

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

eve newton



STARTING  
OVER

# **STARTING OVER**

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EVE NEWTON

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## MORGAN

Smiling, I wake up to the smell of freshly brewed coffee. It's my thirty-first birthday today, and I couldn't be happier to be exactly where I am and who I'm with.

Leaning over to pick up the mug of hot coffee, eyeing up the cupcake with a candle sticking out of it, thinking how sweet my husband is for bringing me this to wake up to. The curtains have been pulled apart to show me the glorious cold winter morning in London.

The sun is shining, and the snow is sparkling off the rooves of the houses across the square.

Climbing out of bed, I stretch my back before taking a sip of the gorgeous arabica bean coffee. Smiling, I wonder where my man is. He'd better not be planning a surprise party for me this year. Last year was horrendous. I had no idea, and I was so shocked when everyone jumped out that I shrieked and tumbled over in my six-inch heels, breaking my ankle—what a way to celebrate your thirtieth.

Hopefully, everyone learned their lesson not to jump out at the woman with slight anxiety issues and social awkwardness levels that get worse the older I get.

I've always been shy, even as a child. I'm never the one to initiate conversations or be the centre of attention. I'm happy just being in the background and observing, far more comfortable being a listener rather than a talker.

I flick my long, blonde hair over my shoulder and blink my green eyes as I take in the beauty of my bedroom. In the middle of the room is a huge,

gorgeous bed with white sheets and a fluffy comforter, plus mountains of pillows. The walls are also white, and several large windows let in natural light. The floor is covered in a soft, plush, white carpet. There is a fireplace in one corner and a television in another. The room is spacious and inviting, and it feels like a place where anything is possible. I remove the candle from the cupcake and pick it up. With my coffee in one hand and the cake in the other, I cross over to the window to stare out over the exclusive London suburb of Kensington, marvelling at the picturesque view.

It's mid-morning, and the sky is clear blue. The sun is a bright yellow disc sitting low on the horizon. There's a sharp frost in the air, and the ground is covered in a white blanket of ice. The trees are bare. The air is still, and there's a feeling of peace and calm that washes over me, adding to my contentment and perfect happiness.

Turning from the window, I finish off the cupcake and take another sip of coffee before I head down to the kitchen. We live in a big five-bedroom mansion that I've spent years decorating and perfecting to just the way I want it. I've been married to my husband for nearly eight years now. I can't believe how much time has flown by. We want to start a family, but it hasn't happened so far, which is disappointing for him and me. But I don't want to worry about it today of all days, so I push it aside as I take the wooden stairs carefully, so I don't spill my coffee.

The kitchen is one of my favourite rooms. It's clean and modern. I adore it.

When I don't encounter anyone on the way or in the kitchen, I frown. Placing the cup down, I make my way through the thickly carpeted entrance hall to Adam's study. I hear his voice clip through the air sharply, which means he is in a mood about something. I hesitate and chew the inside of my lip, wondering if I should approach. I'm not usually so timid around him, but lately, he has been getting into some really dark tempers, which scare me and cause conflict that I really hate so much.

My hands start to shake.

I know he would never hurt me physically, but words can hurt as well. I'd hoped today he would be happy and leave whatever business drama that seems to crop up a lot lately, outside.

"Morgan," he snaps.

Cringing, I take a step back. He must've caught sight of me hesitating through the gap under the door.



I plaster a smile on my face and stick my head around it. “Hi.”

He smiles, perfectly charming and gorgeous. “Happy birthday, precious,” he says, crossing over and kissing me. His dark eyes are full of nothing but love, and I relax. I know it’s silly being nervous around him. He loves me; it’s just that things are tough for him right now. The cost of everything has soared, and he has this huge house and grounds, plus the staff, to think about. It must be really stressful for him.

“Thanks,” I murmur, looking up at him.

Alfie and Pierce, his business partners, wish me happy birthday with smiles. I return them, happy, and all the negative thoughts vanish from my mind.

“After last year, I have decided to do things a bit differently today,” Adam says, his brown eyes crinkling at the corners as he smiles broadly.

“Hmm. No surprises.”

“No, instead, I’m taking you to dinner at Castello’s, your favourite place ever, where you can eat yourself into a coma before I fill you up with cake and...other things...” His tone goes seductive, which sends a thrill over my skin, at the same time as I feel awkward having Alfie and Pierce there.

Ignoring them to focus on my husband, I clap my hands in delight. “This is going to be a night to remember.” I absolutely love Castello’s Italian restaurant. They make the best lasagne in the whole world, and it’s one dish I could eat every day, forever.

“It sure is,” Adam says, wrapping his arms around me tightly. “I have stuff to do before then, so have a nice relaxing day, have a swim in the pool and a nice hot bubble bath, and then we’ll leave at six.”

“Sounds like heaven.”

“You are heaven,” he murmurs, being his perfect, charming self.

