gasp.

Just enough to send desire straight to my core.

I'm pretty sure Krampus expects me to flinch, to pull away, and to cry out when he leans in.

My response to a monster about to kiss me while he chokes me is, instead, to whimper.

Krampus presses his lips against mine in a harsh kiss. I moan at the contact, my lips parting involuntarily to accommodate his long tongue and sharp teeth. Krampus explores every inch of my mouth, curling his tongue around mine and sucking my lips with bruising force. Every time his teeth rake along my lower lip, I shudder. The sensation is electrifying, sending shivers down my spine.

Krampus pulls away. He stares at me for a minute, then his hands curl around my hips as he guides me back to bed. "Go back to sleep. You little humans need rest after wounding yourselves."

But I don't want to let go of him—I feel more alive than ever. "Stay with me," I insist, scooting to one side of the bed. "I mean... You can keep me warm. Since I almost froze."

Krampus hesitates, arching one eyebrow. "You have no idea what you're asking."

The tension in the room becomes palpable, leaving both of us on the edge of something dangerously thrilling. My breath comes in short gasps, my body trembling as I stare into Krampus's eyes.

I lick my lips and let my knees drop open. "Maybe I do. And maybe that's exactly what I want."

CHAPTER 32



KRAMPUS

*M*y desire for Olivia is a raging inferno, consuming my every thought. I want her—all of her—her lush curves, her wit, her nerve. The way she challenges me only serves to stoke the flames of my lust.

How she looks up at me with those defiant yet pleading eyes, even when we both know that this can't end well. The stubbornness inside me burns bright, begging for release, yearning for the unthinkable.

She's my obsession, my desire, and my downfall. She is what I crave most in this world, and I didn't know how much power she held over me.

Climbing onto the bed, I watch as she scoots away, a sultry gleam in her eyes. She's an enchantress, luring me closer, and I can't resist her call. My body throbs as I prowl toward her, taking in every inch of her pale skin, her long white-blond hair making her look ethereal.

Olivia raises an arm. My muscles flex under her fingertips as she trails them down my chest. My breath hitches when I lean over her, her eyes blazing with hunger. She traces her fingers along the contours of my thigh until they brush against my hardness. Even through the fabric of my pants, I feel the heat emanating from her hand.

The air crackles with anticipation as I reach out and grab the neckline of her nightshirt. With a primal growl, I tear the thin fabric away from her body. She gasps at the cool night air, caressing her bare skin.

My gaze devours her like a starved beast, taking in every inch of her curvy figure.

She's fucking perfect. Creamy flesh, soft to the touch. Full curves, flushed with heat. I lean forward, my teeth ghosting over her collarbones. So small. She's so fragile. How am I holding back from her?

My hot breath bathes her nipples, making them harden into peaks begging for my touch. I lap each with my tongue, circling them until Olivia arches into my mouth.

A primal need takes hold, urging me to taste her. I sit up and take one good look at that wet slit between her thighs. Grasping her leg, I drag her closer, spreading her thighs apart. My mouth waters at the sight of her glistening pussy. I can't wait any longer.

I lower my head and lap a trail up her folds. And, fucking hell, she's the best thing I've ever tasted. My voice is a dark rasp when I growl with need against her cunt.

"You taste so good, kitten."

Olivia moans, her hands reaching out to grab at my horns. A shiver races down my spine, straight to my balls. Then another.

She has no idea what she's doing to me.

With Olivia guiding me by my horns, I lower my head to devour her. My long tongue snakes out, caressing her sensitive flesh, leaving a trail of heat in its wake. Her moans fuel my desire as I drink her in, taste every inch of her. I circle my tongue around her clit, tugging on it and sucking.

Olivia's body tightens, her thighs tensing under my hold. That's it. That's it. Give it to me, kitten.

Her body quivers beneath me as she comes once, her overwhelmed cries testing every restraint.

It's not enough; I crave more. My finger plunges into her depths, exploring her with hunger. Her moans grow louder and more desperate, driving me to continue my relentless pursuit

of her pleasure. My tongue returns to trace patterns along her slick folds, sending her spiraling.

“Krampus,” she gasps, her voice barely more than a whisper as her body tightens, shaking with the force of her second orgasm.

“Yes, kitten,” I murmur, my voice rough with lust. “Keep calling my name just like that.”

I stand up, hungry for more of her body. My lips and teeth find her nipples, teasing and tormenting the sensitive peaks. I keep pumping into her tightness, readying her for me.

“Oh, Krampus,” she whimpers, her pleas growing louder and more desperate with every stroke of my finger.

My balls are so fucking heavy. My cock’s dripping so much that I can feel it on the inside of my thighs. Letting her nipples pop from my lips, I straighten my spine and shove my pants down.

“You know what I want, kitten,” I whisper in a desperate growl. “Beg for my cock.”

In a sudden act of defiance, Olivia grins and clamps her mouth shut. The audacity only makes me want her more.

I pull my hand out from between her legs, and Olivia’s cry of protest fills the room.

“If you won’t beg,” I say with a mirrored smirk, “then I’ll have to punish you.”

I cover my fingers in my precome and shove one inside her again. Her body arches off the bed, shaking with pleasure at the sensation. She’s on edge, and I know it, and my precome will only take her higher.

“You’re not allowed to come on my fingers,” I warn her, spreading a hand on her stomach to pin her down and stop her from moving as I pick up my pace.

Her toes curl as I work a second finger inside her pussy, stretching her even more. Fucking her hard with two fingers, I watch as Olivia’s body shakes as she holds her orgasm back.

Her blue eyes go wide as she stares at me. “Please! Please, Krampus, put it inside me. I don’t even care if it doesn’t fit. Just fuck me, please.”

“That’s it, kitten.” I pull my hand out and hold it up to lick at her arousal. “Fucking delicious.”

She shudders, a mewl escaping her lips.

“Your little noises will be the end of me, Olivia,” I say through gritted teeth, feeling my restraints slipping.

My grip tightens around her waist as I haul her up. Olivia flings her legs around my waist, holding herself up on instinct. A fever rushes through me. I want to spear my cock inside her, I want to feel her squeeze me.

Positioning myself so my throbbing ribbed cock can take the place of my fingers, I double-check. Can she truly take me?

I know my precome has prepared her, and my fingers have stretched her, but she’s still so small compared to me. While I’m eight feet tall, she can’t be more than five-seven. Will I rip her apart with my cock?

Taking a deep breath, I gather all the last bits of control I still have. Slowly, so fucking slowly, I push inside Olivia’s pussy with my ribbed cock. As I slide inch by inch inside her, her tightness robs me of all air. The sensation is intoxicating. Overwhelming. Her eyes widen, and she gasps, her fingers digging into my arms.

“Krampus... it’s... so big,” she whispers, her voice trembling as she tries to adjust to my size.

“You take me so fucking well,” I answer, my voice breaking with sheer lust. My body wants nothing more than to plunge inside her. Her heat beckons to me like a fire in the dark.

“You’re so big,” she repeats, gasping again, her brow creased in concentration as she gapes at where our bodies meet.

“Talk to me, kitten.” I wait with bated breath, watching her expressions change from surprise to bliss.

She’s fucking gorgeous on her worst days, but this? The bliss in her eyes while her body squeezes my cock like this?

Nothing compares. Nothing will ever fucking compare to how stunning she is.

Olivia sinks her nails into my arm and arches her hips.

“So good,” she breathes out, a mere whisper.

“Do you like my cock inside you, kitten?”

“So much,” she moans back. “More, please.”

She’s good. She’s good, so I can let go. I drag down an inch, then up, down another inch, then up, pumping her pretty pussy over my cock. Her body tightens and shakes, overwhelmed by the sensations.

Olivia clenches around me, her brows shooting up in surprise, and she comes apart. The feeling of her orgasm choking my cock sends shivers down my spine.

“Krampus!” she pleads, moving her hips against me. “I’m so full. You’re too big. Please!”

“Oh, kitten.” And I smirk when she opens her heavy-lidded eyes to look at me. “I only have the head inside.”

Olivia’s jaw slackens. And that’s where I go off the rails.

My hips piston once, and I finally spear her. She screams at the invasion, but her wetness covers me, her tight pussy fluttering around me. A long groan slips past her lips.

“More,” Olivia pleads, her voice pitching higher. “Please, Krampus, give me more.”

I chuckle, pleasure tightening inside me. “You couldn’t ask before, but now that you’re bouncing on my cock, I can’t stop you from begging.”

Her lips curl into the beginnings of a smile, and I know she has a retort at the tip of her tongue. I double my speed,

thrusting into her heat twice as hard to fuck that retort right out of her mouth.

Olivia's moans fill the air, her head bouncing with every thrust and her hair flying behind her. My control slips away as I lose myself in the aggressive rhythm, my desire for Olivia consuming me.

"There! Right there! So big, so big..." And she squeezes me so deliciously. I look down between her legs to watch my thick length disappear inside her, her little swollen clit begging for my touch.

"Fucking hell. What are you doing to me?" I growl, feeling her tighten around my cock again. Reaching between us, I press a finger over her clit and she goes off.

Olivia tightens like a vice when she comes apart. She feels so fucking good, I don't want to ever let go.

With one final thrust, I follow her off the ledge, our bodies shuddering together. We collapse onto the bed, intertwined and catching our breaths, the room filled with the scent of *her*. My body hot everywhere *she* touched.

Olivia might just ruin me, but this is a risk I'm willing to take.

CHAPTER 33



OLIVIA

The warmth seeps into my bones as I sit on the stool, watching Cricket decorate an apple pie. My teeth sink into the honey cake, the sweetness bursting on my tongue. There's a smile on my face as I watch the elf shape the crust.

Cricket told me he loved baking, but he didn't have as much opportunity when I wasn't here. The elves are small creatures, after all, and the few fairies that live in the house are much tinier.

Not eating meat gives Cricket the freedom to bake me all sorts of breads, pies, and cakes. It makes me happy to see him like this.

And he's not the only happy one.

Acorn *hums*. The grumpy elf is the sort I wouldn't expect to enjoy music. He sings, though, under his breath as he marinates slabs of meat for Krampus's dinner.

I'm glad Acorn likes to cook because he has his work cut out for him. Krampus eats a lot.

Matilda flies into the kitchen and giggles once her eyes find me. She guides her hummingbird closer, and it lands on the lip of my mug.

"Ah, Mistress! Good, I was about to check if you wanted a snack. Master told me to keep an eye on you while he's busy."

I curl my nose and open a smile. "Does he think I'll run away again? Because I've learned my lesson."

Matilda bats a hand in the air. “Of course not. He’s worried, that’s all. He wants me to make sure you’re eating.”

I clean the crumbs off my chin. “Mm, I don’t know. Maybe he’s fattening me up to eat me later on.” I tease.

“Mistress’ presence has brightened Master’s mood.” Matilda takes off and flits around my head. “Everyone is happier now that you’re here.” She lands on my shoulder. “I thought it was clear. Master hasn’t screamed at any of us. Cricket has been making his beloved cakes. Even Acorn has stopped pestering my fairies.”

Acorn grumbles in response.

I chuckle, but my cheeks go warm. “I don’t know. It’s not like I’m trying to improve his mood or anything.” Besides, how could I have done that? We have fooled around, sure, but things only got serious yesterday.

It’s not like a simple fuck would change his sour temper.

“Master has grown kinder, gentler,” Matilda insists. “Your influence has softened him. He would have never gone out in the storm after someone. I couldn’t believe my eyes when he rushed out of the door.”

“And when he brought you back,” says Cricket, raising glittering eyes from his work, “he even reminded us to prepare you a meal without meat.”

My cheeks warm ever further. Did he? That’s unexpected. Krampus does seem to tolerate me much better. He was so very careful with me, making sure I was warm, feeding me... I can’t say it’s just because he wanted to fuck me. I’m the one who invited him.

On the contrary, he warned me he wouldn’t be able to stop himself.

A shiver runs down my body at the memory of his thick cock stretching me. I let myself daydream for a second. I imagine him taking me over and over again, in different positions, and summer coming in, and Krampus fucking me outside, on a river, on all fours on the ground...

I shake off such fanciful thoughts. Krampus is not some Prince Charming from a fairy tale. He's not letting me stay *until the summer*. And even if he did, I shouldn't.

I'm human. A human who loves a monster's cock, but that's all. I can't let my heart get involved.

"You've bewitched him, Mistress," Matilda says with a smile. "And it seems to me that, deep down, you know it, too."

"Hush now." I playfully swat at her, my face burning.

Matilda and Cricket laugh at me. Even Acorn risks a small smile. My gaze wanders to the windows, and I can't deny that my heart longs for Krampus's presence.

But as much as I wish to stay here forever, basking in this newfound sense of belonging, I know it's only a temporary reprieve from reality. My heart aches knowing that soon I must return to the mundane world I was born into, leaving behind Krampus and these wonderful beings who've become dear friends.

I close my hands around the warm mug and bring it to my lips. The scent of clove reminds me of Krampus. And I can't help but hope I can stay in this dream for a while longer.

CHAPTER 34



OLIVIA

The heavy oak door to Krampus's workroom is half-open, so I don't bother knocking. That's something I'd never do in any other circumstances, but I enjoy annoying Krampus. His punishments are not exactly bad.

I push the door open and step inside, the scent of paint wafting over me.

Krampus looks up from his cluttered desk, paint pots, brushes, and water jars taking every inch. The concentrated frown marring his furrowed brow softens into a grin. "No respect for privacy, kitten."

I sashay over to him. "If you didn't want me here, you better lock the door."

"You have a point. I may have to start doing that."

A rumble of laughter vibrates through his chest as I stick a tongue out at him. Before I lose my confidence, I hand him the black sweater I just finished.

"I'm pretty sure this will fit around your horns. Took me a while, but I fixed it."

Krampus takes the offering. He places the sweater on his lap, his fingers brushing the soft wool. He takes a beat, then two. I'm about to rush out of the room when he looks at me again.

"This is exquisite work, kitten. You've improved remarkably fast."

Heat creeps into my cheeks at the praise. I look away. “You’re too generous. You missed a few dropped stitches on the right sleeve.” I force out a chuckle. “I’m not very good; I just have free time.”

Krampus’s gaze singes my skin. I *feel* the way he looks at me like a physical thing. I can almost imagine his narrowed eyes.

“You can’t take a compliment,” he says. It’s not a question.

I snap my gaze back at him. “What? No, that’s not that. I’m just very realistic.”

“Is that a modern expression for a person who can’t take compliments?”

“No.” I roll my eyes. Krampus tucks the sweater behind his chair and curls his enormous hands around my hips. He tugs me between his knees, dwarfing me. “I just... It’s just weird.”

“What is?”

“You’re telling me that I did such a good job when I know that’s not the truth.”

Krampus’s hands tighten around my hips, forcing my eyes to meet his. “When you arrived, you said you hadn’t knit in a long time. Dropped stitches or not, you *have* improved fast. So...” He brings me an inch closer, so I have to tilt my head up to look at him. “Tell me. When I tell you *you’re good at something* and you say *that’s not the truth*... Is that you telling me, or is it what other people made you believe?”

My face burns. It burns so hot that my eyes sting. A knot tightens in my throat. I look away.

“Answer me, kitten.”

“That’s some therapy shit.”

“I don’t know what that means.” He jerks me, so I meet his eyes again. “You can’t take a compliment, kitten. Why?”

I lick my lips; my face is still too warm for comfort. I shrug, peering up at him through my lashes. “Never got many

growing up.”

“That’s what I expected.” Krampus cups my face, tilting it up to meet his gaze, his thumb pressed under my bottom lip. “Then I’ll keep complimenting you until you learn to accept them.”

I chew on the inside of my cheek. This is new. This open questioning, the way Krampus tries to understand me, how easily he reads me. I don’t know what to do with this feeling inside me.

“How are the masks going?” I ask, changing the subject.

Krampus narrows his eyes again, seeing straight through me. Whatever he sees in my face is enough for him to change the subject. “Coming along. The paint is drying on the latest.”

Krampus picks me up effortlessly and places me on his lap, allowing me to get a closer look at his work displayed across the table.

The masks are intricately designed, each one unique and captivating in its own way. There’s one that resembles a fierce wolf, another like a white stag, and many more fantastical creatures, all expertly crafted and painted.

“Why do you like making masks so much?” I ask, unable to tear my gaze away from the artistry before me.

Krampus’s chest swells with his breath, then rumbles as he sighs. “I’ve always admired how humans can express themselves through art. Entire cultures. Family histories. Tales of gods and devils.”

I turn my head to look at him, trying to understand the creature beneath the surface—this enigmatic being who is both tender and terrifying. “How can someone made for punishment enjoy art so much?”

“I wasn’t made for punishment,” he corrects, his voice low and gravelly. “That was my task. I got used to it and saw the need for it. My favorite part of the festivities, however, was gifting these masks.”

My eyebrows shoot up. “You’re kidding.”

The corners of his lips tilt up. “No, but I understand your surprise.”

“What about Santa? Did he join the festivities, too?”

“Santa?” Krampus’ brow furrows, confusion written on his face.

I blink, waiting for his answer. Then I arch an eyebrow. “Santa. Santa Claus. Aren’t you his... helper, or something?” I say that with a wince. Krampus does *not* look like anyone’s helper, and I’m pretty sure he’d be pissed at that.

His brows raise, and he bares his sharp teeth. “Is that what people remember about me? That I’m a *helper*?”

I bare my teeth in an apologetic look. “Sorry.”

Krampus rolls his eyes and breathes out a chuckle. “No Santa, but Nicholas. Nicholas was the one who spearheaded the festivities. He judged people, rewarding the good ones and leaving the punishing part—the bad part, to be honest—to me. I never minded. There’s a whole point to it. But it did take its toll.”

My heart squeezes in my chest. “I get some of that. Being stuck in a task. A duty,” I murmur. “Letting it define you.”

Krampus looks back at me, those all-seeing eyes staring straight into my heart.

I lick my lips, pushing the painful thoughts away. “What happened to him?” I ask, clearing my throat. “To Nicholas, I mean.”

Krampus stares at me a second longer, then shrugs. “Commerce took over the festivities, and Nicholas felt that humanity no longer needed him. I haven’t seen him in a long time.” There’s a sadness on Krampus’s face as he looks back into his past.

A strange warmth blooms in my chest, a connection growing between us as we sit there, his arms around me. Though our worlds are so different, we have both experienced pain and longing.

We have more in common than I could have ever expected.

Krampus catches me staring. Something crosses his face—something incredibly... *soft*.

He curls a hand on the back of my skull and pulls me in for a kiss.

My heart races as his lips meet mine, the heat of his mouth stoking me into an inferno of desire. I can't help but lean into him, craving more of his touch, more of his taste.

Krampus's other hand curls around my hip, pulling me closer. My ass finds the undeniable hardness beneath his pants. A hot shiver runs through me, tightening my nipples.

Desire coils inside me. Krampus slips a big hand between my thighs, his forefinger gliding over my core. I clench and moan, the apex of my legs growing slick.

Krampus has brought me pleasure too many times now. My mouth waters at the thought of making him feel good, too.

His tongue teases at the seam of my lips, asking for entrance. I pull back, meeting his heavy-lidded eyes.

"Let me take care of you," I whisper against his lips. The hungry look in Krampus's eyes almost makes me give up.

I slide down from his lap, kneeling between his knees, and I reach for his pants. Krampus stares at me in doubt, as if he isn't sure about what I'm planning.

I tug on his pants until he gets it. Krampus growls and shoves his pants down to his shins.

Krampus is huge, so the fact that his cocks are big is no surprise. They must be eight inches long each. But that's not all. One cock grows just above his balls, and the second above the first. The lower cock is the one that makes me shiver with unbridled lust. I reach out and curl my fingers around it.

My fingers don't meet around it as it twitches in my hold. I marvel at its size and weight. I run a thumb over the ridges along their length, from just under the head all the way to the base. It's unlike anything I've ever seen, and it's beautiful.

The upper cock isn't ribbed but smooth. Both smell heavenly, like a mouth-watering dessert.

I stroke him, teasing his sensitive flesh, while my other hand cups and massages his heavy balls. Krampus leans back with a groan. His fingers find my hair, tightening around the strands. The power he holds and the strength he possesses only serve to heighten my arousal.

Krampus is fierce, strong, and fearsome. And he trembles under *my touch*.

“Come now, kitten,” he growls, his voice low and husky. “Are you going to tease me for long?”

With a smile, I open my mouth and stick my tongue out. Locking my gaze with Krampus’s, I lap at the head of his ribbed cock. He releases a long groan. I stretch my lips around it, sucking while my tongue explores the ridges. My hand continues to work his balls as the upper cock twitches, tapping my nose.

He leaks precome on my tongue. The oily texture is at odds with the sweet taste, and I suck eagerly. My blood ignites. There’s something about his precome that drives me insane with lust. I clamp my thighs together, letting go of his balls in favor of jerking off his other cock.

Grabbing one cock with each hand, I relax my jaw and take turns suckling each. The ribbed cock is less thick, so I can take his entire head and a couple of inches in my mouth.

The other one is too much. I relax my jaw the best I can, but I can only take his head. With my lips sealed around him, I look up at Krampus, hoping he’s not too disappointed.

Krampus meets my gaze, and he *snaps*.

He grips my hair tighter, yanking me back. He pops my mouth free from his cock with a wet sound. I gasp in surprise, fear of disappointing him washing over me.

But Krampus’s face contorts with need when he looks at me. He sits on the very edge of the chair and manhandles me closer. His dominance sends shivers down my spine, and my arousal soars. Krampus grabs his upper cock in a hand and pulls my head to his lap.

“Tongue out,” he commands with his voice like thunder.

I obey, and he stuffs his cock in my mouth. Not gently. Not slowly. Krampus shoves my mouth down his cock, the very one I couldn't take more than the head. My tongue slides under him, stroking the velvety skin. He hits the back of my throat.

He stuffs my mouth so full that I whimper. My jaw aches. I can barely take one inch past the head.

“Hold your breath, kitten,” he orders, his voice crackling, just like his control.

I obey, and Krampus shoves his cock down my throat.

My air locks, and my gag reflex kicks. I slam my eyes shut, choking. Krampus pulls my head back, and I gasp for air, a trail of saliva connecting my mouth to his cock.

“Again,” he orders, and I know he won't wait for me.

I hold my breath, and he shoves his cock down my throat again. My jaw aches, and my body fights to take him in. Krampus releases a bone-deep groan.

He pulls me back, and I gasp for air. This time, Krampus presses his lower cock to my lips, and I drink from his precome. It sends heat through my veins, and I relax into his demanding need. A moan climbs my throat.

“That's it,” he says, his voice rumbling with praise. “That's my good kitten. You're going to take my cock, won't you?”

I nod, my pussy clenching and begging. How can this monster know exactly how to make me feel good?

Krampus pulls my head closer and sinks my mouth over his thicker cock. It pushes past my gag reflex and into my throat. I moan. The vibration makes Krampus groan with me. I don't think I've ever felt this connected with anyone. He pushes one inch deeper.

Then his other cock slides down my neck, nestling into the valley between my breasts.

And that's so fucking hot.

My breath catches, and the sensation of both cocks against my skin is a new and thrilling experience. A shiver makes my body shake. Krampus pulls my hair back, but I struggle against him, bobbing my head up and down his length.

“Fucking hell, kitten. Are you so needy for my cock?” He takes control, guiding my motions. “That’s it. Take it all, pretty kitten. Does sucking my cock make your pussy slick? Of course it does. Your pussy is begging for me, isn’t it?”

Pleasure sets my blood on fire. I can’t hold back any longer. I give in to his control and allow Krampus to guide me up and down his cock while I reach between my legs and find that throbbing spot.

One touch, and I go off.

I cry out and moan so hard that my throat clamps down around his cock. My body rocks so hard with pleasure that it’s overwhelming.

Krampus reaches his breaking point, releasing a torrent of hot come straight into my throat. The heat of it catches me off guard, and I pull back. He lets me go, his come covering my tongue, filling my mouth, as his lower cock spurts all over my breasts.

I cough and struggle to swallow every drop I can manage, savoring the sweet taste of him. It’s so unfair how good he tastes.

Aftershocks make me shiver. I look up at Krampus, his come sticking to my mouth, chin, neck, and breasts.

His eyes darken, a fierce possessiveness taking hold as he runs his fingers through my hair.

“Fuck, kitten,” he breathes, his voice low and dangerous as he catches his breath. Even so, a smile plays across his lips. “I don’t think I’m ever letting you leave.”

CHAPTER 35



KRAMPUS

*A*s I slide the door open, I put my best apathetic face on. It's no good. My gaze slides to her face, searching. The expectation is killing me. Pressing a hand between her shoulder blades, I guide Olivia into the room and close the door behind us.

Olivia goes down the stone stairs into the citrus-scented steam. She gasps at the sight, her skin prickling from the chill.

After comprehending how humans not only need but also enjoy cleaning themselves, I developed this room. A stone chamber open to the snowfall but still protected from the flakes, the wind, and the rain. The cold air cools the steam down, making it more pleasurable to stand inside the room for long stretches.

Right in the center of the small room, I put a large tub, built out of cypress. It's big enough for a dozen humans, bubbling with hot water.

Deep inside me, I know the reason I did this. I know it's because I've become addicted to her smile.

And it's so worth it. She turns a bright grin up at me, all glittering blue eyes and pink cheeks.

My cocks harden. It's amazing how the smallest of her actions make me hard.

"Did you always have this?" she asks, chuckling. "I can't believe you made me clean up with a bucket."

I shake my head. “I made it for you. Never needed something like this.”

Her eyes shine, and she does the unthinkable.

Olivia throws her arms around my waist, her soft body molding against mine. And she’s not drunk this time. “Thank you.” The words are muffled against my stomach, but I hear them and feel the shape of each one like a caress.

She lets go, darting an expectant glance toward the tub.

I tuck a strand of hair behind her ear. “Go on. Strip.”

Olivia takes it slow as she plucks her clothes off, baring flushed skin and full curves to my gaze. My cocks strain against my thigh, aching to enter her heat.

She pauses close to me, looking up from between long lashes. The position reminds me of the way she sucked my cocks. It reminds me of how hungry she was for me.

Of how hungry I always am for her.

Scooping her up, I chuckle at her little gasp. I lift her into the tub.

“So warm,” she says with a sigh, closing her eyes and sinking into the water.

I take the moment to shake off my boots and pants, freeing my arousal. When I look up, Olivia’s watching me. Hunger darkens her eyes at the sight of my cocks, twitching, hard for her, a smirk playing on her lips.

“So...” she teases, raising herself over the edge of the tub, showing off her wet, glistening tits. “Like what you see?”

“Very much.” The rumble in my chest deepens with every step I take. “I enjoy the sight of you. Your sounds. I especially enjoy watching you come undone on my cock. My name has never sounded so good.”

I step into the tub, my cocks twitching under the surface. Olivia’s face goes a shade redder. She reaches out, her small fingers testing, running along my cockhead.

A needy whimper leaves her as she fists my length. “Do you really like watching me come on your cock?”

A growl rumbles in my chest at her tease. I fist a hand in her hair, grabbing a breast with the other. So small in my grasp, nipples pebbling against my palm. I rub my hand in a circle, stroking her sensitive skin. Her mouth drops open with a moan.

“I fucking love it, kitten,” I say, my voice husky. “And I want to see you cream my cock, but do you remember what I said?”

“What part?” she breathes out between whimpers, her back arching into my touch.

“You always come first. At least twice.”

“Ah, yes.” Olivia’s voice trembles with anticipation, her eyes sparkling with heat. “You’re such a generous beast.”

“Generous?” I chuckle darkly. “No, not generous. I’m selfish. I want to fuck both your tight holes with my cocks, and I want to fill your little body with my come. But you need to be all stretched and ready for it. You need to come first.”

Her eyes widen, and she bites her lip, shivering with excitement. “Well, then... what’s taking you so long?”

I grin. And then I pounce.

Tugging her head back, I expose her fragile throat. I lick her wet skin, right at the nape, trailing down her breasts and nipples, savoring the taste of her. She lets out soft moans, her body responding to my touch.

“So eager,” I grunt against her tit, sucking it hard. I grab her legs, preparing to go under.

Olivia presses a hand against my shoulder, stopping me. “Aren’t you going to drown?” Olivia asks as I lower myself into the water.

“Kitten, I’m not taking this long to make you come.” With a wicked smirk, I lower my body into the tub and pull Olivia’s pussy towards my mouth.

“Krampus!” she gasps, mounting my face as I hold her up easily. Her juicy thighs clutch around my head, deliciously soft. Her upper body is out of the water, nipples hard against the cold air. I reach up, massaging one tit between my fingers.

My long tongue explores her wet folds, greedily lapping at her core, soaking in her sounds, and how Olivia grabs my horns to keep her balance. Her moans and sighs fill the room, turning me on even more.

I swirl my tongue around her clit, then suck the tiny nub between my lips. Olivia pushes her hips down, clutching my horns. A major shudder shakes her body, her moans echoing up the stone walls.

As she comes undone on my tongue, I revel in her bliss, eager for more. This was nowhere near enough.

I slide out from under her and get to my feet. Olivia sinks into the water, trembling with pants and aftershocks.

Grabbing my lower cock, I yank at it, gathering my precome between my fingers. Holding Olivia’s jaw in a hand, I push my coated fingers past her lips, watching her lick my precome, her eyes locked with mine.

“Come here,” I say, sitting on the step inside the tub. I pull Olivia to my lap, her back against my chest, still shivering from her orgasm. My hands find her breasts, kneading them roughly before moving down to play with her clit. Olivia gasps and moans, her body responding to my touch.

“Krampus... please...”

“Patience, kitten,” I remind her as I pull her back against my chest. My teeth nibble at her earlobe and she arches her back.

She comes a second time, her body quaking. Her whimpers of need drive me wild.

Finally, *finally*, I angle my ribbed cock with her pussy. Slowly, she takes me in. The sensation of being inside her is indescribable; warmth and tightness envelope me.

“Ah, Krampus!” Olivia moans my name, urging me on. She takes me in, and I sink to the hilt. Every nerve ending in my body buzzes with need.

Gripping under her thighs, I move her up and down my cock. She weighs nothing in my arms, and her pussy clamps down around me. In this position, I can reach under her thighs, between them, to flick her clit as we find our rhythm.

My pretty kitten purrs with need. She circles her hips, taking me in, and I stretch her tight pussy to the max. How the fuck can we fit so perfectly?

“So eager,” I praise her, my breath against her wet ear. “You take my cock so well, kitten.”

Olivia has something with praise. The words are barely out of my mouth, and she explodes, my name spilling past her tongue, her voice breaking in ecstasy.

“More... please, more,” she begs as she leans back against me, her hands reaching for my shoulders, my hair. Without hesitation, I push a thick finger into her ass, watching her eyes widen as she moans even louder.

Olivia whimpers and moans as I stretch her. Her words become unintelligible.

“Krampus,” she cries, over and over, as if my name has become a prayer.

“You’ve taken my cock so well, kitten,” I breathe against her. “Can you take two?”

She nods, her breaths coming out in pants. Her skin is red everywhere now, as if her body were on fire. She moves like that, too. As if our connection is too much, as if she’s an exposed nerve.

Clenching my teeth, I push the head of my second cock inside her tight, quivering ass. Olivia whimpers and clenches around me, making it difficult to stay in control.

“Ah, so tight,” I growl, panting with pleasure. It’s too much, and I know I won’t last if I keep pushing. I’m barely

inside. Fuck, I'm barely inside her ass, both my cocks inside her, and I'm already on edge.

She's too much.

I hold her waist with one hand and grip her thigh with the other, standing up. With short pumps, I fuck her hard, harder. She takes my ribbed cock so well, and it slides in and out of her soaked pussy.

The cock in her ass is too thick for her right now. The head pushes past her rim, and she clamps her muscles down around me. She fucking suffocates me. My nails dig into her soft flesh as Olivia hangs like a doll from my grip, her pussy fluttering around me with a new orgasm.

Both cocks fill her while my fingers continue their dance on her clit. The sensation of her body surrounding both my cocks drives me wild, and I know I'm about to go.

"Come on, kitten," I hiss from between clenched teeth. "Give me one more."

"Krampus!" Olivia screams as her orgasm overtakes her, and her body seizes in ecstasy.

Pride swells within me. I made her come once more before losing myself in the bliss that her body offers. My knot swells, but I know she can't take it now.

"Such a good kitten," I groan, my voice rough with need. "You've taken me so well. Now take my come. Will you take my come?"

"Yes! Yes!"

My pleasure overwhelms me, and I come inside her, filling both her pussy and her ass. Olivia clenches tighter at the invasion, and I can only pull her closer, my mind drifting with bliss.

My body shakes with furious aftershocks. Spent, I lower myself to the step once more, catching my breath as I hold her afloat.

Olivia relaxes against my body. I cradle her precious form against my chest, waiting for her to come back to herself.

Once she doesn't, I bathe her, making sure she won't be too sore.

Olivia nuzzles closer to me, holding onto me as if I were her lifeline. Once she's clean, I lean back, her snoozing form nestled against me. As I watch her serene face, an unfamiliar warmth blossoms in my chest.

I want to tell her she's making me feel something good, something I've never felt before. I want to tell her to stay. But the words remain trapped within me, unspoken.

"Olivia," I whisper to her sleeping form, "you have no idea what you've done to me."

And for now, that's enough.

CHAPTER 36



OLIVIA

The fire crackles, and shadows dance across Krampus's stony face. His eyes are distant, lost in the flames. I watch him for a few minutes, but he doesn't seem to notice me.

My heart squeezes. I wonder where his mind is.

I stride across the room, my nightshirt dancing around my thighs. Krampus raises his head at the sound of my steps. His stony face melts into those soft eyes as I straddle his lap, my nightshirt riding up my thighs.

I intertwine my fingers through his hair. "What's wrong?"

He blinks, his gaze focused on my face. "Just... how things changed. How much I craved vengeance, once." His lips curl. "I used to sit here and contemplate it. Imagine it. Sometimes, I'd ask myself what I could have done differently. Others, I'd seethe at the betrayal and daydream about wreaking havoc." His fingers curl around my waist. "Now it means nothing. It feels like a waste of time."

Concern aches in my chest. "That was lifetimes ago. I can only imagine how that made you angry, but... All those involved are long dead. Why hold that grudge?"

"I know." His hands slide under my nightshirt, rough palms skimming my bare hips. "Revenge holds no appeal anymore. My mind's often somewhere else."

Relief washes over me. Relief and something warmer. I like the way he looks at me, especially when he says these

things.

“So, you promise you won’t sneak out in the middle of the night to kill the whole town?”

Krampus stretches a lopsided smile. “I promise I won’t do anything to upset you. Is that enough?”

My lips stretch into a wide grin. “It is.”

Krampus brushes our lips together. I suck on his bottom lip. Krampus growls, the bulge between my legs growing harder. He closes his massive hand around my jaw and forces his mouth against mine in a harsh, delicious kiss.

A pity he pulls back too soon.

“Bed, kitten.”

I pout. “Not without you.”

He chuckles, giving my backside a playful swat. Warmth blooms under my skin. I gasp, feigning insult.

Another swat, harder this time. My right ass-cheek stings. It burns so good. Heat pools between my legs as I squirm on his lap.

I can tell he notices by the glint in his eyes, the rumble in his chest. “Someone’s eager for punishment.”

Krampus grabs both my ass-cheeks and spreads them. His fingers slide between my folds from behind, teasing, playing, and finally circling my bundle of nerves.

I rock against his hand with a whimper. This is so new to me. I’ve never had someone who knew my body so well and who cared about pleasing me so much. Krampus’s bliss is entirely based on my own.

Grabbing his shoulders, I raise my hips to move against his fingers. My breasts brush against Krampus’s face, my nipples tightening under the warmth of his breath.

Krampus grabs and tears the neckline of my nightshirt in one swift motion. I gasp as the shirt comes apart, baring my breasts.

“I liked this shirt!”

“I’ll fix it after I’m done with you.” Krampus grins as he sucks a nipple into his mouth. The other he pinches and rolls between calloused fingers. His tongue works my nipple into a pebble, hard and sensitive.

Pleasure coils in my core, tightening with each roll of his thumb over my clit. I clutch his shoulders, nails biting into flesh, as my first climax crashes over me. My hips buck on their own, and I drop my head back to moan his name, the way I know he likes.

He doesn’t relent. Both hands under the remnants of my shirt now, Krampus sinks a finger into my pussy. He covers one then another with my arousal before fingering me. I move back against him, bouncing on his fingers. Krampus’s free hand delivers stinging slaps to my rear. The mix of pain and ecstasy shatters my senses, orgasm after orgasm wracking my body.