I giggle and slink off, feeling his eyes on my curves as I walk away.

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## ELIJAH

“Hey,” Dylan says, marching into the big farmhouse kitchen in the four-bedroom house, that my two friends and I own in Shoreditch. His short dark hair is all bedhead messy. “Happy birthday.”

I look up at him from my newspaper, which I’m reading at the huge island in the middle of the room. “Thanks.”

“What are we doing to celebrate?” he asks, opening the fridge and poking around in the packed-out cold cupboard until he finds the orange juice.

“Nothing.”

He glances at me in shock. “What? You’re forty.”

“Yeah, and?”

“It’s a big deal.”

“Not to me.” I go back to reading the paper.

“You’re turning into a real old fart, you know that?” he grouses.

I get his annoyance. He would go for drinks to celebrate it being Tuesday. He is young, only twenty-seven, and he should go out and have fun. Me? I’m getting to the age now where I want to stay in, read my book and go to bed.

*Fuck.* Maybe I am turning into an old fart.

I run my hand over my cropped blonde hair, my hand coming to rest on the back of my neck.

That realisation doesn’t make me change my mind about my birthday, though. It’s just another day.

“Jesus,” he mutters, shaking his head, his light brown eyes locking onto my green ones. “Come on. Just a few drinks.” He gives me the puppy-dog eyes. I know for a fact that expression can sway any woman from here to the

shining sea.

But it doesn't work on me.

"Can't. I'm on call."

"Oh, might've known," he complains, throwing his head back. "Can't even take the night off from being the badass Taskforce Commander that cleans up London's streets even for one night."

"If *I'm* on call, that means you are as well," I say with a tight grin, placing my paper on the island to glare at him.

"You're the worst."

"You love me, really."

He sighs. "Okay, hotshot. Fill me in. What's the scoop?"

"We think they're making their move tonight. We have to be ready."

"We've been watching them for weeks and nothing. How can we be so sure it's tonight?"

"Rumblings."

He rolls his eyes. "You seriously need to get shagged."

"I'm good, but thanks."

"Seriously. Kaleb is getting pissed off with this waiting game, and so am I. When are we going to find someone to settle down with? These one-nighters suck balls."

I growl and hunch my shoulders. "No one said you had to wait for me." I know I'm being selfish and a dick, but I can't help it. I cannot be with someone I'm not attracted to on a level that runs soul deep, and I can't help that I'm not attracted to *any* women on that level. Looks aren't everything, or we'd be shackled up with someone by now. It has to be perfect. We agreed a while ago that when I turned forty and none of us had found anyone, we'd try to find someone who would have all of us together. We live and work together because we are close and we like each other, plus the rising costs of everything, we couldn't afford to live in this area, in this house near our work without three salaries coming in. We decided on one, admittedly drunken night, to see if there was anyone out there that would take all three of us on. Surprisingly, there are plenty of women who say they would. Trouble is... I'm not that into it anymore. Not the foursome, but just love in general. It's not like we have been sitting around waiting for someone to drop into our laps. We've been proactive, but they are all just so...blah.

I hate thinking that because I'm sure they're lovely and will make a great wife to any other man. But to me, they're boring and blah and can't hold a

conversation to save their lives, never mind talk about real-world stuff that matters. That matters *to me*. My job matters to me. It's not just a job, but a calling. I see all sorts of shit going down, and I want someone I can talk to about it at the end of the day. Someone to unburden to who might not fully understand but will get what it means to me.

The government hired me to take down gangs who are selling all sorts of shit on the black market, from weed, E and uppers to downers, heroin and crack. If I have to work every day from now until I die, I will remove every single one of these arseholes from the streets, even if it ends up killing me.

"We need to talk about this," Dylan states, rapping his knuckles on the island. "We agreed."

"Yeah, I know, but I've explained myself more than once. I won't settle. End of story. When we find her, I'll let you know."

"You're backing out, aren't you?"

"No," I growl, wishing he couldn't see straight through me.

"You are, you dick."

"I'm not, *but* I need it to be perfect. Why settle?"

He huffs and backs down. I know he wants to fight me on it. He is ready to find someone right now and make a life with them. He's eager, like a puppy dog, bouncing around all happy-go-lucky. Even though he is itching to throw an impatient punch at my face, he won't. It's not in his nature. He's the calm one. Kal, on the other hand, well, it'd be a different story if he was confronting me right now. He's way more feisty and we've already come to blows about this several times. If they can't accept that I need to hold off until I'm ready, then we can break the deal and they can suit themselves as will I. I will know *the one* when I come across her. I need to *feel* something, and so far, I haven't felt jack shit.

I sigh and pick my paper up again as Dylan leaves me alone, not happy but keeping his trap shut.

I'm waiting for my boss to contact me with the details for tonight. I was bluffing to Dylan. We aren't on call. We are on a mission. I was trying to soften the blow for him. I protect him more than I should in all aspects, being the youngest of us, even though I know he can handle himself and tricky situations.