“Please,” I gasp, writhing against him. “I need to come on your c—”

He silences me with a bruising kiss. The sound of fabric ripping announces that he just tore his pants open. I love this aggressiveness. I love how Krampus reminds me that he needs me so much that he can’t wait to take his clothes off.

Krampus pulls his fingers out of my pussy, slick with the proof of my arousal. He coats his lower cock with it, then positions it against my pussy lips. His ridged length teases my entrance, nudging just inside.

I whimper, shaking my head as I make to move away. I need the other one. I need it so much that it makes me dizzy.

“The other,” I plead. “Please, fuck me with the other.” I need the stretch; I need to be filled to the brim, and then more.

Krampus stills, doubt flickering over his features. But the swell of his arousal is unmistakable, pressed hot and hard against my inner thigh.

“Please,” I beg again, sliding a hand between us to stroke the rigid flesh.

A growl rumbles in his chest as he pins my wrist to my hip. Krampus locks his eyes with mine, burning with lust, as he gathers wetness from my dripping pussy to slick his length.

“Fuck, kitten. You’re so greedy for punishment.” With his other hand, Krampus pumps his ribbed cock, covering his fingers in his oily, tasty precome. He brings that hand up to my lips. “Drink it, kitten. It’ll make it easier for you.”

Without hesitation, I wrap my lips around Krampus’s fingers and suck. His precome slides down my throat, warm, oily, and delicious. My body goes languid, relaxed, and my pussy clenches around nothing.

I need him. I need him now.

Krampus withdraws his fingers from my lips, and I whimper at the loss. He chuckles as he positions himself between my legs once more, rubbing the head of his thick cock against my slick entrance. His upper cock, the breeding one, is much, much thicker than a human’s, but other than that and the color, it’s very similar.

“Are you ready for this, kitten? Once I start, I won’t stop.” Krampus’s voice is low and husky—promise and threat in one. My heart races in anticipation, and I nod feverishly.

“Please, give it to me,” I beg, my voice sultry, my eyes locked onto his.

With a grin that sends shivers down my spine, Krampus nudges his swollen head against my opening. Inch by inch, he pushes into me, the girth of his cock stretching me deliciously. It’s an exquisite burn, and I struggle to take him all in. A groan leaves my lips.

“Relax,” Krampus murmurs, his thumb circling my clit while he continues to push me down over his cock. The pleasure he gives me distracts from the pain just enough, and soon I feel like I can’t take another inch.

Surely he’s hilt-deep inside me. I’m so full. So full I know he’s stretching me to the point of pain, my organs readjusting to receive him inside me. I straddle his thighs, his thick cock

deep inside me, as the ribbed member twitches between my asscheeks.

“Move, kitten,” Krampus urges me, his hands on my hips. “Move or I’ll fucking lose it.”

I move up and down, slow at first. I bounce an inch up, then an inch down, then I tilt my hips, searching for friction, but I hit nothing once I sink deeper.

Opening my eyes, I search for his pelvis. A gasp escapes me when I see he’s only halfway inside me.

“Fuck,” I cry out as I watch my pussy swallow another inch of him. “You’re so big!”

Krampus’s eyes roll to the back of his head. He grunts, and grunts again, every muscle of his torso tight with need. I race my hand over his shoulder. I had never seen him so surrendered to my body. To the pleasure only I can give him.

It makes me even hornier, if possible. Moving my hips in short bursts, I bounce faster and faster on his cock. It’s a primal need that drives me; desire is the only thing in my mind, and I can’t help but let out wanton moans.

Krampus’s face contorts, his grip on my hips tightening. “You feel so good, kitten,” he growls, the sound vibrating through my body. “Your greedy cunt is taking so much of me.”

“More,” I moan, my motions following no rhythm as I sink one inch lower and the head of his cock stretches the perfect spot.

There’s hitting the G-spot, and there’s *this*. Krampus’s thick member stresses my inner walls, pushing every part of me to its limit. The area around my G-spot drags against that delicious part of him, and I discover *true bliss*.

My body locks into the most powerful orgasm yet. I drop my head back and howl Krampus’s name. In response, he holds me closer and closes his teeth around my nipple. The sharp pain brings me even higher.

As if sensing that it’s pain that’s stretching my bliss, Krampus grabs a handful of my ass and spansks it. Hard. I

clench my muscles in reflex, squeezing his cock inside me. My body moves on its own now, seeking more pleasure, more pain, and more everything.

As I slide up and down on him, I notice the mysterious skin around the base of Krampus's cock swelling. Feeling daring, I tilt my hips to press against it while I ride him. Grinding my teeth together, I push myself to the edge, taking all of him inside me. My clit hits the base of his cock. The sensation adds another layer of ecstasy to our already intense fuck. I roll my eyes back and tumble off the ledge once more.

"Fuck, kitten," Krampus grunts, his thrusts becoming more forceful and his nails digging into my sides. "I can't anymore. I'm going to fill you with my come. You better take every drop."

"Yes, yes, please!" I beg, my climax building inside me again like a wicked creature who can't get enough. Krampus's body tenses beneath me, and just as I'm about to go again, Krampus slams me down on the last two inches of his cock that were still out of me. I gasp in surprise as it stretches me further once Krampus sheathes himself completely.

Krampus's come is thick and scalding, and it fills me up so much that I feel another earth-shattering orgasm coming...

Then comes the pain.

The base of Krampus's cock swells. Hard. A lot.

Too fucking much.

It blows up like a fucking balloon inside me, too wide for my already abused pussy, and sharp pain rocks me back down to earth.

I scream, the pain jolting through me as the swollen part of his cock expands even more inside me. My fingers claw at Krampus's chest, trying to escape the unexpected thickness. I try to slide it out, and I try to get rid of that part of him, but I can't.

I can't. *We're fucking stuck.*

Pushing off my knees, I gasp out loud again when pain hits me. I squeak, forcing myself away from Krampus's body, desperately trying to put distance between my poor pussy and his thick cock.

"Master?" The sound of footfalls and a concerned voice echo from outside the room.

"Out!" Krampus roars, his grip on me tightening as he forces me down.

"Stop!" I whimper, slapping at his hands.

Krampus doesn't falter. His body shivers with aftershocks, but he pins our pelvis together, not allowing me to move an inch.

"Krampus! Krampus, what is this? Why can't I get it out?" I whimper, my eyes filling with tears from the sharp pain. I squirm, desperate to remove his cock from inside me, but it refuses to budge.

"Shh, kitten," he whispers softly, holding me close to his chest. I squirm once more, but Krampus holds me down easily. "This is a knot. It's part of my body; it guarantees a potential pregnancy. Relax. Relax, it'll go away."

"You sure? We don't have to go to a hospital?"

"No, of course not."

I whimper as I adjust myself. "Why did you put this inside me? You said you don't know if humans can get pregnant."

Krampus strokes my hair, pulling back just enough to meet my eyes. "Kitten, it wasn't on my plans. I told you I could lose control. But your tight pussy was so hungry for me, so desperate to take it all in..." He clucks his tongue and pulls me to his chest again.

My heart races in my chest, panic ebbing. "How long will we stay like this?"

"About twenty minutes," Krampus answers. Before I can complain, he lifts me up, wrapping my legs around him. He carries me out of the living room and down the empty hallway

to the bed, laying me down with extreme care, his cock still buried deep within me.

In one swift motion, he rips apart the remnants of my nightshirt, exposing my trembling body. Looking up into his face, I don't hide my confusion.

Krampus covers my body with his, careful not to move my hips. "Kitten. I'm done with only punishing you. Now I'm also rewarding you." His fingers find my clit, massaging it with exquisite precision. It releases some of the pain. "You're such a good kitten for taking my knot. I didn't know you could take me entirely, but here you are. Such a good little kitten. I'll make you come as many times as possible until the knot goes down."

Chewing on my bottom lip, I fake a glare. It doesn't last long. Krampus knows exactly how to work me into a frenzy.

"Fine," I reply defiantly, my breath hitching as sparks of pleasure shoot through me, "but you better make me scream with pleasure this time."

CHAPTER 37



OLIVIA

S now blankets the forest, muffling the world under its silent weight. The vast windows in Krampus's workroom glow, lit from within by the warmth of the fireplace. The glass goes down to the floors and up to the ceilings now, and I watch as a hare rushes into the woods.

This is so much better. Krampus magically enlarged the windows after I asked for more natural light. He didn't even have to, since I hardly come into this room, but he did it anyway.

I smile, watching him hunch over his desk, painting a fox mask with broad, careful strokes.

"You'll enjoy working in here much more now," I tell him, smiling at his back. "You can watch the animals. The natural light makes it look so much nicer, too."

"I never missed the sun. You know I'm not exactly a summer creature."

He truly isn't, not with his immense size and the blue and white colors of his body. Krampus's legends were always about Christmas and winter, too.

I stride over to his desk, leaning against the edge. "Well, Mr. Darkness, then why did you change the windows if you don't care about it?"

His grin is a flash of sharp teeth. "Because you're annoying."

Exasperation flares in my chest. My fist connects with his shoulder before I think better of it. He laughs, a rough chuckle, and his massive hand curls around my hip.

Krampus tugs me closer. Closer. Until I'm perched on his lap. Warmth spreads over my chest, but he does it so nonchalantly that I lean into his warmth, enjoying the feel of his brawny arms around me.

Krampus puts the brush away and blows warm breath against the wet surface of the mask. The half-finished object stares at me as the layer of red dries.

I run my fingers over the stiff bristles of paintbrushes and pots of ochre, crimson, and white. "What are you going to do with this? Do you have any chosen decorations for each one?"

Krampus moves his body, so I'm sitting closer to the desk. "You can decorate it however you like."

Joy sparks through me, and I dive in. I pick the smallest brush, the one that fits my hand. Carefully, I dip it into the white paint. I lose myself as I draw dots, long lines, and thin swirls onto the mask.

I feel his gaze on me, soft and warm, and glance up to find him smiling as he watches me.

Krampus. *The* Krampus, an eight-foot-tall blue monster that could break me with one hand. A creature bitter and hateful toward humans. A beast that prowls the woods, hunting for fresh blood.

And he's smiling at me.

A blush steals across my cheeks as I return to my work, hiding my smile behind a hand.

The mask dries, and I admire our creation. Comfortably perched on Krampus's lap, his warmth seeps into me, and a thought whispers I could get used to this. I pick up the braids of red and white yarn I made earlier and fasten them onto the mask.

It's our creation now. His woodcarving and red layer. My decorations and braids. The idea brings a swell of happiness to

my chest. His hands are always on me while I work.

I tilt the mask to admire it. Krampus leans closer, his nose against my hair, and he breathes against my neck. A shiver runs down my spine, not from fear, but from something else entirely.

“Are you hungry?” Krampus asks, the rumble of his voice vibrating through me.

“Starving,” I admit, realizing I don’t even know how long we spent here. Time passes strangely. It drags, and it rushes and swells, but I keep losing track of it.

We walk together into the kitchen, with Krampus’s hand resting between my shoulder blades. The elves snap their attention at us, and neither is fast enough to hide the amusement in their faces.

The elves bow to Krampus as we enter, their respect for their master clear in their posture.

On the other hand, Matilda flits over on top of her hummingbird and hovers gracefully in front of us.

“Mistress,” she greets me, her voice like tinkling bells. “You do work miracles, don’t you? Master never comes to the kitchen. He doesn’t need to, not when we serve him. But for you, he makes exceptions, doesn’t he?”

Krampus makes a move to grab Matilda, but she flits away with a cascade of laughter.

“I’m sorry, Master! I couldn’t help it! Are you hungry, Master? Master is never hungry between meals. Is it the Mistress? Tell me, Mistress, how can I help?”

Krampus looks at me, nodding me on. My stomach growls, craving something sweet and warm. “Some cake and tea, please.”

Cricket jumps up from his bow. “Mistress!” he calls out, then rushes toward the table. “I made something new for you. There’s a berry and lime. I’ll brew tea for you, Mistress.”

Krampus pulls a stool closer, but when he sits on it, it has magically changed into a large, comfortable chair. My brows

shoot up. *That* is something I don't think I'm ever getting used to.

His big hand curls around my hip, and he tugs me onto his lap again. I dart a glance toward the elves, busy as they hurry between stove and table. Shyness flushing my cheeks, I let Krampus pull me close.

I curl up against him, uncertain about being so openly... affectionate? I don't know how to describe this. Krampus doesn't do romance. He isn't *affectionate*. Does he even have a heart?

But I won't deny sitting against him. Every time I sat on people's laps, it was an uncomfortable experience for both of us. There's the heaviness of my body and the way my hips squish people's legs until the blood flow slows down.

But Krampus? He's the opposite of this. He's so big and so broad that it's like I'm the one sitting on a comfy chair. Also, he's so damn warm.

"Master," Cricket says, speaking up, rushing forward with a plate in his spindly arms. "I prepared something new. This joins both Master's and Mistress's tastes." Bowing low, he offers Krampus the plate.

It's a pie—big, golden brown, and flaky. Cocking my head, I wonder what he means by joining our tastes. I do like pastries, so it makes sense that my taste is *pie*.

Krampus picks up the pie and takes a bite. He's so big that one bite takes almost half of it. The crust parts to reveal steaming, succulent meat. My eyebrows shoot up.

"Cricket, you're a genius." I beam at him, genuinely impressed. I love pie, and Krampus loves meat. That's a perfect memento of the two of us.

"Indeed," Krampus agrees, his voice rich with satisfaction. "It's not bad at all."

Cricket goes a shade paler. I'm pretty sure Krampus never complimented him. He looks like he's about to pass out.

“Thank you, Master,” Cricket stammers, his large eyes shining with pride as he scurries back to the stove.

I shift in Krampus’s lap, turning to face him. “Is it alright for me to sit like this in front of the others?” I murmur, feeling a little self-conscious.

“Kitten,” Krampus grunts, taking another bite of the pie. “I can do whatever I want.”

“Of course.” I chuckle. “But some of us were raised to be a little more... polite.”

“Polite is overrated,” Krampus retorts, his voice deep and rumbling. “It’s a waste of time.”

“A waste of time? It’s the bare minimum to get along with others.”

Krampus shrugs. “I’m not polite, and we all get along just fine.”

I arch an eyebrow at him. I stare, waiting for him to laugh or something. Really, Cricket almost passed out because Krampus complimented him. But no, he genuinely believes that.

Laughing, I shake my head. “You’re so headstrong. I was taught to put others before myself. That I have to take other people’s needs into consideration all the time.”

Krampus finishes the pie with one last chew. “And do others do the same for you?”

The question takes me aback. I blink a few times. “That doesn’t matter. I’m doing my part.”

“Isn’t that exactly what *others* want you to think?” he insists. “If you always let others eat before you, and the others learn they can count on you to allow them to take their fill without a care in the world, won’t you starve? It makes no sense to share with someone who constantly takes more than they need.”

My brows lower, and I glare at him. “You could stand to lose some of that selfishness, you know. We must sacrifice to live in community.”

“That works if *everyone* pulls their weight, Olivia. And I’ve learned that humans can’t do that. It’s not in human nature to be fair. Putting others before yourself all the time will only lead to heartbreak and disappointment,” Krampus says, his voice firm.

His words resonate within me, stirring up memories of my family. Perhaps there’s some truth to what he’s saying. Maybe people don’t always deserve all my hard work. Maybe I deserve to be selfish sometimes.

It feels like I’ve been letting my mother have her fill all my life while I starve.

Cricket rushes over, holding a steaming mug of tea and a plate of cakes. I accept both gratefully, smiling at him. “Thank you, Cricket.”

Without a word, Krampus plucks the plate from my hand and holds it aloft so I can pick at the cakes. The small action makes my heart skip a beat.

There’s no denying it now—I’ve fallen in love with Krampus.

He seems to want the best for me, more than my family ever did, even if his delivery and methods sound less than ideal. My heart grows warm when I look at him. The weight of his hand on my hip is unshakable. Steady.

I sip from my tea and let the hot liquid burn down my throat, grounding me. No. I can’t let this dark fairy tale swindle me. I can’t let myself get lost.

Humans shouldn’t love monsters. Being a monster fucker sounds amazing. But a monster lover?

This is just me daydreaming about being loved unconditionally again. But that just leads to two things: heartbreak and disappointment.

CHAPTER 38



KRAMPUS

The sun peeks through the dense canopy, dappling the snow in golden light. The sky is almost as blue as Olivia's eyes. The storm is gone. I breathe in the scent of pine and fresh snow, my chest aching at the thought of what comes next.

Though I ache to keep Olivia here, locked away from the world in my embrace, I love her too much to see her hurt. I want what's best for her.

Even if the best is leaving.

She is the light that brightens my endless darkness, the best thing in my long, lonely life. And I will enjoy every moment we have left together.

Olivia kicks at the soft snow, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright. Her hair catches the sunlight, turning gold. When I invited her to come outside, I gave her clothes back. I couldn't have her wearing a dress in the snow again. She's covered in those tight, black pants that cling to her curves, boots, and her big jacket, closed to her chin.

When she glances up, mischief dances in her gaze. "What?" She opens a tentative smirk. "Are you wondering if I'm going to run away again?"

Arching an eyebrow, I lift a shoulder. "You're not running. I'd chase you."

"Again?"

My lips twitch. "You know I will, kitten. Every time."

A grin spreads across her face as she rises on tiptoes, her small hands splaying on my stomach. The warmth of her touch seeps through my skin to my bones, igniting a slow burn in my blood. I lower myself so our faces come closer.

Olivia takes a sudden step back. “Then you’ll have to catch me.”

She darts into the woods before I can reply, her pale hair streaming behind her. Laughter drifts back to me, rich and warm like mulled wine, stirring my lust.

Fuck. She knows what this does to me. I growl, every muscle in my body tightening for a chase. I restrain myself, digging the heels of my boots into the snow. Olivia disappears between the trees, kicking up snow behind her.

I give her a head start, my gaze tracking her silhouette between the trees. The woods are her domain now, a place she feels safe in a way she never did before. My chest swells with possessive pride at the thought. It’s because of me. It’s because she belongs to me, and she knows I’ll always keep her safe.

I let desire ignite inside me. I let the primal urge to chase my mate take over.

When the sounds of her flight fade into silence, I stalk forward. My feet sink into the deep snow, and I flare my nostrils to find her scent.

It would be easy to track her steps, but I want to smell her. I fucking love the way she smells. And when the tang of her arousal hits me, I can’t stop the growl that rumbles from my chest.

The hunt quickens my pulse and sharpens my senses until I can taste her anticipation in the air. Olivia runs in silence now; no laughter reaches me, but I can hear her kicking the snow. I can hear her ragged breaths as she puts distance between us.

My blood boils in my veins, and a thousand images flash across my mind. I imagine all the ways I want to punish her for running. All the ways I want to claim her, mark her as mine. Fuck, I would fuck her until she couldn’t walk away from me.

At last, I see her. Olivia looks over her shoulder, finding me. She squeals and picks up her pace, darting past the trees and stumbling into a snow-covered clearing.

And seeing her like this, with her hair flying behind her and her full curves splattered with snow as she darts away from me, turns the fire inside me into an inferno.

With a roar, I eat up the distance between us, my heartbeat racing. I reach out an arm. My fingers graze the back of her coat.

I close my hand around the hood of her jacket and let myself drop to my knees. This way, our heights are more equivalent. She jerks to a stop and bounces back against me. I catch her against my chest and lower my face to hers.

“Caught you,” I purr against her throat, my hands fisting her jacket.

Her heartbeat thrums under my lips, strong and steady. “Oh, no,” she says, her lips twisting into a wicked grin. “What will you do with me now?” she asks, those blue eyes glinting.

I tilt my head and taste the salt-sweetness of her skin, scraping my teeth along her pulse. “Anything I want.”

Closing a hand around her jaw, I force my tongue past her lips. Olivia struggles for all of a second before letting me in, her tongue dancing around mine and her nails digging into my wrist. I trace her bottom lip with my sharp teeth, careful not to break the skin.

I grab her jacket and force it open. Her breath hitches as I tug it down her arms, baring her to the chill air and my greedy hands. Olivia pretends to struggle against me, weakly pushing my hands away.

Dropping her jacket, I go for her hair. I fist the soft strands around a hand and pull her head back. Olivia’s gasp melts into a moan as she stares at me with half-lidded eyes. I smirk at her and cover a breast with one hand, squeezing it roughly so she gasps.

Fuck. No bra. She knows how I love her without. I cup one breast, kneading the soft flesh and rolling her nipple between

calloused fingers until it pebbles tight. My cocks jump in my pants.

She's fucking delicious. From the way her soft curves fit against my body to how she smells, to the little sounds she makes when I know she's getting wet.

"Needy little thing," I rumble, licking along her lips.

"Thought you liked me without underwear," she pants, her nails scoring down my chest.

Fuck. So her bra isn't the only thing she ditched. My cock throbs at the thought of her bare cunt, glistening and swollen for me.

"I fucking love it," I reply, shoving a hand under her shirt and grabbing her bare tit. Olivia breathes out hard when I squeeze her breast. I press my forefinger and thumb around her little nipple and roll it between my fingers, urging it even harder.

Olivia's eyes flutter, and she opens her mouth to let out another throaty moan. I take advantage of it and dip my tongue into her mouth, drinking from her taste.

I'm obsessed with the way she tastes. *Everywhere*. Every part of her body drives me insane with a mix of possessiveness, lust, and an affection so deep it rumbles in my bones.

Using my thumb and pinky, I push both her tits together and use one hand to massage them. She's so fucking soft and so fucking small. It's a wonder I fit inside this pretty pussy.

But I need more. The scent of her weeping cunt wafts up to me, and I'm buzzing about feeling her.

I shove her shirt up over her perfect tits and pull her head further back. Now she's arched against me, and her full breasts hold the shirt up in this position, so I can keep staring at the milky mounds. With my free hand, I shove inside her pants, searching for that spot of hers that has me on my knees.

And, of course, she's pantieless. She's fucking perfection.

Olivia's pussy is swollen against my fingertips. I push one finger between her folds and over her clit. Olivia bucks into my hand in reflex, her little clit rubbing against me.

I touch her entrance. And she's so fucking wet for me.

A growl escapes me as I leave her lips to nibble on her ear. "Desperate for my cock, aren't you?" I pull my hand back, spreading her arousal over her clit and massaging it with small circles. "This tight pussy is dying to milk my cocks, isn't it?"

Olivia smirks, but her knees buckle under my ministrations. "Don't care about a monster's cock."

"Liar." I rub her pussy faster, pulling my hand out, then pushing my finger back between her folds, massaging her clit. "No one can make you come like I do, kitten. This pussy belongs to me, and it will never come around another cock. You know that."

"Yeah?" she blows, trying to argue, trying to keep up with the banter, but she's too slick, too hot to focus.

"Yes, kitten. Only I know how to work your body. Because you're mine."

Olivia whimpers, her hands searching for purchase as she circles her hips against my fingers, seeking her release.

"Play with your tits, kitten. Let me see you playing with them," I growl.

Olivia cups her breasts in her hands, twisting her nipples with a moan. The sight of her panting and her fingers plucking at those pink nubs makes my cocks ache to be inside her.

I remind myself of the day she went too cold and she blacked out, so I pull her closer to my body, keeping her warm. And then I double my speed on her clit, massaging her the way I know she likes.

"Please, Krampus," Olivia begs, her voice barely more than a whisper, "please let me come."

"Such a good kitten for asking," I say, my chest vibrating with my need for her. My hand quickens its pace on her clit ever further, pushing her closer and closer to the edge.

“Please... please...” she gasps, her entire body tensing as she reaches the precipice of pleasure.

“Come for me, kitten,” I command, and Olivia’s orgasm crashes through her, her cunt clenching around nothing as she screams my name. Her slick coats my hand, and I can’t wait another second.

Olivia still trembles when I push her off my body. She stumbles one step, and then I grab her hips. I shove Olivia down onto the snow, positioning her on all fours. In one swift motion, I tear her leggings to shreds, leaving her exposed before me.

Olivia cries out, snapping her head to glare at me. I grin back at her, lowering my gaze to her soaked pussy. So fucking pretty, all swollen and pink and ready. The scent of her arousal is intoxicating, mingling with the crisp winter air.

I push her shirt up and out of the way, exposing her perfect backside, her back, and her nape. Leaning closer for a second, I grab her breasts, feeling them bounce in this position.

Then it’s my turn to strip. My pants drop to my knees, revealing my rock-hard cocks, both desperate to feel her warmth again. A part of me wants to fuck her with my upper cock, to knot her, and to fill her with my seed. I want to keep her with me, to fill her so much that she never wants to leave. But I prioritize her pleasure first.

She comes first, *always*.

CHAPTER 39



KRAMPUS

Grabbing her hips, I line up my lower, ribbed cock with her dripping pussy. I should stretch her first and work her walls so she's relaxed enough to take me in.

There's no time. I can't wait to feel her pussy squeezing my cock. One last time.

"Krampus!" she calls out, staring at me wide-eyed, her hands buried into the snow halfway to her elbows. I throw her jacket so she can put her hands over it, but I have a one-track mind now.

With a single thrust, I spear into her. Olivia curses and cries out, her inner walls clamping around me, tight, hot, then fluttering. She squeezes, throws her head back, and howls.

Olivia screams in ecstasy as she comes once more, her body quivering from the intensity. She pushes back against me, arching her spine and shoving her hips up. Perfect.

I brace myself on the ground with my hands and knees, my massive body covering Olivia like a protective shield. She arches her back, her shredded leggings clinging to her thighs, her shirt gathered around her shoulders. Her body begs for more.

Her body begs *for me*.

"Such a good kitten for taking me so well," I praise her as I thrust inside her, deeper, harder. The sensation of her tight pussy wrapped around me is intoxicating. Her scent fills my nostrils; it's like she was made just for me.

I drag my ribbed length along her walls, willing her pleasure to last longer. Olivia shudders, and goosebumps race down her arms. She moans so loud it echoes through the trees.

Growling with lust, I pick up my speed, fucking her harder. Olivia bounces on my cock until her knees leave the ground. She plants her feet down, rising with me as I pound into her wetness.

Madness takes over. I fuck my sweet kitten, pistoning my hips, the primal need to mark her as mine taking over. She squeezes me tight.

“Krampus—” Olivia gasps, but her orgasm interrupts her, and she screams, squeezing my cock within her like a vice. My mind is clouded by her touch. The way she feels around me is an obsession I cannot escape.

My pleasure rushes down my spine, but I grind my teeth and hold it back. She comes first.

I slow down, then drag my cock out of her, allowing the ribbed surface to drag her ecstasy on. She shudders and trembles against me with aftershocks.

“Already done?” she whimpers, her breath hitching. I can’t help but chuckle at her eagerness.

“Of course not, kitten. These are too few. Haven’t I told you? I’m obsessed with how hard you squeeze me.”

With that, I grab Olivia and pull her up to my lap, her back pressed against my chest. She gasps, glancing up at me as I adjust her body against mine. I kneel, sitting on my haunches. I keep the balance of her upper body against mine.

My hands curl around her thighs, and I spread her open. The sight when I look down is almost too much. I almost blow on the spot.

My pretty kitten, with her hair spread against my chest, her mouth parted with puffs of air. Her tits are still exposed, rosy nipples begging for my touch. The snow that has melted against her runs down her body in watery trickles. My cock is nestled between her thighs, rubbing against her little clit.

Fuck. I will never tire of her. I will never tire of her scent and the feel of her in my arms. How am I supposed to survive this?

I position her against me. My ribbed cock rubs against her clit. My knotted cock presses against her entrance. Her arousal covers me, the scent making me grunt.

“You smell so good, kitten,” I tell her, my nose against her hair.

“You, too,” she replies, her blue eyes glinting up at me.

My heart squeezes in my chest. This feeling inside me grows until it chokes me. I push it back down. This is not the time.

I line up my cock with her pussy and enter her, savoring the sensation. The tightness is exquisite, and my breath hitches as her warmth engulfs me. Olivia stretches, adapting to my size. She moans every inch I sink into her. In this moment, I know it’s the last time I’ll be inside her, and it breaks my heart.

We breathe out together once I’m seated inside her. It’s a relief. It’s like being home.

“Wrap an arm around me, kitten,” I instruct her. She obliges, holding onto me as if her life depends on it. I press my face into her hair, inhaling her deeply and committing it to memory. “Are you comfortable?”

She nods and licks her lips. Beautiful.

“Use my other cock to get yourself off,” I order. Olivia doesn’t hesitate; her delicate hand reaches down, grasping my ribbed cock and pressing it against her clit. It’s still wet, covered in her slick.

My hips circle as I move her up and down my cock, my hands gripping around her thighs and ass. She’s small enough to fit perfectly in my hands. I’m careful to fuck her just right, to bring her pleasure with both cocks.

Her body moves in rhythm with mine, each thrust bringing us closer to the edge. My mind swirls, knowing that I’m going

to miss her terribly. Nothing will ever feel the same now that I know she exists.

“Krampus...” she moans, her voice barely audible above the slapping flesh. My body reacts, the need to please her overtaking everything else.

I pick up speed. The air fills with the sound of our bodies colliding and her pretty mewls. Olivia’s orgasm builds once again, her inner walls clamping around me. She moans my name again, and more of her wetness covers me.

“Harder... please,” she begs, and I oblige, slamming into her with a ferocity that leaves us both breathless. I keep my eyes peeled open, fastened on her face.

I can’t miss anything. I need to remember this.

Olivia explodes again, and her body shudders against mine. I know I won’t be able to hold back much longer. Her hips move out of sync now, desperate, and her breathing is ragged. She holds my cock against her clit and I keep pounding until I feel her squeeze me once more. She bursts open again, her pussy fluttering hard around me.

And this time, there’s no way out. She squeezes me too perfectly. I’m about to go.

“Fuck, kitten. You feel so fucking good,” I grunt, losing my grip on the last remnants of restraint.

My nails dig into her soft flesh, and I push her hard against my lap, pinning her to me. “I’m going to knot you, kitten,” I say as I sheathe myself inside her, and my knot swells. “Be a good girl and take it.”

“Oh, shit,” she cries out, but she arches her back, pushing her hips against me.

A fierce pleasure barrels down my spine, and I roar as I come deep inside her, filling her up. My second cock bursts, releasing hot streams onto her breasts and stomach. Olivia gasps in surprise and squeezes me harder inside her.

My knot swells. Olivia cries out once it stretches her out too much. She digs her nails into my arms, but she doesn’t

move. My little mate slams her eyelids shut, but she takes it so well. And for that, I fill her womb to the max.

“Fuck, kitten,” I groan, feeling my knot swell within her tight, pulsating pussy. We’re locked together now, our bodies inseparable.

I’m still coming, with intense bliss burning within my veins. She cries out, and I look down. We watch her lower stomach bulge slightly with my come. The sight drags my orgasm even longer, and another burst of come spouts free, a rope hitting Olivia’s tits.

The sensation is too much for her, and she shudders in another overwhelming orgasm. She convulses in ecstasy, and her body finally goes limp against mine.

I curl an arm around her and fold her body against my chest. My cock stays locked inside of her, and I’ll keep her warm until she comes back to herself.

* * *

Olivia jerks awake, her beautiful blue eyes wide as they stare at me. I hold her naked form close to my chest, radiating warmth into her trembling body. My knot is almost gone now, and I should take her back inside.

“Krampus,” she whispers, her voice barely above a whimper. “You’ve ruined me.”

I chuckle low, but my heart is heavy. “Good,” I reply, my chest rumbling with possessiveness. “I wouldn’t want it any other way.”

She sighs in contentment, snuggling against my chest. I hold her close, inhaling our mixed scents.

“I need to get you inside or you’ll freeze off, kitten,” I whisper against her hair.

She nods and makes to sit up. Gently, I pull my cock out of her, the knot having receded. A torrent of my come spills from her, and Olivia shudders again, smiling despite herself.

“Shit,” she breathes out with a laughter. “How did that fit inside me?”

I rub my cheek against hers, claiming her as mine, even if just for this fleeting moment. “You’re made for me,” I tell her.

Olivia smiles, letting me rub our scents together. But I see it. I see the way her smile drops.

“Krampus... The storm is over. I need to go back before the sun sets,” she murmurs, her eyes clouded.

And I know that by *back*, she doesn’t mean my place. She means the human village down the mountain. She means her family and her house, far, far away from here.

Where we’ll never see each other again.

My heart aches, knowing I have to let her go. But I nod, agreeing. Speechlessly, I help her into her jacket and fix her pants with a snap of my fingers.

Olivia would usually smile or laugh. But not today.

We face each other, standing in the snow as the sun lowers behind the trees. She stares at me, her eyes full of unspoken words. I clench my jaw and hold what I truly want to say behind my teeth.

She opens her mouth. My heart races. Is this it? Is this when she asks me to stay?

She closes her mouth, then opens it again. “I’ll clean up, and then I’m ready to go,” is all she says. Such a short sentence.

How can it break my heart like this?

I nod once, then bend to pick her up. Olivia lets me cradle her to my chest. She folds her arms around my shoulders and nuzzles against my neck. Almost as if she wants to make me hers, too.

As if she wants to stay.

CHAPTER 40



OLIVIA

*M*y heart shatters as the familiar stone with the carved circle appears between the trees. It's the one man-made thing, dark and ugly and broken amid the white of the forest. My boots crunch on fresh snow with each step, but the only thing I focus on is the pain in my chest.

Krampus stops once we climb the stone circle. My gaze traces the old symbols, the tree I was tied up to. I'm not surprised to find there's no bitterness in my chest, even now. Even as I'm about to face my captors.

Krampus waits in silence. I'm afraid to face him. I'm afraid of this moment. Yet, I turn and look up into his face.

He's wearing the sweater I knitted him, black yarn hugging his muscular torso. It fits him well. I never thought I'd see the day he wore a shirt. My lips quirk up for a second before falling.

This is our last goodbye.

Krampus's gaze is fastened on my face, unfaltering. His hair moves with the gentle breeze, and though his face is empty, I see the sadness in his eyes.

"I will not get closer to town." His rumble vibrates through me. Oh, how I'm going to miss his stormy voice. "In case they fear me. We don't want them to be mad and hurt you in the process."

Fear him. My fingers curl into fists. Yes, they still see him as a monster. But this has to change.

I stop an arm's length away, close enough to breathe his woody scent. Pine and clove, and something darker, more primal. The ache in my chest sharpens into a stab. This is the last time I'm drinking his scent.

"I'm glad the sweater fits," I tell him, my voice breaking.

The corner of his mouth tilts up with a wry, bittersweet smile. "It is soft. Warm." His clawed hand reaches out, cupping my cheek. "Like you. Like your touch."

My eyes burn. I lean into his touch, the rough pad of his thumb brushing my skin.

"I hope this is worth it," she says. "Going back to them."

"Your family needs you." His hand falls away. "I would keep you here if I could. I would tie you up, keep you in my bed, and stop you from leaving." He shakes his head. "But you must go to them. You taught me not to be selfish. I won't hold you here."

My throat burns now. It's a struggle to keep the tears at bay. "I'll never forget you," I murmur, then take a shuddering breath. "The time we had together means the world to me."

"Nor am I you, kitten." He pulls me into the hard wall of his chest, the soft sweater enveloping me. His heart thumps under my cheek, as broken as my own.

I close my eyes, memorizing the feel of him, the scent. My heart can't take it. I can't spend another second here, another second in his arms, or I won't have the courage to go home. I step away, a chasm opening inside me.

Krampus towers before me, his eyes glowing like embers in the sunset. "I will wait for you, kitten. Always."

Hope flickers in my chest. "Do you think we'll see each other again?"

Krampus doesn't nod. He just stares at me as if he, too, wants to commit me to his memory. "You won't find my home again, not with the magic in my lands. But I will find you, kitten. I will always find you."

Tears prick hot behind my eyes. I swallow the lump in my throat and take another step back, putting distance between us. It's over. I'm leaving this place, leaving him behind.

I turn away, steeling myself, but glance over my shoulder for one last look. He stands motionless amidst the trees, as eternal and unchanging as the woods themselves. Then I lose sight of him.

The trail stretches through the forest, back to the small town of New Oberzell. Conflicting emotions churn inside me. Sadness wars with determination. I have a mission now, a duty to fulfill.

I must show the people that Krampus is not the monster from their stories. I have to make them understand, so they give him the home he deserves. So they can love and honor him again. Now that the wendigo is dead and no more children will ever be hurt again, I know it's about time they welcome Krampus back.

My backpack digs into my shoulders as I march onward. The sun dips behind the trees, shadows lengthening around me. I swipe away a stray tear and keep walking. The woods will spit me out at the edge of town under the cover of darkness. And then, my real work begins.

CHAPTER 41



OLIVIA

Stepping out of the trees, I shiver against the cold evening. Somehow, it feels colder in here. Maybe I got used to Krampus's permanent warmth. I shake my head, shoving the thought away before it hurts me.