As if on cue, my phone buzzes and I pick it up. "Yeah?"

"Castello's. 7 PM. They're making a drop. Be there and end this."

"On it."

I hang up. No more needs to be said.

Picking up my mug of tea, I take a sip before going back to reading my paper. I cannot wait to get that scum off the streets. It'll make my night. My month. Maybe even my year. We've been after these guys for ages, but they've been one step ahead. Not anymore. Tonight, we've got them.

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## MORGAN

I have had one of the laziest days I've ever had in my life. I've had a swim in the small indoor pool, followed by a sauna and then a hot bubble bath. I've watched TV, read my book and stuffed my face with healthy snacks. It's been boring as all fuck.

I was hoping Adam would find some time to spend with me, but he's been out *all* day, only returning about an hour ago to get ready to take me out.

I grimace at myself in the mirror.

I'm not one for formal dresses. I prefer casual wear any day of the week, but I've made an effort to dress up and look pretty for my man. My long blonde hair is coiled up on top of my head in a tight bun. My face is made up in natural, but pretty shades. I'm wearing a tight white dress that accentuates my curves and costs more than I feel comfortable with. My nude-coloured shoes are high and strappy with a thin heel, which concerns me just in case I get a dose of the clumsy and end up breaking my ankle again. As far as outfits go, I look hot. As far as the cost of the outfit goes, I feel terrible, but Adam doesn't want me to work, instead convincing me to stay at home and look after our home, and children, when we finally do have them.

"Hi," Adam says, pushing the half-open door wider. "Wow, you look amazing."

"Thanks."

"Sit."

I give him a curious look but perch my rear on the end of the bed. To my surprise, he drops to his knees in front of me and looks up at me with those

beautiful dark eyes. He runs his hands down my calf, lifting my foot before he clasps a pretty silver bracelet around my ankle.

“It’s gorgeous,” I murmur.

“Not as gorgeous as you.” He stands up and takes my hand, helping me rise. “Are you ready?” He glances at his watch almost anxiously.

Nodding, I let him lead me out of my room and down the stairs, where to my confusion, Alfie and Pierce are waiting.

“You don’t mind if they join us, do you?” Adam asks, pulling me closer to him.

“Uhm, no?” What else can I say? It’s super weird, but I’m not going to kick up a fuss on my birthday which will probably throw Adam into a mood.

“Good girl,” he murmurs in my ear, making me blush.

Hoping that whatever present Adam has for me isn’t going to be extravagant and inappropriate if he’s waiting to hand it to me at the restaurant, I let him lead me outside. I know this bracelet isn’t my gift. This is just a starter gift. I know my husband too well.

My stomach clenches into a tight knot as Adam helps me into the back seat with Pierce in the passenger seat and Alfie on the other side of me. Feeling hemmed in, I wonder what on earth is going on here. Why have I been shunted to the back like we’re in a taxi?

Something feels off, and I very feel nervous. They’re all acting edgy, and Adam keeps looking at his watch every two minutes. It’s freaking me out, but I keep my mouth shut, not wanting to ruin this night by complaining.

The drive into the city doesn’t take long, which is good because I’m ravenous, having lived only on snacks all day. I haven’t eaten properly since last night, which is not helping the churning in my stomach. Adam finds a parking space to pull into, and helps me out, clutching my hand tightly after he gives it a soft kiss. His eyes are wary, and his smile is almost apologetic. I want to ask what the hell is going on, but again, I keep my mouth shut, so I don’t start a fight or cause any ructions.

Adam leads me the short way down the gritted pavement to Castello’s.

I shiver.

I feel like I’m being watched as I walk down the street. It’s a very weird feeling, like someone is following us or something. I look over my shoulder, but I can’t see anyone. The urge to run is clawing at me, but then Adam opens the door of the restaurant, and the feeling goes away when we enter. The interior of the restaurant is very elegant, with white tablecloths and candles

flickering on the tables. The enormous floor-to-ceiling windows open up in the summer to accommodate outdoor seating, but they're closed tonight as it's freezing. I shiver as I didn't bring my coat, but I soon warm up as we are seated at a cosy table for...four.

*What the fuck?*

Adam checks his watch again, and I purse my lips.

"Waiting for something?" I ask, and then cringe when his eyes bore into mine.

"What do you mean?" he asks carefully.

"Nothing," I mutter and pick up the menu to peruse, even though I know exactly what I'm having.

Adam drops it as well, turning to the waiter who has arrived to take our drinks order. He orders Champagne, and I smile. I don't drink often, but when I do, I love a glass of Champagne. The bubbles and sharp taste are exquisitely decadent. Not my usual style at all, but tonight I want to try to enjoy myself. I relax and let the weird behaviour of my husband go.