New Oberzell's houses loom before me across the overgrown grass. Windows shuttered and cobblestone streets empty, I wonder about the time. An eerie quiet blankets the city.

It must be the middle of the evening. Shit. Time passes differently in Krampus's place.

Swinging my backpack off, I dig through it, my fingers closing around the smooth metal of my phone.

Turning the phone on, I'm surprised at how much charge I still have. I check the date. Oh. It's just like Krampus mentioned. Though it felt like I spent almost a month with him, in here it's only been a week.

Still, enough time for Mom to miss me. For her to be worried. I chew on my bottom lip, waiting for my service to turn back on.

Hope flutters in my chest as notifications arrive, one after the other. I dismiss the many spammy ones, the ads, and even the emails from my boss. He'll be mad, for sure, but Mom definitely called the cops, and I can get a police report saying I was lost in the woods and present it to my boss.

I must contact Mom at once. She called me a few times and left a bunch of messages. A smile teases the corners of my lips. At least I'll have one good thing. Mom will have been so worried she might treat me well for a while.

Mom: You could have let me know you weren't coming today. It would have been the responsible thing. Are you taking long? I wanted to have the mirror up when Jessica comes over for dinner tomorrow.

Mom: Olivia, at least answer me. How far are you?

Mom: Jessica will be over in two hours, where are you????

Mom: Olivia, I can't believe I gave birth to such a selfish creature. You've always been irresponsible, but this is a record. You don't even bother letting me know where the mirror is.

Mom: Are you mocking me? I called the store, and they told me you bought the mirror. Is this a tantrum?

Mom: For the last time, girl, tell me what you did to my mirror.

My heart sinks and sinks further with every word. The last message was three days ago. She stopped calling. She stopped messaging. I bet she even blocked me out of spite.

She thinks I'm doing this on purpose. She thinks I drove two states to buy a mirror and then hide it just to nag her. That's how badly she thinks of me.

And all I've ever done was try to have her love.

My eyes sting. My mouth curls downward as a tear trails down my cheek. I hit the arrow to go back to the main screen and click on my sister's message. There's no hope in my chest this time, so I'm not surprised when I read her words.

Sister: Heyyyy! I just dropped my phone and cracked the screen, can you believe it? Can I borrow some money? I need to get it fixed asap and Mom won't give me anymore this month. * eye-roll emoji *

Disappointment sinks its claws into my chest, sharper than the cold. I'm not surprised, not really. If I vanished tomorrow, would anyone care? Search parties combing the woods, missing posters with my face?

Unlikely. That's exactly why I was targeted for the sacrifice, after all.

As a last try, I click on Google search and type my name. I hope for news. Disappearance news, some articles mourning the loss of a life too soon.

Nothing. No report, no mention. Nada.

So much for maternal instinct.

Shoving the phone into my backpack, I hesitate at the edge of town. With a shaky breath, I walk toward the houses.

The empty square yawns before me, cobblestone streets and quaint houses silent in the gathering dusk. A chill runs down my spine that has nothing to do with the temperature.

Where is everyone?

The sky is still purple with the sunset, though it is growing darker. I pick up my phone once more to check the time.

It's just past five.

Blinking several times, I check again. I even go online to make sure my phone is updated. Nothing changes. It's five p.m., and it feels like midnight.

Not a soul stirs. An uneasy feeling settles in my gut as I take a step forward. My boot heels click too loud against the stones, the sound echoing between buildings.

I clear my throat, suddenly nervous. The windows are closed, curtains drawn. There's not even the bark of dogs. The shops I pass are empty.

Not just empty. Deserted.

I turn in a slow circle, taking in the details. Not a single light flickers in any window. My breaths come quicker, shallow and sharp. It feels like there are fewer cars parked in front of the houses than when I arrived.

The silence is deafening. My heart races as night falls, covering the town in a blanket of darkness.

Something isn't right in New Oberzell.

CHAPTER 42



OLIVIA

The evening chill seeps into my bones as I rush toward the bakery, glad to see the light inside. I push the door open as I work a smile onto my face. Surely, Violet will know what happened here.

Sniffing, I step inside the bakery, my gaze searching for the dark-haired owner with the big smile. Violet is not behind the counter, but it's understandable. It's late for a small-town bakery, after all.

No patrons take the tables. There's none of the cheer, laughter, and warmth from my morning here. Though the lights are on, it's chilly inside. As if a window were left open.

"Violet?" I call out, leaning over the counter to peek into the kitchen.

No one calls back. I don't remember if Violet had someone working with her.

"Violet?" I call again, louder, but no answer comes.

Disappointment washes over me, bitter as burnt coffee. Shadows dance across the floor and up the walls in the dim light filtering through the windows.

Where is she? And why would she leave the bakery unlocked? Is that a small-town thing?

I wander through the bakery, taking in the familiar scent of yeast and sugar. I search for any sign of her, any note saying that she's going to be back. Maybe a clue to where she lives.

My gaze snags on a photo on the wall. One man catches my eye, bearing a striking resemblance to James with his small black eyes and full mustache.

I pause and look again, narrowing my eyes.

Yes, there's no doubt. This person looks like James. Eerily so.

How is that possible? The photo is ancient; the colors faded and sepia-toned. Then I remember Violet saying it was James's grandfather... But is he?

Nothing is at it seems in this place.

Unease pools in my gut as I step outside. I wanted to tell Violet farewell about the wendigo being dead and how no one has to worry anymore.

Where should I go now?

I make my way toward the spot where I left my car. What are the chances they fixed it? None, for sure. I'm not even surprised when I pause in front of the dark B&B and find that my car is not there.

My pulse races. I sniff again, the cold making my nose hurt. So, they have my car stashed somewhere. Of course, they do. They don't want to risk the police coming here and finding it.

There's no need to worry about that. My mother didn't even miss me. There's no way she called the cops to let them know I disappeared. I stand outside the B&B, breathing out puffs of air, my mind racing.

What do I do now? I could spend the night at the B&B, but what if they tie me up and leave me in the woods again? There's no way they entered the place last time without the owner's knowledge.

A door opens a few houses down. My brows shoot up in surprise. The place is so still that it feels almost abandoned. A tall woman steps out into the shadows, her straight black hair pulled into a tight braid. She closes her door and turns.

Shock flickers across Dorothea Klein's angular face. We stare at each other for a moment, then she strides toward me.

"You're alive." Her eyes are wary, and her hands twist in her dress.

I hold my hands up. "I mean no harm," I tell her. "Really. I get that you guys were desperate and needed to sacrifice someone. My arrival was perfect timing. I don't blame you."

She pauses in front of me. Dorothea's shoulders relax a fraction. "The sacrifice—we thought Krampus had taken you."

A deep sorrow blooms in my chest at the memory of Krampus. I force a smile. "The real culprit is dead. A wendigo was preying on your children, not Krampus."

"A wendigo?" Doubt colors Dorothea's voice.

"Yes," I tell her. "Krampus does live in these woods, but he doesn't want to hurt anyone. In fact, he couldn't even reach the town until the day I arrived. The wendigo died a few days ago. Krampus killed it himself."

Dorothea shakes her head, her eyes intense. "But the deaths—there were two more while you were gone. One of them just two days ago."

My breath catches. "What?" No, that's not possible. Time clearly passes differently in Krampus's territory, but not like this. Not this slow.

"We thought Krampus refused to accept the sacrifice, that's why he's still killing the children. I'm going to meet my husband at James's house, and then we're going to have a meeting at the mayor's. We have to discuss this. We..." She swallows hard, her eyes glinting with tears. "We're thinking of abandoning the town. We'll bring that up to the mayor."

I shake my head. Krampus couldn't have killed those children. "There's no way it was Krampus, Dorothea. I promise. He wouldn't hurt the children. He's not evil."

Dorothea gawks at me, her eyes shadowed with fear. She takes a beat, studying my words. Finally, she releases a deep sigh, one of those that comes straight from the soul. "You must

leave this place, child. You survived, and I'm glad we didn't have to kill another innocent." Before I can ask about that, she steps away. "Take this blessing, child. Take this blessing and go home, back to your family."

And with one last look over her shoulder, Dorothea flees into the night, leaving me alone under the indifferent stars. My stomach seizes with fear.

If the wendigo wasn't killing those children... Then what is?

CHAPTER 43



OLIVIA

Dorothea told me to go home, back to my family. Turns out my family doesn't miss me. And no matter how hard I tried, they don't need me, and they don't love me. I know now they never will, and I can't buy that love.

I don't care about going home right now. There's no rush. And there's something much more important to fix.

With nowhere else to go, I find myself drawn to the familiar embrace of the woods. Maybe because I spent so long in the quiet of Krampus's house, I feel much safer among the trees. The shadows and moonlight cast a comforting blanket over my thoughts as I step past the first trees and find a stump to sit on.

My mind races, putting the puzzle pieces together. What's going on? What is truly happening in this place?

Okay, here's what I know. Krampus does live in the woods, but he said the town locked him up with a magical spell many years ago. So, he couldn't reach the children.

Krampus could be lying, but I don't believe that. He has no reason to.

We thought it was that wendigo who had eaten the children, but that's not true. So, there's someone—not Krampus and not the wendigo—who has been eating children every twenty years until someone sacrifices an adult in the woods.

The circle in the woods flashes in my memory, its chilling presence tingling down my spine. It's a strange place to perform a ritual for a beast of the woods, isn't it? The circle and symbols carved in stone were the kind we see in movies to call forth demons.

It was also old, with some figures missing and some overgrowth.

And then there's James—that picture in the bakery. It looked so old, but the man in it was undeniably him. Could he be... immortal?

Krampus said there are many supernatural creatures out there, even when we have no idea about them.

A cold horror seeps inside me as I realize the terrible truth: James must have been sacrificing children all these years. He must have framed Krampus for the crimes, letting the town believe they were appeasing the fearsome creature. No wonder he had been so eager to sacrifice me. Perhaps he'd made a deal with the devil himself for immortality.

Shit. It makes so much sense! Maybe James himself put up that barrier to keep Krampus away, fearing Krampus would ruin his plan.

"Shit," I whisper into the night, my blood boiling with anger and fear. How could he do that? He's lived in this town for years—maybe centuries. And yet, he has no qualms about sacrificing *children*. He must see the poor babies growing up, and he doesn't give a shit about handing them to the devil.

My stomach sinks. What a horrible person. I must stop him. The town needs to know.

I can't allow more innocents to die. Who do I tell first? Dorothea seems open and even regretful. She would listen to me. But she went to meet James himself.

No, I must go after Mr. Horner, the mayor. He must be at home. Dorothea said she would meet him *after* talking to her husband and James.

My heart pounds with determination as I rush through the woods towards the mayor's house. I keep near the edge of the

woods, hiding in the shadows. The roots and the undergrowth slow me down, but I need secrecy.

And I need to get there before James does. I pick up my speed.

The branches whip my face as I speed past them, their stinging pain keeping me alert and focused. I know I'm racing against time, and I refuse to let fear slow me down.

The mayor had told me he lives on the edge of town, on the biggest farm with a huge oak up front. It's not hard to find the place.

I stand before the mayor's dark, looming house, my heart pounding in my chest like a trapped animal desperate for escape. Anticipation and apprehension mingle within me, a potent cocktail threatening to consume my resolve. But I cannot falter.

I must tell Mr. Horner the truth. He needs to know James is killing these children.

Reaching the front porch, I waste no time. I knock on the door several times.

"Mr. Horner?" I call out. No light comes from inside the house. Is he asleep? I knock again. "Mr. Horner!"

If he's asleep, how is he going to meet up with Dorothea? No, he must be somewhere else. I rush down the porch and circle the house.

Far in the fields, I descry a large building cutout against the sky. There's light inside—a single, faint light. The darkness of the night is suffocating here, as if it were a ravenous beast eager to swallow me whole. No sound breaks the silence—not crickets, not birds, nor frogs. Nothing.

My heart lodges in my throat. I follow a trail toward the building, swallowing to put my heart back in place. It's no use. There's a presence around me, pushing into me.

The building is an old barn. It's not in good shape, with one door hanging from its hinges, a broken window, pieces of wood lying about everywhere.

Its timeworn walls sag under the weight of age, and the wind whispers through the gaps between the boards, singing a mournful lullaby. I step inside, and electricity crackles in the air. Goosebumps ride down my arms.

“Mr. Horner?” I call out, hesitation coloring my voice, and I narrow my eyes to search for the source of light. The creaking floorboards beneath my feet seem to echo the unspoken fears lurking in my heart. “Is anyone here?” I ask, my voice barely audible amidst the oppressive darkness that surrounds me.

“Help... please...” A weak, female voice pierces the silence, her words a fragile thread.

My heart stutters as the urgency of the moment crashes into me. I can't waste another second. I push past the hesitation gnawing at my gut and delve deeper into the barn. I rush forward, searching for the voice, searching for the light.

As I round a corner, my breath catches in my throat. In the very back of the barn, there's an open space. The light comes from a single gas lantern, its yellow light washing over the girl's features.

Lying on her side, bound and wearing only her pajamas, is Violet. Around her, on the old floorboards, there's a brand new chalk drawing of a circle.

Just like the one in the woods.

CHAPTER 44



OLIVIA

Violet gasps for shallow breaths as she weakly struggles against the ropes around her wrists. Shock freezes my body for all of a second. I rush to her, dropping my backpack.

“Violet!” I drop to my knees beside her, fumbling with the knots. “What’s happening?”

Violet shakes her head slowly. “Don’t know... I was...” She closes her eyes and opens them again. Her pupils are blown wide. “In the bakery? He walked in. I think he drugged me.”

Fucking knots. They’re too tight. “Who? Was it James? James dragged you here?” My gaze shoots at the circle around us again. It’s exactly like the one in the woods—same symbols and everything.

My heart races. Is my theory right? James sacrifices people for a demon using these circles? I have to get Violet out of here before James comes back.

Her eyelids flutter open, confusion clouding her gaze. Violet frowns. “Olivia? You’re alive?” Her voice slurs.

“I am.” I force a reassuring smile on my face even as my hands shake. Reaching behind me, I pull my backpack closer and search it for something, anything, to cut Violet free.

My knitting scissors. Relief makes my heart skip a beat.

I work through the thick rope around Violet’s ankles first.

“Krampus killed none of the children, Violet. There’s good in Krampus. He’s a monster, but he’s a good monster.”

Violet blinks slowly, and I’m not sure she comprehends any of my words. Rage makes me clench my teeth together. How dare he? How dare James hurt her? Drug her, drag her like this?

The barn door creaks open. I snap my attention in that direction, holding the scissors aloft. But it’s not James.

Mayor Horner stands there, staring between us with muted shock.

I lower the scissors. The mayor doesn’t know about James’s deal. The mayor and the Kleins believe it *is* Krampus who’s hurting people.

“Mayor!” I breathe out in relief. “Quick, help me free Violet! It’s not what you guys think!”

The mayor frowns, his eyes wide. “You... You’re alive?”

A nervous chuckle escapes me as I turn back to Violet and keep on working the ropes around her ankles. “Crazy, isn’t it? Krampus isn’t the one to blame for the children’s deaths! Krampus is... He’s actually good! Which is a strange thing to say, I know, but you’ll have to trust me. I think James is behind it all. I found a picture of him at the bakery—an old picture, like from one hundred years ago, and he was there! Exactly the way he looks today. So,” the first of the ropes snaps, “I’m pretty sure he made a deal with the devil for immortality or something like that. Maybe he had to keep giving people to the demon, that’s why he came up with the sacrifice story.”

Undoing the ropes around Violet’s feet, I grab her shoulders and force her up. She’s too groggy to help me; she’s fumbling and breathing hard as I drag her to her feet. Violet sways, but I keep a hold on her.

“James also put up a barrier around Krampus’s house, so Krampus was locked up all this time. He couldn’t have killed the children because he couldn’t even *leave*.” I twist my body

to look over at the mayor. “Help me carry her, Mayor. We have to go before James—”

Violet’s nails dig into my arm. I look at her face, her wide eyes focused on the mayor. There’s fear in her expression. A cry locks in her throat.

Something hard hits me across the head, and we fall.

CHAPTER 45



OLIVIA

The scissors slip from my fingers and clatter to the ground. My vision swims as I try to focus on my surroundings. My side explodes in pain as I grimace and struggle to sit up.

“Ugh,” I groan, clutching at my throbbing shoulder. Violet has fallen next to me, but she is unharmed.

“You shouldn’t have come back,” Mayor Horner hisses.

My heart stops. I look up at him. He’s holding a wood beam as if it were a club.

Did the mayor *hit* me?

There’s no way...

The ever-smiling man with his soft voice now scowls at me, his cold words laced with an anger I’ve never heard before. “You’re alone in this world,” he spits, shaking his head, “no one would care if you just died. And I checked.” A wicked smirk crosses his face. “No one reported you as missing. *You* could have saved this town. You could have let those children live. But *no*. There’s no sense of sacrifice in this generation.”

I blink as I unfold my body and get to my feet. The mayor stands over us, his face twisted with rage. Fear grips me, but I force myself to push through the pain and confusion.

“Mayor... What are you talking about?” I shake my head, positioning myself between Violet and Horner. “Krampus doesn’t take sacrifices. It was...”

The mayor scoffs. “I know that, stupid girl. But the town needs a sacrifice every twenty years for the crops to grow, so someone has to be killed. But when I went back to finish you, you were gone. And I don’t fucking care where you were, but you shouldn’t have come back.”

My heartbeat races. Violet pushes herself into a sitting position. I help her to her feet.

“No.” I shake my head. “This isn’t fair. The children were dying to improve the crops? How is that a fair trade?”

“It’s not,” Violet wheezes next to me. “The crops... They’ve been... getting worse... for years.”

I snap my gaze at the mayor. “So, the crop part is bullshit. Is that what you told the Kleins? That you must sacrifice people for the crops?”

Horner shrugs. “It’s amazing what people do when they think they might be in danger. Even if the danger is imagined.”

Gritting my teeth, I dart my gaze around us. The scissors are not within reach, but I can get them. My priority is to get Violet out of here, away from Horner. If I can keep him talking until Violet has enough strength to run, or until I get the scissors, maybe we’ll have a chance.

“So, it wasn’t because of the crops,” I shoot at him, taking a small step back toward the scissors. “Why then? Don’t you think you owe me that much?”

His lips curl in a sneer. “Of course I owe you. After all, your blood will soak into that circle tonight,” he says, tilting his head toward the chalk circle, “and your sacrifice will allow me to live another twenty years.”