A few minutes later, after Pierce has changed his mind three times on what he wants to eat, the waiter hovers next to us, taking our food order. As soon as Adam is finished ordering, he gets up and bends down to give me a quick kiss.

"I'll be right back," he murmurs.

Not happy at all to be left on my own with my husband's two business partners, I frown but watch him go as the door opens and a group of men dressed in black enter the restaurant. I get a seriously bad vibe from them.

I turn to Alfie, but he smiles and draws me into a conversation which is clearly a distraction, but I'm not having it.

"Wait. Where did Adam go?" I look over my shoulder and see him disappearing down the corridor that leads to the toilets with the group of men right behind him.

Panic hits my chest. "He's in trouble," I say, shoving my chair back, ready to stand up.

"He's fine," Alfie says, waving it off. "Here, have some more Champagne."

"No, those guys have followed him. Go and check on him, please." I can't tear my eyes away from the doorway where they disappeared. I know in my gut that those guys are bad news, and that Adam is in trouble.

"I'll go," Pierce says, giving me a weird half-smile as he pushes his chair



back.

“Thanks.” I frown and tap my foot under the table, chewing the inside of my lip. I watch as Pierce walks through the doorway and then jump as a crash resounds through the restaurant.

“Fuck,” I exclaim, placing my hand over my heart. “What the hell was that?” I stand up, pushing my chair over in my haste, my blood pumping through my veins as my hands go hot with worry.

When I hear yelling and more crashing coming from the back of the restaurant, I wring my hands in front of me.

“Wait here,” Alfie says, standing up, his face dark and dangerous.

“What is going on?” I demand, all concerns about ruining this night with an argument disappearing as the reality of this situation catches up to me.

I knew something wasn’t right, but now everyone is acting strangely. Alfie grabs me suddenly and shoves me behind him.

“Hey!” Trying not to topple over onto my arse in these stupid heels, I grab hold of him for support, completely in the dark about what is going on.

The commotion around us is confusing and loud. I don’t know if I should run for help or hide under the table. The restaurant staff are going about their business as if nothing is happening! It’s crazytown!

“Alfie, please,” I say, shaking his arm. “Tell me what’s going on.”

His face is closed off, his eyes narrowed. “Nothing.”

“What?”

Then, I watch in horror as he heads for the front door, disappearing quickly, abandoning me in the midst of this chaos. It is spilling out into the restaurant now. Men dressed in TAC gear have Adam in their grip, and from the looks of it, Pierce has also been handcuffed.

“Hey!” I shout, marching forward and getting in the way of the brute who has Adam in custody. “Get your fucking hands off him!”

His green eyes meet mine with an almost bored expression before he draws in a deep breath, and his pupils dilate. Our gaze locks for a few seconds as Adam struggles, but it all becomes background noise for just those few tiny moments where time stands still. Then everything rushes back to me, making me dizzy and nauseous.

“Out of my way, Ma’am,” he barks. “You are actively obstructing an ongoing investigation.”

“What?” I shriek. “Wait. What is going on? You’ve got my husband.”

Again, his eyes meet mine. “Your husband is being arrested. That’s all

I'm at liberty to say. Come down to the station, and we can tell you what we can, when we can."

"No!" I yell, grabbing Adam's arm. "No! You can't take him from me. He didn't do anything wrong! Those other men, the ones dressed in black, they're the ones you want." Tears prick my eyes as Adam shrugs my hand off him, his eyes staring straight ahead. "Adam! Tell them. Tell them you didn't do anything. Don't leave me, Adam, please."

He says nothing.

Neither does Pierce as he and Adam are marched out of the restaurant along with the guys in black.

"Wait!" I call out, my hand on my stomach hoping I don't see the Champagne in reverse. "Wait."

But they keep walking. Everyone ignores me, as if I'm not even here.

"Alfie," I mutter. He went out the front. I hasten after the task force, or whatever the hell they are, running precariously in my heels. I yank the door open and follow them, turning to the left and then right, looking for Alfie.

I see him being shoved into one of the vans that are parked up outside with a sinking heart.

"No!" I scream into the dark. "No, you can't do this!"

"Ma'am," a young officer from the taskforce says, coming up behind me. "I'm sorry, but your husband and his partners are seriously bad guys. Did you know about any of this?"

"What's *this*?" I spit out, about ready to tear his face off in my frustration and growing anger.

"Come with me," he says and grasps my arm gently, leading me to a car and opening the door. "Get in."

"No! You can't do this. I haven't done anything, and neither have they!" I struggle in his grip, but I trip in these blasted heels and fall against him, my hands splayed out on his broad chest.

He gazes down at me with eyes the colour of autumn leaves, and my breath escapes me. His cologne smells delicious as I inhale deeply, his eyes blazing with heat before he steadies me with both hands on my arms.

"Ma'am," he croaks. "Please get in, and we will explain everything back at the station."