Shock rattles me to my bones. My eyes widen.

“*You?*” My mouth moves, but no sound comes out. “You? But... James. I saw his picture!”

Horner grins. “That *is* his grandfather. They just look alike. The funny thing is: I’m also in that picture. But I’m not stupid. I changed my hair, my clothes. I even had a mustache then. Every time someone starts to find it strange, I only have to

move out for a few years. Travel around. I have an apartment in New York. But here's the catch." He props the club on his shoulder. "Small towns sound quaint in theory. But it's only in places like these that you can kill a few outsiders and no one will bat an eye. If this happened in New York, I'd have a whole FBI department up my ass by now." And he grins.

Horner grins as if he wasn't speaking about murdering people every few years and the small side effects of the deaths of children. A bitter taste fills my mouth.

"Alright. What happens now, Horner?" I ask, forcing every ounce of confidence I can muster. "You need to kill someone to fulfill your... *pact*."

"A deal. It's a literal deal with a demon. And yes, I need to sacrifice someone every twenty years over a circle like this. Otherwise, the demon comes hunting. And he loves children."

"Okay. So you need to kill someone. Let Violet go then."

Horner snorts. "Now that you both know, none of you can walk out of here, Olivia."

"But Violet is not an outsider."

"But she is." And his nose curls as he gives Violet a once-over. "Just like her father was. He was an easy sacrifice. No one missed him but his wife. That fool. We're proud Germanic descendants here. None of this... modern nonsense."

Violet recoils. My stomach burns with anger. I bare my teeth, my hands shaking. I want to punch his face so hard right now.

Better. I glance behind me at the scissors. They're so close. If I can get close enough to pull them with my foot...

Horner cackles. "How cute," he spits. "I would like to see you try."

I look back at him in time to see the club swinging. Violet pulls me away at the last second, and we stumble back. He swings a second time, and Violet and I jump back.

Together, we hit a barrel. I glance over my shoulder in time to see the lantern tilting.

The impact sends the lantern crashing to the ground, and in an instant, flames erupt around us. The fire spreads quickly, feeding on the dry hay and wood of the barn. Horner curses, his eyes wild, as the inferno encircles us.

“Move!” I yell, pulling Violet away from the fire. My gaze is fastened on the door behind Horner, but the moment I try to dart to it, he swings again. I dodge and change my direction, rushing toward the center of the room, where the circle lies. It’s our only refuge from the flames, for now.

But Horner stands between us and the exit. And now, the scissors are out of reach.

I glance around, searching for a way out, when I notice a shadow flickering in the firelight. My heart races.

Dorothea. Dorothea said they’d come here after talking through things. If I get them on our side, they’ll stop Horner. They surely will let us out.

I need to get Horner to expose himself.

“Wait!” I cry out as he moves to us, the club aloft. “So, you did a deal with a demon,” I speak fast, hoping against hope that Dorothea can hear us, “and you told the others it was for the crops when, in fact, it’s to maintain your immortality.”

Horner shakes his head. “Yes, I’ve already told you that. Can’t you stop struggling for once? I’ve already tried to kill you before.”

“And you put the blame on Krampus, but actually, actually it was you. Killing the people. And the demon killing the children.”

“Yes, your point is?”

“Did you lock Krampus away because he would stop you?”

“Of course. I needed someone to blame, and Krampus is an obvious scapegoat,” he says, his eyes darting around us. “Now, let’s get this over with.” He brings the club up. “You have to bleed to death on the circle. I’m not sure it’ll work if

you burn it to a crisp first. And we can't have the demon kill more children. Half the town has already left."

I step back, but the fire licks too close to my legs. My hand races down Violet's arm to clutch her fingers. She trembles, her mind not completely her own, but she squeezes me back.

Tears fill Violet's eyes, and I hold her close, feeling the heat of the approaching fire. The air is thick with smoke, choking us. Panic rises within me, but I hope the others have enough compassion inside them to help.

Horner starts toward us. Fear spikes in my blood.

He stops. "One last question, Olivia," he says, his eyes narrowing. "How the fuck did you escape?"

My gaze flicks to the shadow in the fire, now growing larger and more distinct. My heart soars.

"Krampus saved me, Horner. And he's very fond of punishment."

CHAPTER 46



KRAMPUS

The house echoes hollow when I stride through the front door, an aching silence where Olivia's laughter once filled the halls. Wrongness seeps into my bones. An urge to find out what's changed burns inside me. I sit on my chair, and my gaze finds her empty seat.

Of course there's something wrong. And I know what it is.

It's her absence. The house misses her. I miss her.

Fuck. I shouldn't have let her go. Regret washes over me, filling my mouth with an ashen taste. Is this what life is going to be like? Because I let her go?

Am I going to live eternity in boredom and pain, seeing only dull colors? In silence, in regret?

Flashes of our days together take the back of my eyelids. The feel of her against me and how perfectly her small body fits mine—yes, but there's more. There's this ache in my chest that only her presence soothes. A hole I had never noticed that only she fills.

No. No, I refuse to accept this. Shooting to my feet, I pass the door again, my feet sinking into the snow. What if she's gone? What if she left town, what if she's so far away now that I won't ever find her again?

It doesn't matter. There's no way I'll let her go without trying. If she's gone, then I'll follow her. I'll track her scent across the world if that's needed.

Picking up my pace, I follow my own tracks back to the summoning circle where I left Olivia. Night has fallen between then and now, but I clearly see the drawings as I cross over them.

A summoning circle. Which villager did this? Is this related to the barrier that had me stuck close to the house? One thing is not necessarily linked to the other, but there are high chances that the same human who knew how to create a barrier also knew how to summon a demon. Many generations ago, some people had magical knowledge of healing.

I wonder who took that knowledge and corrupted it.

My feet take me away from the circle toward the village. I follow Olivia's footsteps in the snow until the very edge of the woods. There, they disappear.

Mingling with the woods, I peer from the shadows. There are some buildings nearby, houses, and such, but they're dark. I see little light in the rest of the town. My heart rate picks up as I step out of the trees.

How strange. I don't know how long it's been since I last came here, and I don't know how they're going to react. Humans always reacted with fear upon seeing me—all but Olivia—and now that they're not used to my sight?

No. I sink back into the darkness. I don't need a commotion. Moving through the edge of the woods, I keep my eyes open, searching the village for any signs of humans.

The place is empty. What is happening here?

As I'm about to step out of the woods, a scent catches my attention. Olivia's. Moving back to the trees, I search the air for any signs of her.

There's a stump with her scent's signature. She sat here. I flare my nostrils and drink her in. My balls tighten. How could I let her walk away when she smells like this?

I shake myself back to the matter at hand. Her scent trails along the trees, weak, mingling with the undergrowth and rotting leaves. Olivia kept to the woods, her trail clear. Good. I creep through the shadows, tagging her. I cross the village's

center, which is also empty, then move away from it. There's only a dark house with fields and a barn in the distance, with light calling from the inside.

Sinking into the shadows, I move toward the barn. What is Olivia doing here? And why is the town deserted? If they all left, why does she linger?

From the barn, I hear it. I hear her voice.

"So, you did a deal with a demon," she says, "and you told the others it was for the crops when, in fact, it's to keep your immortality."

What? So that's what happened? That's what the circle's for?

"Yes, I've already told you that," answers a man, his voice vaguely familiar. "Can't you stop struggling for once? I've already tried to kill you before."

Rage spikes inside me.

"And you put the blame on Krampus, but actually, actually it was you. Killing the people. And the demon killing the children."

"Yes, your point is?"

"Did you lock Krampus away because he would stop you?"

That's my girl. This is the one answer I need to hear the most.

"Of course. I needed someone to blame, and Krampus is an obvious scapegoat. Now, let's get this over with. You have to bleed to death on the circle. I'm not sure it'll work if you burn to a crisp first..."

Anger roils inside me, choking me. Yes, the familiarity of his voice makes sense. Of course. He was alive then. He knew me. And yet, this tiny, tiny creature decided he could defy the fate of all—my *fate*—for greed. Red takes my vision. Rage blinds me.

I hate humans more than ever. Humans are greedy, and they've always been greedy, and they'll always be greedy. And they don't give a fuck about who they'll hurt in the process of gaining something.

Olivia is different. She sacrifices too much, and she sees through me and into me. Olivia sees the monster, and she accepts the monster. She's good.

And the second Olivia walked back into a human town, this fucker wants to hurt her.

He wants to hurt her *again*.

I jerk back to reality, my upper lip pulling over my teeth in anger. I try to find a way in as the barn glows orange.

The barn is on fucking fire. And my mate is inside.

Somehow, the anger inside me burns hotter. A roar shudders inside me as I try to find a way in. I push through fallen beams, my eyes searching for her.

Then I see her. Olivia stands too close to the burning flames, holding another human girl, her eyes wide with fear. And I see *him*. The man sneers like a demon, holding a club in one hand as he *threatens* my mate.

Every last rational thought disappears.

My legs propel me forward with a ferocity I've never known, and I leap through the flames, landing between Olivia and the man. The air crackles with heat and tension as I snarl at him, rage bubbling inside me, boiling over.

He stumbles back and drops the club. His face goes from smug to shocked in an instant, his eyes wide as he stares at me. "Y-you? How did you...?" He stutters, tripping over his words. "How did you cross the barrier?"

"Krampus!" Olivia cries out, and there's undeniable relief in her voice. Fuck, my little mate was so afraid. So afraid.

My anger swells, a tempest within, threatening to consume everything. This man, this pathetic excuse for a human, dared to try to kill my mate not once but twice. He shakes under my glare, stepping back toward the exit.

“Krampus, listen, I...” His gaze darts everywhere. “How much did you hear? Did you hear... No, I was lying! I had to, I... James, he threatened me. He said that if I didn’t take the blame for this, he would... he would hurt my family!”

I snarl, prowling closer to him. The fire makes my shadow longer. I thirst for his blood.

“You don’t have a family,” the girl in Olivia’s arms drawls on, her voice weak.

He shoots a glare so full of anger toward the girl I’m impressed. I’m impressed at how much lying and hurting humans can do even while their lives are in danger.

“Please, Krampus,” he pleads, desperation dripping from every syllable. “We can work something out... You were always worried about protecting the town, weren’t you? This is how I could protect the town, I... I...” With a snarl, I raise a hand and let my claws grow long enough to slash across him. He shows me his palms, a scream lodging in his throat. “We can make a deal! I know how people always treated you here, no matter how much you tried to protect them! People always treated you as a monster. Everyone believed that you wanted sacrifices because they feared and hate you. I’ll help you take revenge on them if you want. Just spare me.”

It is the truth. People in these villages have always feared me and kept a respectful distance. I never cared. I understood that’s what animals do when confronted with a predator. Besides, I was chosen to punish them for misdeeds, and of course they would resent me.

But I do hate the thought of the people I protected believing I would start *eating* them on a whim. Revenge does sound sweet.

But Olivia’s happiness sounds sweeter.

My rage is a wild beast, untamable. He’s not getting away this time. A deafening roar erupts from my core, causing him to shudder in terror, slamming his eyes shut. His pants darken with the scent of urine.

My voice booms through the burning barn in another roar. “Olivia. Out.”

She wastes no time. Her footsteps rush from behind me. She drags the other girl with her. They move too slowly, the other girl stumbling, heavy in Olivia’s arms.

The girl trips. Olivia gasps, holding her up at the last second. The man pounces like a snake and grabs Olivia by her hair. The other girl falls. Rage flares within me so hard that the fire grows hotter. Olivia struggles against his grip as he holds her against his chest.

It’s everything. The way he touches her, the *fact* he’s touching her, how he uses her as a shield—the sneer on his face.

“Let me go, Krampus!” he screams, his voice trembling. “You came here after her, didn’t you? You’re here to save your little whore. Let me go, or your precious slut dies!”

The fire around us intensifies, mirroring my own fury. My body tenses, ready to pounce, ready to do *something*. I can’t jump on them. I’d hurt her. But he backtracks to the door, and I can’t let him go.

Olivia’s blue eyes connect with mine. I know what she’s thinking. She wants me to prioritize the village, to kill this man whatever it takes, to stop the deaths.

I can’t. I can’t hurt her.

A knitting needle bursts out of the man’s shoulder. Red blossoms on his shirt. It comes so out of nowhere that we all stare at it without reaction.

He shrieks in pain. Olivia shoves herself out of his hold. She scrambles away from his grasp as a black-haired woman appears behind him, holding another knitting needle like a weapon.

“Dorothea?” Olivia breathes out as she grabs the fallen girl and helps her up. She still insists on helping.

The man yanks the needle from his shoulder and lunges at the woman, his face twisted with rage. But I’m not letting him

have another chance.

In a heartbeat, I grab his arm and yank him away from them, slamming him to the ground with a sickening crunch. The urge to torture him for everything he's done threatens to overwhelm me—for locking me in that small part of the woods, for trying to kill Olivia twice.

I pull him up and slam him to the ground once more, savoring the sound of breaking bones.

“Krampus.” Olivia’s voice rings through the chaos of the burning barn. I don’t need to look at her to understand the underlying message in her tone. She doesn’t want this. Even after what this man has done. There’s another way to end everything.

I know how to break the deal for immortality; I only have to null it.

With every ounce of restraint I possess, I drag the man to the summoning circle scribbled on the ground, the fire roaring around us as he struggles against my grip.

“Let me go, you monster!” he roars, but his pleas fall on deaf ears.

I pin him down at the center of the circle, my face inches from his. “I *am* a monster, and I have no qualms about hurting you little by little until there’s nothing left to kill.” I grin, and his face goes white. “At least I’m at peace with who I am.”

“Please,” he begs, his eyes glinting with tears.

I curl my lip in disgust. The word sounds so much better on Olivia’s tongue.

I grab his throat. “Once I bleed you on the circle, your devil will collect your soul and consider the contract void.”

Fat tears run down his face. “Please, please.”

“Save your pleading for the demon who’ll punish your soul.”

With the claws of my right hand, I slice his throat. His blood spills onto the circle, marking the sacrifice. He gurgles

and chokes on his blood, his hands failing to contain the fatal wound.

I savor the stale taste of revenge as I watch the light disappear from his eyes. The circle's symbols glow, then disappear. Once he stops moving, I get to my feet.

Victory rushes through my veins as I stand amidst the raging flames. I look around, searching for Olivia.

Fuck. The barn is consumed by flames, the fire licking close to the edges of the circle. I make a full turn, frantically searching for Olivia. My heart sinks as I see the fire consuming the spot where she had been standing moments ago.

Panic seizes me.

“Olivia!” I roar, fear clawing its way up my spine.

All that remains is the crackling of the inferno and the distant cries of people. In that moment, I fear that I've lost Olivia forever.

CHAPTER 47



KRAMPUS

*F*lames lick at my heels as I sprint across the burning barn, panic clutching my throat. Where is she? Where is she? I make a circle around myself, the fire growing hotter, licking at my arms.

But I can't leave. I can't leave without her.

"Olivia!"

She screams an answer, faint but unmistakable. I would recognize her voice anywhere. I would recognize her smell, too, but the smoke overpowers any other scent.

Doesn't matter. There's no way I'm leaving without her.

I slam through the inferno, ignoring the searing pain, frantic to reach her.

There. A flash of pale blond hair. Olivia huddles against a wall, clutching a dark-skinned girl and an older woman with a black braid. The fire rages around them, blocking the exit and filling the air with acrid black smoke.

Screams echo outside, but I tune them out. Nothing matters but Olivia. The look of fear on her face terrifies me more than anything else ever could.

I rush forward without hesitation and scoop the three women into my arms. Olivia's face slams against my chest, her warmth seeping into me. Her scent wafts to my nose, and it brings me immediate relief.

My heart stutters. She's safe.

I rear back and hurl myself against the wooden wall. It splinters under my weight, and we tumble out into the chilly night. I release my hold on them once we're far enough from the barn, the sound of wooden walls breaking apart behind us.

Smoke pours out of the barn behind us, but the cool air is refreshing—a welcoming embrace. When I look up, the smoke billows into the sky, but it's unable to cover the stars.

A man sprints toward the older woman, gathering her close, but my focus remains on Olivia. Folding my hands around her face, I make sure she's safe, unwounded, and in one piece. I wipe the soot from her delicate features, unable to stop touching her, reassuring myself of her presence.

“Are you alright?” My voice rasps with emotion, like an exposed nerve, buzzing.

Tears swim in Olivia's eyes as she nods, and it's almost my undoing. The depth of feeling that awakens in me steals my breath and leaves me trembling.

“Why are you here?” she asks, her voice breaking.

The answer is simple. “I couldn't stay away from you. The second I entered the house, I knew I couldn't let you go.”

More tears. A flush stains Olivia's cheeks and nose, pale skin blooming rose. “Are you sure? Even if you think humans are the worst?”

“Not you.” I caress her cheek, struck anew by her beauty and spirit. “You've changed me, Olivia. I never imagined I could feel this way about anything... anyone. But you've made me want to be better, to feel more. You make me happy in a way I never dreamed possible. You're not like other humans, because you're unlike anyone that's ever existed. I adore every little thing about you, even the strange ones, and even what drives me mad. Even if you make me wear questionable pieces of clothing.”

Olivia laughs, her eyes glinting, as she races her hands up my sweater-covered chest. “It looks good on you.”

“Then if you like it, I'll wear it. Simple as that. I'd do anything to see you happy.”

Olivia's lips part on a soft gasp, her eyes glowing. "Oh, Krampus." Her hold tightens. "I love you," she whispers. "Even if you don't care about human feelings."

I shake my head, smiling for the first time since we parted ways. "I care about yours. And I love you, Olivia, if that means I can't breathe without you. I can't live without you."

Joy lights Olivia's expression, as dazzling as the stars emerging overhead. We stare at each other, the world falling away, and I'm lost in the depths of her blue eyes—until a raspy cough interrupts us.

Olivia's eyes snap to the dark-skinned girl next to us. She doesn't look well. She looks like she's barely holding on. Concern etches lines on Olivia's brow.

"We have to help Violet," she says, already moving to the girl's side. "I think Horner drugged her. We need to find a doctor."

The dark-haired older woman turns back to us. "Poor Violet. She doesn't deserve any of this. Come on. Let's fix her up." She releases a sigh. "There's a lot of fixing we have to do tonight."

* * *

Later in the evening, we find ourselves inside the small town hall. The building is packed with people, their expressions a mix of shock and disbelief. I sit in a shadowy corner with Olivia nestled in my arms, but that doesn't make me any less of the center of attention.