"You'd better have a good explanation," I snarl, yanking my arms out of his grip. "You've got the wrong people, and I will make all of you pay for this. You're a bunch of fucking arseholes who've just ruined my fucking

birthday!” I’m angry now. Furious even. Twice in a row, my birthday has been ruined. “Fuckers! You’re all fuckers.”

“Jesus,” a blonde one says, sidling up to the officer who has me and glaring down at my face. I recognise him as the one who arrested Pierce. “You’re a feisty one, aren’t you? Get her in the car, Dyl. We need to move out.”

I growl when ‘Dyl’ puts his hand on top of my head and pushes down, forcing me to get into the back of the car, like some kind of crim. He slams the door shut and climbs into the driver’s side. “Sit back, Ma’am, and we will go through everything at the station,” he says, setting off.

I hiss. “Stop fucking calling me *Ma’am*, and yeah, you keep saying that, but I demand you tell me right now what the hell is going on.”

“Okay, *Ma’am*. If you want to do this right here, right now, you’ve been shackled up with one of London’s biggest crime bosses to hit the streets since the fifties. If you really don’t have a fucking clue who you’re sleeping with, know that you’re better off without him.”

My heart stops.

Stunned into silence, all I can hear is my own breath as I wheeze, struggling to take air into my lungs.

---

## DYLAN

I'm an idiot.

A first-class complete, and utter prick.

What was I thinking, saying all of that to her?

I grip the steering wheel tighter and glance at her in the mirror. Her face is pale, and there are unshed tears brimming her glorious emerald eyes. Her skin is pale and flawless.

Reality crashes back down on me, drenching any desire I had for her. She is gorgeous, but she is taken. Married to a drug baron who probably treats her like dirt. She has that wounded bird look, the kind that appears to walk on eggshells. Even with her feisty nature, when she had a go at Kaleb and me, it took everything she had. Now she has gone into survival mode, withdrawn and barely hanging on.

"I'm sorry," I mutter, wishing we knew more about her. The truth is, we don't. She has been kept hidden from the criminal underworld. Is that part of their plan, and she's really the mastermind behind all of this, or is she caught up in a world she has no idea exists? I'm convinced it's the latter, but she won't be left alone until we get her statement and Eli has had a shot at interrogating her.

"What are *you* sorry for?" she asks coldly, staring out of the window.

"For saying what I did. I could've been gentler."

She snorts with icy amusement. "No shit, Sherlock. Do you always come out and tell the innocent woman that her man is a big fat criminal?"

"Not always," I admit. "But you pushed me."

"Pushed you?" she scoffs, her eyebrows going up. "Oh, please. You were

dying to tell me that I'm an absolute idiot for not knowing any of this about him. You probably took great delight in seeing my world crash down around me."

Her bitterness hits me dead in the heart. "No, not at all. I am sorry for acting like a knobhead."

"Not forgiven," she grits out.

"Still. I want it on the record."

"You're a complete asshole."

"I know."

She sighs. "What's your name?"

"Who wants to know?"

"Don't you already know, seeing as you've obviously been tracking my husband for a while now."

Contemplative pause. "Dylan Harris."

"Humph."

"Tell me anyway?"

"Morgan...Happs, obviously."

"Well, Morgan Happs. The best thing you can do for your husband is to hire a damn good lawyer. He is in some serious shit."

She tears her gaze away from staring out of the window and locks eyes with me in the rear view mirror.

I'm forced to look away to watch the road, but I see the sneer of confidence that comes from those entitled enough to have a big wallet for prominent lawyers. Too bad her assets are frozen now. I don't want to be the one to tell her that, though. She has already had a shit night. I don't want to make it worse. I want to protect her for some reason.

"You know someone?" I ask anyway.

"You could say that."

"Are you going to give me a name to contact them when we get to the station?"

"Clive Harlow. My uncle."

I blink once and then press my lips together. Okay, big guns are definitely deployed, but she has no idea that Chief Justice Harlow is the one behind clearing up the streets and is responsible for not only this task force that we are a part of, but also tonight's orders.

"Hmm."

"You know him?"

“I do. But he won’t help you.”

“Says you.”

I hate hurting her, but I have to. I indicate and pull over to the side of the road. Turning around in my seat, I give her a steady look. “He is the one that gave the order to take your husband and his partners into custody. I’m sorry, Morgan, but you’ll have to find someone else.”

The tears that she’d pushed away spring up again, and this time one rolls down her cheek. I force myself not to reach out and touch her. It will all be over if I do. I draw in a deep breath, almost *tasting* her perfume that weirdly smells like a chocolate orange and is driving me wild. I know Eli was caught off-guard by her as well. I saw it on his face in the restaurant. He won’t admit it now or in a million years. This woman is taken. Married to a criminal. A criminal that we just took down and are about to put behind bars for a very long time. She is about as off-limits as a woman can get.

I gaze into her deep, rich green eyes, like the forest at night. They are framed by long, dark lashes that curl at the ends. They shimmer with an inner light and seem to reflect the emotions of her soul. They are warm and inviting, luring you into their world, which shows me how kind and caring she is. She is exactly the kind of woman who could be cherished, treasured, and adored by us.

But she’s taken.

Her full red lips quiver before she presses them together. “I don’t have anyone else,” she whispers. “I only have him.”

“I’m sorry,” I whisper back.

“What did they do?”

“I can’t tell you that right now. Commander Miller will tell you the charges at the station.”

“Please, Dylan,” she says, reaching out to touch my arm.

It’s like fire, and electricity is searing through my TAC gear. I stare at her delicate hand and lick my lips.

“They’re selling seriously bad stuff on the black market.”

“Like what?” she asks in disbelief.

“Weed, crack, heroin, mollie, you name it.”

“Drugs?” She frowns fiercely.

I nod slowly. “They’ve been linked to a dose that has been lethal to some.”

Her eyes widen, and her mouth goes slack. “What?”

“I’m so—”

“Don’t you dare fucking say you’re sorry again,” she spits out, removing her hand from my arm, to my immense disappointment and returning to glaring out of the window.

“Keep driving. I want to speak to this Commander Miller dick,” she says stiffly.

I nod, at a loss for any more words. She is hurting, and I hate that I was part of causing it. It makes me even angrier at this dickhead for what he’s done. She deserves better than that asshole, but it’s not my place to tell her that.

Again.

Once was enough, and even that was too many. I’ve crossed the line with her big time. Eli is going to whip my arse and probably kick me out of the squad for what I’ve just done. But I had to. I’ve fallen for this woman in the space of five minutes, and there isn’t a damn thing anyone can do about it now.

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## MORGAN

**W**e pull up into the underground parking of the station. I'm completely numb. I can't move. I can't believe that my husband would do the things that this officer has told me. It's unheard of and unthinkable.

The car door opens, and Officer *Dyldoh* Harris reaches in to help me out. I'm unsteady on my feet, but he holds me up, not letting go until I right myself. The car in front of us opens up to let out the arsehole who took my husband into custody.

"Hey!" I snap, coming to life and striding forward, but I come to a dead stop when he opens the back door and hauls Adam out. "Adam! Tell them you didn't do this!"

Again, he ignores me, staring straight ahead with a grim expression. It hits me in the heart. Why is he doing this? Why is he ignoring me?

The task force guy leads him into the station with me staring after him, tears welling up, but I refuse to let them fall. Not now. I need to hold it together. I cannot fall apart yet. I will when I get home, but now I have to be strong for him and for me. I don't know what is going on, but he's my husband, and I have to believe in him; not these trumped-up charges. If Uncle Clive *knew* he was a bad guy, he wouldn't have left me in that house with him. I'm sure of it. He just wouldn't. I might've fallen out with my parents over my choice of husband, they might've disowned me over it, but surely to God, if Clive knew I was living with criminals, he'd have said something.

Officer *Dyldoh* ducks into the station, leaving me with the blonde one I saw outside the restaurant who called me feisty. I wish I was. That was the aftershock and adrenaline. Now, I don't know what to think or which way to



turn. I don't even have my phone because I left it at home, not wanting to bring a bag with me to carry it.

He gestures with his head to follow him, and I put one foot in front of the other, walking behind him into a busy station, considering it's night-time.

"I'm Captain Kaleb Walker," he says as he pushes open a door that leads to a drab, bare interrogation room.

I follow him inside, ignoring him.

"Sit."

I do but only because these heels are killing me and standing around seems like cutting my nose off to spite my face.

"The Commander will be in to speak to you soon, but there's someone else who wants a quick word with you, okay? Can I get you some water?"

I draw in a deep breath and then regret it instantly. He smells like an ocean breeze with undertones of a Mai Tai cocktail. It hits my senses and floods them, swirling my already messed up head with thoughts of lazy days on beaches, reading, sleeping and having sex. That is some killer aftershave and I bet he knows it.

"Uhm..." I mutter, having forgotten what he asked, trying to focus on his blue eyes but failing miserably.

"Water?" he asks again, pinching his nose as if to not breathe in the air around him. I guess he doesn't want to inhale the same air as an idiot who didn't know her husband was a drug dealer and who can't string two sentences together in case he catches a case of the dum-dums.

*Alleged* drug dealer.

Nodding, I then glance at the door as it opens. "Uncle Clive!" I stand up, almost knocking the chair over. "What is going on? You need to help him. He didn't do anything."

"Morgan," he says and comes over to give me a kiss on top of my head. He grips my shoulders gently and pushes me back into my seat.

"Kaleb, please give us a minute."

He nods and rushes out as if he can't wait to escape me.