Dorothea, the dark-haired older woman I saved, stands before the crowd, her rich voice commanding everyone's attention.

"Horner made a deal with a demon for immortality," she explains, and several gasps follow, "in exchange for a sacrifice every twenty years. When he couldn't find a suitable offering, the demon would take the lives of innocent children. We were all fooled. We thought it was Krampus all this time, but

Horner had locked Krampus away. Horner is gone now, as is the deal. We won't have any more deaths."

The townspeople whisper amongst themselves, their voices rising like a swarm of bees. Unsettled glances are cast my way, and I shift uncomfortably, feeling their doubt. Dorothea's eyes meet mine briefly before she continues.

"We must discuss what comes next for all of us. New Obernzell has much to make up for. For all the innocents who died in our lands."

"Give them time," Olivia murmurs, resting her head against my chest. "They're just surprised by your existence. They'll get used to you. You know, when I first arrived, they told me about the Krampus like a myth. A fairy tale. For you, it wasn't that long ago. But for us, it's been a hundred years. Stories change a lot in such a long time."

Her faith warms my heart. I used to think she was silly for trusting so easily, but her positivity is a balm.

"Dorothea invited me to move closer to town," I admit, "but I refused. I'm fond of the woods and the creatures there. I enjoy the solitude, but also the excitement of occasional festivities. I don't want to stay close too often... unless you desire it."

Olivia raises her head from my chest. Her blue eyes search my face.

"Krampus," Olivia sighs, her fingers brushing over mine. "I've spent my life living for others, always giving what my mother wanted. Always working so hard to make her love me... She never truly missed me. I opened her messages, and she's just worried about the mirror I bought her. She hasn't tried to contact me, check on me, or anything..."

Anger coils inside me. I close my hands into fists, opening my mouth to curse her mother.

Olivia touches my knuckles and kisses my jaw. "That's not what I mean. I can't make her love me. I tried a lot, but it doesn't work like that. It's time for me to live for myself on my own terms."

Pride swells within me at her words, and I lean down to capture her lips in a tender kiss. I rope her hair through my fingers, massaging her scalp. She hums softly.

“Good,” I rumble against her soft lips. “I like to hear that, kitten. Stay close to those who want to see you happy.”

Olivia smiles—that beautiful sight that makes my heart warm. “I will,” she says, pressing herself against my body while she still stares at me. “And I know exactly what I want to do next.”

“What is that?”

Olivia presses a kiss on my mouth. “I want to go home.”

CHAPTER 48



OLIVIA

After sliding the last hanger onto the rod, I step back to admire my work. My new closet bursts with color—a kaleidoscope of skirts, blouses, and dresses.

So many cute pieces Krampus will tear apart with a flick of his wrist.

I shake my head and close the doors. I can't complain. Krampus always fixes everything, even before I ask. Besides, I find it *so hot* that he wants me so much that he can't wait.

After the clothes, the trinkets, and the books, I think I'm done. These are all the things I brought from my apartment. All the things I'm keeping from my old life.

With the revelation of Horner's true intentions, James was quick to fix my car and give it back. Violet helped me pack up the last of my things at the old place a few days ago. She was an immense help. We drove together, and she told me about how she always believed a bear had attacked her father, while the truth was much darker.

I'm ready to forgive the town and let my need for my mother's approval go. Violet still has too much pain inside her.

Violet drove me back, and I gave her the car. She left town for good. She couldn't stay here anymore, not after they tried to sacrifice her, too.

I was quick to forgive, but I had never seen these people before arriving that day. Violet was born and raised here. The

sacrifice came as a betrayal. She always felt like she was *other*, and Horner proved that's exactly what he thought of her.

I hope she's finding happiness in the city or wherever else she goes.

The floorboards creak behind me. I turn to find Krampus balancing my mother's mirror, the antique glass glinting in the dim light. He's so big, the heavy thing looks like a hand mirror.

"Where would you like this, kitten?"

A flush creeps up my neck at the sight of him and at the gravel in his voice. I've only been away from him for a few days while I drove home, but I missed him more than I thought I could miss anyone. And my body knows it. My body has missed his touch, his scent, and the heaviness of his cocks.

It's more than lust, and it's more than love. It feels like he's part of my soul.

And this mirror. It's the mirror that started it all. It's the reason I passed through town.

"You can put it there." I point to the wall across from the bed. A perfect view of the room, of us. He lifts it effortlessly into place, adjusting the angle to reflect the entire room. It catches the light from the large windows and reflects it on the floorboards. Krampus steps back so I can look at it.

My hair looks almost blond in this light. It spills down my shoulder over my favorite long-sleeved shirt, the neckline dipping to show a hint of cleavage. As I run my fingers through my hair, Krampus closes the door behind us with a soft thud.

Our eyes meet in the mirror, hunger and longing, and something deeper still. Krampus's body is tight, his biceps curling and uncurling as he prowls closer.

"I have never missed anyone the way I missed you," he says, his voice a low rumble. "I thought I might go mad, waiting for you to return."

Heat pools low in my belly at his words and at the promise in his eyes. He stops mere inches from me, the heat of our bodies mingling, calling to each other. We stare, frozen in time, electricity cracking between us.

Then it snaps. Krampus's hands grip my waist, pulling me against him. I feel the hard ridge of his arousal pressing into my lower back, and a shiver of anticipation runs down my spine. His fingers entwine in my hair, yanking my head back for a searing, possessive kiss that leaves me breathless. My body responds, with heat and desire pooling between my thighs, my nipples tightening painfully.

"Fuck, what did you do to me, kitten?" he growls against my lips. "I fucked my hand thinking of you once while you were away, and I hated every second of it. It doesn't compare. Nothing will ever compare."

His aggression fuels my own passion, and I can't help but moan as he rips my shirt open, letting one breast bounce free. He grunts appreciatively at the sight, his large hand enveloping the soft flesh, one thick finger running around the sensitive peak.

"Perfect," he murmurs, and I chuckle.

"I liked that shirt."

He smirks, his eyes never leaving mine in the mirror. "I'll fix it after I've made you come so many times that the only name you'll remember is mine."

The promise sends a delicious shiver down my spine, and I lean into his touch, my knees buckling as he plays with my breasts. With a swift movement, he tears my leggings down, leaving the remnants hanging from my thighs, my pussy exposed and glistening with need.

The possessiveness in his actions only heightens my arousal, and I watch through the reflection as he shoves his pants down, his thick cocks springing free.

Krampus hauls me up in front of him, spreading my legs wide so that we can both see how my pussy drips with want.

“Look at you, kitten,” he says, his voice rough with lust. “This pretty pussy is weeping for me. It knows who you belong to. It knows you’re mine—only mine.”

With that, he thrusts into me, his ribbed cock filling me to the brim, stretching me around him. I gasp at how full I feel. It’s still a struggle to take him in like this, with a single thrust. Krampus doesn’t give me time to adapt.

Our eyes lock in the mirror as he drives into me, pounding me with a ferocity that has me clinging to his arms for support. My inner walls clamp around his cock, and the texture drives me to the edge in one second. My orgasm rips through me as I watch us in the mirror, my body quivering and clenching around him.

“Krampus... Krampus,” I moan, barely able to form words as he flips me onto the bed on all fours.

Krampus roars with possessiveness. He spreads my knees, so I tilt my hips up. My body trembles with need. I clench around nothing, praying he’ll soon take me.

He presses the pad of a thumb to my clit. “So needy.” He presses his thumb to my entrance, and I clench around him. “Fuck. Look how desperate you are. You’re fucking sucking me in.”

I whimper. “Please, Krampus. I need you.”

“I need you too, kitten.” He runs a hand up my back, interweaving his fingers through my hair. “Tell me. Have you touched yourself while you were away?”

Lying never crosses my mind. “Yes. Twice. It didn’t compare to...”

Krampus slaps my pussy. I squeal, jerking away. He yanks at my hair, keeping me in place.

A growl. “Bad, bad kitten.” He slaps my ass, hard. I clench again, the sting making me even wetter. “I’m going to punish you. You know how that works, right?”

My body shakes with restraint. “Oh, no,” I breathe out. “You won’t let me come.”

“Exactly,” he says, dragging out the word. His cock pushes into me from behind. The head stretches me to the max, so I know he’s putting his breeding cock inside me. Krampus pushes my head down with one hand, the other gripping my hip as he starts to move. “Don’t come on my cock, kitten. Or the punishment will be much worse.”

Sinking my teeth into my lower lip, I hold back. I taste blood, but I hold on. Krampus drives into me harder and harder, claiming every part of me. His huge body covers mine, overwhelming me. His ribbed cock rubs against my clit, so perfectly I’m not sure I can survive long.

Krampus picks up speed, pounding so hard he’s driving me into the bed, robbing me of breath as I whimper, cry, and moan. My wetness glides down my thighs, and I arch my hips further, begging.

“I’m going to stuff you so full it’ll be a miracle if you don’t get pregnant,” he growls, and the thought of carrying his child sends me spiraling into an unexpected climax.

I scream, my body squeezing, tensing, and convulsing. Krampus curses as he lets go of my head, balancing his body on all fours over me as he fucks me so hard I bounce on the bed.

As I come down from the forbidden high, Krampus’s knot swells inside me. One pump, two, and Krampus shoves his hips against mine, so hard my knees raise off the bed. The knot locks us together as his hot load fills me to the point that my lower belly distends. As promised, he fills me until I’m heavy with it.

His ribbed cock bursts between my legs, covering my stomach. Because of my position, it runs down to my breasts. I moan, closing my legs to keep it against me, to feel the ridges against my throbbing nub.

My body goes limp, spent, and shaking from the force of successive orgasms.

But Krampus isn’t done with me yet.

He folds an arm around my waist and flips us, lying back on the bed and spreading my legs open. His knot still holds me in place, ensuring that I can't escape him. Not that I'd ever want to.

His thick finger traces my aching center without touching it. "Such a bad kitten," he growls against my ear. "I wonder how I'm going to punish you... Maybe I'm going to keep you coming on my cock until you're a mess, covered in my saliva and my come. Until you can't walk properly," he vows, and I manage a wan smile at his threat. Krampus brushes his finger against my clit, just for a second, and my body jerks with the contact. "It's so hard to think of a punishment for you."

"Why?"

"Because you're a wicked little thing, aren't you, kitten?" Another brush. Another jerk, as if I had touched a power socket.

"You're the only one who truly knows me." I look up to meet his eyes. "And don't worry. I'll stay. I'll stay no matter what."

EPILOGUE



KRAMPUS

Six Months Later

Flowers bloom everywhere, their petals drifting in a warm breeze. Children laugh, chasing each other through the main square. Stands line the edges of the square, crowded with visitors from the other tiny towns at the foot of the mountain.

Glancing down at my feet, I count the fruit baskets, the flower crowns and wreaths, the cold meat, and the bread. Every town once under my protection, within my territory, brought something.

I'm still not used to being treated as the unwilling hero, but I'll take it. The buzzing of celebration that pulses in the spring evening makes it worth it.

Childish laughter rings across the space. I follow a group of kids running about, all wearing masks I carved from wood.

Though the townsfolk keep their respectful distance, today they offer smiles and thanks, grateful I saved them from a deal they had nothing to do with.

I do enjoy the celebration. Being gifted food and sitting on a raised chair to watch people dance and have fun. But there's one thing I enjoy more than everything else. There's one face that makes my heart skip a beat every time.

My gaze wanders, searching for pale hair and bright eyes. Where is she?

A woman approaches, bowing her head. “I bring a message from a friend.”

A friend. Yes. This is Dorothea. The new mayor. It’s funny how Olivia seems to be the one face I can distinguish among all these humans.

I nod. “Where is she?”

Dorothea’s lips curl. “She left. She said she’d be waiting for you where it all began.”

* * *

My heart quickens as I stride into the forest, following the smell of my woman. A part of me hates that she came here on her own at night. But surely, I have no reason to worry. Surely the other creatures in the woods remember the wendigo.

I approach the summoning circle etched in stone and the old oak. White catches my eye. Sweet, sweet honey wafts to my nose.

Olivia stands a few feet from the oak, her wrists bound overhead, a thin nightdress clinging to her curves. My pants tighten. I circle her until we’re facing each other.

My pretty mate knows what she’s doing. The sight of her bound like this, at my mercy, drives all my senses insane. A jolt of lust rushes straight to my balls. They grow heavy as I watch Olivia’s nipples tighten through her nightshirt. Her breasts push against the thin fabric, the hem barely covering her cunt.

“Olivia, what are you doing?” I ask, my voice low and husky. She smirks and winks at me, feigning innocence.

“Can’t you guess?” she playfully whispers, her eyes bright with mischief. It’s clear now; she wants to play a game we both adore. She licks at her plump lips. “Oh no, a monster.” She gasps and steps back, her wrists caught on the branch. “Please, don’t eat me!”

Fucking perfection.

I step closer, reaching out and tearing the front of her nightshirt. Her breasts bounce free, the tight buds of her nipples begging for attention. The sight of them leaves me breathless.

I trace a finger down her neck, across her collarbones, and over a breast. I flick her nipple and watch her shudder.

She pants as she struggles with the rope. "Are you going to eat me?" she whispers.

I close my forefinger and thumb over her nipple and twist it. She gasps. I smirk. "Maybe. But not the way you imagine."

A growl escapes my throat as I pull her nipple and let it go. I adore watching her tit bounce. Pink takes Olivia's cheeks, and she parts her lips, her eyelids growing heavy with lust.

I walk around Olivia and kneel behind her, listening as she pretends to be scared, her soft gasps music to my ears.

Grabbing her hips, I tilt her ass up. She dances on the tips of her toes as I spread her cheeks and stare at her wet center. She's so slick already.

I press my face between her thighs and breathe in. The addictive scent of her arousal washes over me. Olivia clenches her legs around my face, a moan climbing her throat.

"Please, Krampus... don't hurt me," Olivia pleads in mock fear.

I pull back and part her folds to expose her little pearl. My tongue flicks out, tasting her wetness. Olivia moans and jerks with the sudden touch.

That's it. That's what my mate enjoys. I bury my head between her thighs and devour her pretty pussy, lapping at it from behind, flicking her nub until she's on the edge of the precipice. She teeters there for a heartbeat, then drops into sheer pleasure. I raise her off the ground, drinking every drop of her slick like an addict.

Her moans drift on the wind as I slip a finger inside her. I stretch her, work her tight muscles to make sure she can take

me. Then I add a second finger—each thrust heightening the intensity of her moans.

“You filthy tease,” I growl, then bite her backside. Her walls clench around my fingers; her orgasm rushes forth, coating my hand in her sweetness. “Such a dirty kitten. You’re creaming my fingers. So needy.”

“Please... please,” Olivia whimpers, her body quivering with need. I grin, rising and positioning myself behind her.

“Did I train my kitten right?” I tease her, pressing my upper cock into her cunt. “I don’t even have to order anymore. She just *begs*.”

Olivia shoots me a glare over her shoulder, but one pound of my hips is enough to undo her. My ribbed cock slides into her eager cunt, each ridge eliciting a gasp from her lips. I move in and out of her, dragging out the pleasure, soaking in the warmth of her tightness.

She hangs from the tree, her bound wrists supporting her weight, as I drive into her. The thrill electrifies us both. Her moans mix with my growls, creating a symphony of desire.

I pick up my pace, thrusting into her tightness until the scent of her inebriates me. I raise her off the ground with every thrust, her entire body shaking. Her feet land on my shins as she finds her balance. I redouble my efforts. I drive home. Olivia screams as she climaxes again, her tight heat gripping me like a vice.

“More,” she begs, out of breath. “I need more.”

“Of course you do,” I reply. “You’re so greedy. This cunt of yours is so greedy.”

I withdraw from her and walk around facing her, my cock glistening with her wetness. Fisting my ribbed cock, I cover my fingers in the mix of her orgasm and my precome.

Olivia watches my every move with rapt attention. “It’s your fault. Your cocks are addictive.”

Bringing my precome to her mouth, I spread it over her lips. “Your pussy drives me crazy, too, kitten.”

Olivia laps my fingers clean and shivers. I throw her legs around my waist, taking her weight, and position her over my throbbing breeding cock. Slowly, I push it into her dripping pussy.

Olivia rolls her eyes back, shuddering with every inch of me. She stretches around my girth, my precome helping her slip that extra inch. My sweet mate arches her hips to take me deeper. I sink almost to the hilt, and the two of us moan in unison.

Pausing to let her adapt to my girth, I rip the rest of her clothes off. She's naked now, perfect and soft, and all curves. I release a sigh as I cup her tits, making sure I memorize every second of this.

"Such a good sacrifice," I tell her. "So willing. So wet."

Olivia moans, her head dropping back in sheer bliss. "What are you going to do to me next, Mr. Monster?"

Closing a hand around her waist, I drag her up and down my cock, humming at the way her tight cunt squeezes every inch of me. I play with her nipples as I pound into her, adjusting my hips so I thrust into that special place inside her.

"First, I'm going to make you come again."

Olivia squeezes my cock and comes apart, creaming me yet again.

"Now," and pleasure barrels down my spine as I clutch her around the hips and slam her down my cock, "I'm going to fill this pretty cunt with my come, and I'm going to knot you. Did you hear me, kitten?"

"Yes! Yes, Krampus!" She says my name like a prayer, and I know this is the only heaven I'll ever see.

I pour inside her, then slam her down so I can knot her. My knot swells, locking her body against mine. Olivia cries out, slamming her eyes shut, but I don't let her feel pain.

Reaching between us, I flick her little clit until lust overwhelms the discomfort and my pretty mate relaxes in my

hold. Once she's limp and gasping, I bring her wrists down and sit with her over a tree root.

Olivia drops against my chest, cuddling close. She catches her breath as I trace the rim of her ass with a finger. Olivia gasps when I push it inside her.

"Krampus," she breathes out, looking up at me with those burning blue eyes. "Aren't you done punishing me?"

Kissing her pretty lips, I adjust her on my lap so my ribbed cock inches into her ass. Olivia clenches around me, holding me close as she shivers with every inch.

"Kitten," I breathe out against her lips, "you're made for me, and I'm made for you. This is so much stronger than love. This is fate. And I know," I sheathe my ribbed cock in her ass, and she squeezes her small body against mine, the knot still holding us together, "that you're far, far from satisfied."

Olivia shudders, and I know she's stretched to the max, uncomfortably full, straddling the line of pain and bliss.

She looks up at me, her eyes shimmering, a smile stretching her lips. "You know me too well."