"I'm so sorry, Morgan. I know this has come as a shock to you, but your husband is in deep trouble. They've been selling drugs on the black market..."

"So I've heard, but you're wrong," I interrupt. "He wouldn't. And if he's so bad, and you knew about it, why did you leave me with him?"

His eyes go sad, and he slumps into the chair opposite mine on the other

side of the table. “I had to,” he says. “I knew he wouldn’t hurt you or involve you. I had someone watching you. They reported back every day. If things had taken a turn, I would’ve pulled you out, but as it was, I needed things to remain the same so that we could catch him and his business associates. If you’d disappeared, they would’ve gone underground, and we’d have lost them.”

“What?” I shake my head. “You were spying on me?” All of the blood drains from my head, making me go dizzy.

“No, it wasn’t like that. Your part time housekeeper, Jess, she’s one of mine.”

“Jess?” I mutter in disbelief. I can’t get over this. It’s insanity.

“Love, you’re better off without them. Trust me on that. I can’t say anymore. Commander Miller will fill you in but know that you’re not under suspicion.”

I nod slowly. “Do my parents know about any of this?”

He shakes his head. “It’s not my place. You tell them if you want, but I know things are strained...”

“Strained?” I blurt out with a hollow laugh. “They disowned me for choosing Adam over them, but they made it impossible to have both. Adam was right about them, saying they were out to split us apart. I didn’t want to believe it, but he knew...” I choke on the sob that comes up.

Clive’s pained expression does nothing to comfort me.

“So, you’re not going to help?”

“I can’t, love, except...” He looks over his shoulder as he pulls something out of his inner jacket pocket. He slides it over the table to me.

I stare down at the pre-paid debit card. “What is this?”

“Ten grand. You’ll need it.”

“What?” I shake my head as he picks up the card and my hand and slaps it against my palm. I close my hand over it and see the warning on his face. I gulp and quickly shove it down the front of my dress, not having anywhere else to put it. I’ll figure out his words to me later, but right now, the door is opening, and the asshole, whom I assume is this hotshot Commander dick, strolls in with a file.

“Eli,” Clive murmurs, standing up.

He nods and slaps the file down on the table, his expression grim and unyielding.

I want to beg my uncle not to leave me with him, but he exits the room

quietly, closing the door behind him.

“Morgan Happs. I’m Commander Elijah Miller.”

I gulp and sit up straighter, pushing my chair back a fraction. His presence is overpowering, but in a protective way that unfortunately I feel I desperately need right now. He is enormous and muscular, and I want him to wrap his arms around me and tell me this is all going to be okay.

“Do you know why you’re here?”

“Because you arrested my husband.”

He blinks. “And?”

“And nothing. Your officer shoved me into the back of his car before he told me lies about Adam. He didn’t do this. He isn’t a bad man. It must be the other two, Pierce and Alfie. They’re dragging him down when he didn’t do anything.”

I bite my tongue when his eyes harden, and pull back into myself, wishing I’d kept my mouth shut.

“He told you what?” he asks coldly.

Realising I just threw the officer under the bus, I feel bad. He tried to be kind in that detached sort of way officers of the law have.

“I made him tell me. I threatened to call my uncle if he didn’t and have his arse fired.”

Commander Miller snorts and looks decidedly like he believes that could be true. “He told you that your husband has been selling drugs on the black market and that he and his partners have been linked to the deaths of at least half a dozen people that we can tell, and that they are also responsible for seventy per cent of the street drug trade in the city of London?”

Having it laid out for me again and in more detail is too much. I feel the bile rise in my throat and push my chair back. Stumbling to the bin in the corner, I throw up what little is in my stomach. As I kneel over the bin, retching, I feel a cool hand on the back of my neck that instantly soothes the raging of my churning stomach.

“Here.” His soft voice is almost apologetic as he hands me a bottle of water and helps me to my feet. He gives me a tissue from the box on the corner table. I take it and wipe my mouth, feeling like such a fool.

“I’m sorry,” I mutter. “I’ll clean that up.”

“Don’t worry about it. Sit. I’ll take care of it later.”

I look up at him. His green eyes are almost the same colour as mine. He is tall, really tall, like six four or five. His expression is one of pity, and it’s

more than I can bear. He thinks I'm pathetic and weak.

He's right.

I am.

How could I live with this man and not know anything about who he really is?

I hate myself for losing faith in him, but suddenly all the secret meetings behind closed doors, the stopping conversations dead when he saw or heard me coming. The lack of any real information on his jobs, just citing investments when I asked. It's all adding up to something that isn't what I thought. My happy home, while it had its tensions with Adam's temper and particular ways, was still mine, and I was still happy.

Wasn't I?

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## KALEB

**L**eaning over on the desk next to where Dylan is working on the paperwork for the Happs arrest, I can't tear my eyes away from the closed door of the interrogation room where Eli is with Mrs Happs.