EPILOGUE



OLIVIA

Three Years Later

The scent of roasted chestnuts and mulled wine wafts through the chilly air as I stroll down the cobblestone path of New Oberzell's town square. My boots crunch on the salt sprinkled on the ground to melt the ice, the sound almost drowned out by the cheerful music and laughter surrounding me.

I smile and wave at the townspeople, their cheeks flushed from the cold and the beer. They've come so far since Krampus first arrived, their distrust morphing into gratitude for all he's done for the community.

James waves at me from his spot next to his daughter. She holds a phone up, snapping pictures of the party. Both smile at me as I approach.

"What a party, isn't it, Olivia?" James asks with a wide smile. "These were hard three years, but we finally have reason to celebrate." He closes a hand around his daughter's shoulder. "A good crop. The tourism is kicking in. We're thriving again."

He looks at me in such a way that I know he wants to add *and without a deal with a literal devil*. I nod back at him. That's a plus.

James's daughter chats about social media, but I don't have the patience for that anymore. I worked very hard to put New Oberzell on the tourism map, doing images and pushing them on social media in the first year.

After that, and after accepting that my mother wouldn't ever miss me, I deleted all *my* social media, and I've been moving away from the modern part of my existence.

A little girl in a red coat and hat toddles by, waving the mittens I knitted for her. My heart swells at the sight. Though I enjoy connecting with the people here, I feel like I'm growing more and more into a sort of recluse.

At least a recluse from other humans.

I handle a couple of hours here and there, but nothing compares to the comfort I find in Krampus's arms.

Only with him can I be myself fully, dark and light. His love for me is as constant as the stars, embracing every part of my nature.

I had no idea loving a monster would be that easy.

I continue through the stalls, searching for his familiar hulking form. At last, I spot him on the throne carved for him atop a dais, our son Nick nestled against his chest.

The sight still makes me tear up. Nick is so small in Krampus's massive hand, and yet Krampus is a natural at holding him gently. I watch the small bundle that is my son, sighing in his slumber, the blue skin a few shades lighter than his father's.

Krampus's features have softened over the years, the bitterness that once etched deep lines into his face fading away. He glances up as if he feels my gaze, his eyes lighting at the sight of me.

I climb the steps, ignoring my chair in favor of something much more comfortable. With zero hesitation, I settle onto his lap, sighing as his arms wrap around me. The tension seeps from my body, his solid warmth a balm against the chill.

The villagers dance and celebrate around us, their laughter a symphony of joy.

Krampus's voice rumbles against my back as he leans in to speak. "You've done wonders for this town, kitten. Your

efforts have made it thrive like never before. I hope you're proud."

"Thank you," I reply, warmth blooming in my chest. "But it wasn't just me. You've changed as well, and they see it. Your magic helped them thrive."

Krampus pinches my side, making me jump and chuckle. "Take a compliment, kitten. Be proud."

I tuck a strand of hair behind an ear. "I know. Still working on that."

A child, no older than six, approaches Krampus with wide eyes full of wonder. The little boy holds out an orange, offering it to Krampus. Krampus stoops, his massive fingers enveloping the fruit as he accepts it.

"Thank you, child."

The child beams and scurries away, giggling. I nuzzle into Krampus's side, pride swelling within me. "You've come so far from the bitter, grumpy monster."

"Only because of you," he murmurs, sincerity lacing his words. He pulls Nick closer, cradling our son in one arm while wrapping the other around me. "You two are my world, everything that truly matters."

Tears prick at the corners of my eyes, and my heart swells with emotion. I rest my head on his shoulder, breathing in his earthy scent. "Our family is my home, Krampus. Nothing could make me happier."

As we watch the villagers dance and sing, our bodies pressed together, I feel a deep sense of belonging. This unlikely family, born from the darkness, has become my sanctuary—and I finally found the unconditional love I spent my whole life yearning for.

Right here. In the arms of my monster.

EPILOGUE



KRAMPUS

Ten Years Later

*M*y heavy boots thump against the wooden floorboards as I stride into the bedroom. The afternoon sun bathes the woods outside the large windows, spilling into the room. Summer brings many animals near the house, from deer to hares and bears. They all respect my authority. None of them ever dare threaten my family.

This is our safe haven, and this room is my mate's favorite. I knew I'd find her here.

Olivia stands before the mirror, her pale hands tracing the contours of her beautiful face. She frowns at herself, then relaxes her face, pressing a forefinger to the spot between her brows.

Her reflection startles—wide blue eyes meet mine, framed by white-gold lashes. She smiles.

“You scared me.”

“I merely wished to join you in your activity.” I wrap my arms around her waist and nuzzle into the top of her head. My chest rumbles with a pleased purr as I inhale her sweet scent.

Olivia tilts her head away, allowing me to rub my cheek against hers. “What activity?”

“Admiring your reflection,” I reply, meeting her gaze in the mirror. “I agree you're stunning. I'd stare at you for eternity.”

Olivia grins and curls her nose. “That’s not what I was doing. Look.” She drops her face into a hard scowl, then relaxes. She points to her forehead. “See?”

“No.”

“Exactly.” She whirls in my arms to face me. “I haven’t used sunscreen since I moved here. I have two children, and it’s been ten years since I last applied any form of skin care to my face.”

I let her go, studying her face. “Kitten. I’m not following.”

Olivia chuckles. “I’m supposed to *age*, Krampus. Humans age. With no sunscreen and no skincare, I was supposed to have something. Some sort of wrinkle, hyperpigmentation, or something like that. And I have nothing.”

Curling my fingers around her hips, I bring her up against my body. Olivia closes her legs around my waist, a position we’ve gotten used to when I want to look at her properly.

“So, your problem is that you’re not aging,” I conclude.

Olivia nods. “Yeah.” She places her hands on my shoulders. “Isn’t that strange? Is it because time passes differently here?”

I close my hand around her perfect ass, keeping her comfortable. “No, kitten. That would slow aging down, of course, but not stop it.”

“Then what? Are you telling me my genes are miraculous?” A wicked grin opens on her face. “Or is your come the best form of skincare out there?”

I growl, rubbing my cheek against hers. My cocks are hard, but I keep them out of this chat. “Good for you I enjoy keeping you covered in it.” We chuckle together, then I squeeze her ass once. “Perhaps this was an oversight. No one explained it to you. After all, we weren’t used to humans. Fairy food has its benefits, kitten. Immortality is but one of many.”

Leaning forward, I capture her ear between my lips. I nip at the delicate shell, eliciting a soft gasp.

“You’re joking.”

“Never.”

She pushes away from my chest, her eyebrows high on her face. “I’m immortal.”

“You are. You’ve eaten too much fairy food now to elude it. I never thought that was a problem. I’m immortal, after all.”

Olivia chews on her bottom lip in thought. “That’s going to take some time to get used to.”

“However long you need. You’re immortal, after all.”

Olivia laughs. My favorite sound in the world. Stretching my neck, I find her earlobe again.

“Isn’t that crazy?” she breathes out. “Horner could have only eaten fairy food, and he would have been immortal. He didn’t have to kill anyone.”

I shrug. “But if he came after it, I wouldn’t have allowed him. This is not something to be given away freely.”

“Then why me?”

I arch an eyebrow. “Because you’re mine.” And I grin.

She rolls her eyes. “The townspeople will notice eventually, won’t they?” she asks with shallow breaths. I smell the first tang of her arousal. “Maybe I should stop going there so often.”

“Yes. Maybe you should,” I agree, lowering her onto my body.

Despite her protests, she arches into my touch, grinding her hips against my groin. My cocks strain against the front of my trousers, begging for her.

“Do you think they’d find me dangerous? Would they want to burn me for being a witch or something?”

I growl, the thought of anyone hurting her makes me angrier than anything else could. “They wouldn’t dare.” I take a breath, reining in my temper. “Let some years pass. Soon,

they'll forget you were ever human. They already call you a fairy queen."

Slipping my hand under her dress, I knead at her bare bottom. Olivia moans. This white dress is driving me mad. I've been struggling with the thought of ripping it to shreds since she put it on. I trail one hand up to cup her breast, rolling her nipple between my fingers.

"You'll not want for companionship, I assure you," I tell her as she breathes harder against me.

Olivia whimpers, her desire dampening the apex of her thighs. "Insatiable beast."

"For you, always."

With my hand on her bottom, I tease at her slit over her panties. A sigh escapes me. She's started wearing panties for the sake of the children. A pity. I dip my finger inside the cotton garment.

She's soaked, making the glide easy. A growl rises from my chest. Olivia's nails dig into my shoulders. As I'm about to touch her little clit, a call rings from the living room.

"Mommy! Daddy!"

We tense, and I pull my finger out of her delicious pussy. I gather the dress under her backside as I stride to the living room. A couple of breaths later, I've reined my hard-on in, too.

Holly, our younger daughter, sits with her legs spread on the soft rug in front of the gated fireplace. Acorn kneels behind her, humming as he braids her white hair. Holly grins at us, her hands deep in a skein of yarn.

"Mommy, look! A-co do my hair!"

Nick, our older son, glances up from his toys, pale horns peeking through cotton-soft hair. "His name is Acorn, Holly," Nick says, shaking his head with that ancient air of his.

"It's alright, young master," Acorn calls back. "She's still learning."

Olivia squirms in my arms. I set her on her feet, and she rushes to the yarn between Holly's fingers.

"Here, baby," she coos to Holly. "Let Mommy check for any markers. We don't want you to get hurt."

The children are still small, so we're still learning how much they got from their mother and how much they got from me. Apparently, my blood is much stronger than any human's. The children look like me, and they're strong like me.

Olivia's still learning how to deal with kids who don't get hurt.

"I already removed them, Mistress," Acorn says. "Do not worry."

"Thank you, Acorn." Olivia smiles, the warmth in her eyes is a balm to my soul. I've given her a family, a home, and a life of comfort and joy. It's worth tenfold more than the loneliness of my previous existence.

I follow Olivia and kneel next to her and Holly. My daughter smiles up at me before going back to playing with the yarn. My gaze snatches at something that falls off it.

I hold up a tiny knitted sweater. Arching an eyebrow, I glance at my mate.

Olivia grins. "I'm making one for each of the fairies. They seem to enjoy them."

"Great, just what we need," I grumble even as I smile. "We already have a colony of them, kitten. If you keep making them sweaters, they'll keep bringing more and more of their friends."

"Aw, you love them," she teases me with a wink.

I had to double the size of the house to fit all the new creatures. Olivia's warmth is a beacon to all sorts of supernatural entities. More elves joined the kitchens, and I've lost count of how many fairies, pixies, and other sorts live in every room.

"Unbelievable," I grunt, rolling my eyes, but Olivia knows very well I don't mind. I'd pay any price to have her close.

Cricket enters the room carrying a tray laden with cupcakes and warm mugs of milk for the children. He grins at them when Nick and Holly shoot to their feet, celebrating his arrival. He places the tray on the short-legged table before Nick and Holly, who dive into their treats with the usual enthusiasm.

“Thank you, Cricket,” Olivia says, her blue eyes sparkling with happiness. Seeing her like this, surrounded by our loving family, makes my heart swell with pride. I catch her gaze as she looks back at me, and it’s as if time has stopped.

She has all of me.

“Come, kitten,” I say, offering her my hand. “Let’s go for a walk while the children eat.”

The elves bow, promising they’ll keep the children safe with their lives. Olivia chuckles, but I know very well that’s the truth. This is our family now.

As we step outside, the sunlight bathes Olivia’s golden hair. I met her with her white strands, but I adore this spun-gold color. She looks stunning in her body-fitted white dress and boots.

And I can’t wait to have them out of her.

We trail away from the house, into the trees. Birds chirp above my head as Olivia tells me about the book she’s reading. I update her on the toys I’m whittling for the children. We stop so Olivia can scratch behind a deer’s ears.

“Is it strange that I’m not freaking out about being immortal?” she asks me after walking in silence.

Squeezing her fingers between mine, I bring her hand up to brush my lips against her knuckles. “No. Because you haven’t understood it yet. Time doesn’t exist, kitten. It’s something you humans created to make sense of your existence. The truth is—you won’t notice time passing. You’ll live one day after the other. The world will move apart from you, but here, with me, every day will be filled with happiness, and you won’t even notice as the world gets old.”

She smiles at me. “These are strange concepts.”

“You’ll get used to it. One thing you humans are is adaptable. You’ll adapt to it, and you’ll forget how it was before.”

Olivia pauses. “I don’t want to remember how it was before. Living with you is all that matters.”

I race my fingers through her golden strands. “It’s what we were meant to do.”

We stare at each other, lost in the moment. Then Olivia steps back, her hair falling away from my hand.

Olivia fans herself. “It’s such a hot day today,” she says, glancing over her shoulder at me. She lowers her eyelids, looking up from between her lashes. “What do you think? Should we race to the river?”

I give her a once-over. Her nipples are tight through her dress. I grin and lean forward, brushing our cheeks together.

“Run,” I whisper into her ear.

With a smile, Olivia breaks away from me, darting through the trees. I give her a head start, my heart pounding. Then I shoot after her.

My arousal builds as I chase her, my pants growing tighter. The thrill of our game, with her laughter ringing in the wind, makes every moment together feel like magic.

Olivia’s laughter fills the air, a sweet melody that echoes through the trees. She glances back at me, her blue eyes shimmering with mischief. Her body is a beacon, drawing me in like a moth to flame.

I close the distance between us, my heart racing with anticipation. She makes her way to the river. I can smell her arousal. Olivia races into the river, then slips, and she stumbles, water splashing around her as she falls. Olivia gets up fast, tripping out of the water.

I reach her just as she lands with a soft thud near the water’s edge. The frosty river soaks her white dress, making it transparent and clinging to her body like a second skin. Her hard pink nipples stand out against the fabric. Her knees fall

apart, showing off her transparent panties and the enticing slit of her pussy. My arousal intensifies, and I can't resist her any longer.

"Krampus," she breathes, feigning helplessness, as I loom over her. Grabbing her wrists, I pin both over her head. She gasps, and I lean down, capturing her lips in a fierce kiss, our tongues battling for dominance. Olivia whimpers as my teeth rake along her lip.

My hand finds her breasts, grabbing them, and my fingers flick her hardened nipples. Olivia moans, her body responding to my touch. She arches her back, pressing her chest closer to my hand, urging me on.

"Please," she gasps, her eyes wild with desire. I waste no time, yanking my pants down and revealing my throbbing cocks. I pull Olivia closer until her head rests near my right knee and her hips near my left one. Roping her hair around my knuckles, I tug her head closer. Her lips fall open.

With a wicked grin, I push my lower cock into her waiting mouth while my upper one rubs against her face. Olivia relaxes her throat, but she can't take much. The sensation of her struggling to take me in sends waves of pleasure coursing through my body. She sucks greedily, swallowing my precome like she's addicted.

"That's it," I praise her, moving my hips. "Drink it all. Let's get your pussy all ready to take me."

As I pump my cock in and out of her mouth, I reach between her legs. First, I rip her panties out. I'd burn them if I could. Then I spread her legs to play with her clit, rubbing it in slow circles. Olivia's moans send vibrations up my shaft, driving me wild.

"So fucking wet, kitten." I dip the first knuckle of my finger inside her, gathering her arousal as it covers my hand. "That's it, kitten. Keep purring around my cock."

Olivia's eyes roll to the back of her head. Goosebumps race down her arms. She circles her hips against my hands,

and I know she's close. Tightening my hold on her hair, I drag her warm mouth up and down.

She comes around my hand with a muffled scream, her body tensing. I pull out of her mouth, watching as precome drips past her lips.

"More," Olivia whimpers, her eyes glazed over with lust. I oblige, positioning her on all fours in front of me and pushing my upper cock into her mouth, while the lower one slides under her chin to press against her delicious tits. The sight of her gagging and slobbering on my cock, her eyes rolling back in ecstasy, is almost too much to bear.

Bending my body over her small form, I reach between her legs once more, massaging her clit as I thrust into her mouth. Olivia's second orgasm hits her hard, and I can't help but grin at the sight of her writhing in ecstasy. As she catches her breath, I slip one, then two fingers into her slick pussy, pumping them in and out until she reaches her third climax.

"Please, please," she murmurs like a prayer.

"I'll give you what you need, kitten. I promised I'd always keep you full, remember?"

At last, I manhandle her against my body, lifting her up by her waist with her back to me. I hold her legs open as I position her against my body. My lower, ribbed cock finds its way inside her welcoming heat. We groan together in delight.

She feels perfect, like every other time. Her tight pussy clenches around me, dragging along every ridge. My upper cock nestles between her ass-cheeks, weeping thick precome, covering her lower back. I pump furiously, driven by our mutual need, until Olivia orgasms again, her body shaking against me.

Closing a hand around my upper cock, I cover it in precome, make it extra-slick. Slowly, I push my second cock into her ass, stretching her to the limit. Olivia whimpers, clenches, and cries out. The sensation of being filled by me sends her over the edge again and again, her cries of pleasure echoing through the forest.

I move her up and down my cocks, one hand holding her leg up and the other around her waist as I keep her aloft. It's easy to stretch a finger and flick her swollen clit into new, earth-shattering bliss.

“Such a good kitten. I don't even have to order, and she takes all of me. So greedy. Such a greedy kitten.”

Olivia loves this kind of talk, and her body seizes, clenching so hard around me that I have no other option. I pump twice more as possessiveness takes hold of me, and I spill myself deep inside Olivia, filling both her holes. I shudder as my mate goes limp in my arms, my knot sitting against the rim of her ass.

Once I've had enough, I pull out and watch as my load pours out of her. It makes me growl with possessiveness.

Mine mine mine, I chant inside my head.

My body goes heavy with satisfaction. Nothing beats making her come so much, then coming inside her. Spent, I lower her body into the river, washing her clean as she leans against my chest, trusting me to keep her afloat, safe.

“Krampus,” she whispers, her voice full of love as she looks up at me.

“Yes, kitten?” I trace a finger down her jaw and across her lips.

She smiles dreamily. “I'll take a nap. Let me know when you want to go home.”

Home. I know she means the house we share with our family, but I hold her close as she drifts off.

This human, who has captured my heart and soul, is my home. She is the only home I'll ever need.

The End

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Taylor Fox adores stories with strong heroines who don't have to choose. She likes to explore the dirty, dark fantasies we carry inside our hearts, never judging, never shaming. She lives in Toronto, Canada, with her husband and Mia, their cat.

If you want to join her newsletter, keep yourself updated, or grab a free prequel story, check her website.