I'm being called, by whatever runs my engines, back into that room to grab the woman and see if what I'm feeling about her is real.

She is exquisite.

Fuck.

Her perfume, the scent of chocolate and orange combined is as mouth-watering as they come. Not to mention, she is gorgeous, and even though her sparks of fire are few and far between, I can tell she has an inner strength that will be formidable when she gets over the shock of this. I don't think for a second that she had any clue what was going on in her home. I don't think any less of her for it. This guy was good. Too good. For years, we've been chasing our tails as they gave us the runaround.

Now we have them, but we've pulled the rug out from under this slightly wounded woman, unintentionally hurting her. That doesn't sit right with me. Not that it makes *any* difference. She is taken. Married to Happs, and that's all there is to it. It's a shame. A waste, but it is what it is.

What it does drive home, is that we need a someone to be with. We have waited around for Eli to get his shit together, but enough is enough. He has turned forty, and that was our full green light.

"When this is over," I say to Dylan. "We're having that talk with Eli again."

"Oh, thank fuck," he mutters, his head down, still working. "I am so

fucking sick of going over this in my head. He agreed and it's what we all want, so why are we sitting around with our dicks in our hands? This is just beyond."

"I know. I feel the same, although I'm beginning to think Eli has changed his mind about what we agreed. It's up to us."

"Deal. This time we don't take no for an answer."

"Too right."

I glare at the closed door, wishing we could have that conversation now, when it bursts open, and Eli walks out carrying a bin with the woman behind him. Her eyes are lowered, and she looks like she's been hit by a ten-ton truck. I feel for her, even though I wish I didn't.

I just can't get her eyes out of my mind. The vision is lingering, making my mouth water at the thought of her consuming my senses day and night...

Fuck. I need to get her out of my head.

Eli disappears into the gent's toilets and returns shortly after, taking her arm and leading her to the door. He catches my eye and mutters something to her. She nods and waits as he comes over to Dylan's desk. He looks up, giving her a lingering once-over, but goes back to his work. Quite reluctantly, it seems.

*Interesting.*

"I'm taking Mrs Happs home. She's in the clear for now. Dyl, I want that report to be spot on when I get back."

Dylan nods. "All i's dotted, and all t's crossed. We are not losing these dicks on a technicality."

"Good," he mutters and then turns his attention to me, seeing as my eyes have wandered over to Mrs Happs.

"You going to tap it and unwrap it?" I snort when he punches me in the shoulder to get my attention.

"Excuse me?" he snarls as Dylan looks up with a loud snort.

"Her perfume...like a Terry's Chocolate Orange. It was a joke. Lighten up."

"She's married," he states in an icy tone that I've rarely heard from him before.

I draw my eyes to his. They are furious. I'm not sure if he's angry with me, her, Happs or everyone.

"Yeah, unfortunately. Doesn't mean we can't look at those perky tits and peachy arse." I'm pushing him. I've seen something in him that has *never*

been there before with regard to a woman or pretty much anyone else before. I want to force it to the surface, make him admit he fancies her.

He does that and more. He slaps his hand to my chest and slams me up against the wall behind me, practically winding me with his superior strength. “Don’t talk about her that way. She is married. You will treat her with respect. Get your mind out of the fucking gutter and back on the job.”

He hisses and lets me go.

I exchange a triumphant glance with Dylan, whose eyebrows have gone sky high. “Me thinks he protests too much.”

He stalks off, keeping his back to me as he gives me the finger.

I chuckle and look at the woman again. She gazes up at Eli with big doe-eyes. A realisation hits me hard and unpleasantly. Eli has fallen for a married woman, and now he will never accept anyone else into our lives.

We are doomed.

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## ELIJAH

**F**eeling Kal's eyes boring into my back, I give him the finger and ignore him. Marching up to Morgan Happs, who has unfortunately been caught up in this raid in a slight twist of fate on our shared birthday, I avoid looking into her eyes which are the same colour as mine. It's something that I cannot do. I can't stare into the forest green depths and drown in their loveliness. I can't appreciate her full red lips, which I want to drive my tongue in between to taste her tongue on mine. I can't inhale her perfume and have it consume me. I can't engage her in a conversation which I know will meet my every expectation and then some. I can't fall for her and have my heart ripped out because she isn't mine and belongs to someone else, even if he is a criminal. She is his.

"Let's go," I mutter.

Pausing to let a woman and a small child through the door as she barrels past us, the door swings shut behind her forcefully. Reaching for the handle, I freeze when she starts speaking.

"Adam Happs," she states. "You have arrested my fiancé and I want to fucking know on what charges."

Glaring at Morgan Happs in confusion, I see her eyes shoot to the woman at the desk. Her face goes so pale, I take my hand off the door handle in case she is about to faint on me.

"What did you say?" she murmurs.

The woman at the desk turns her head to glare at us before turning back.

Morgan shoves past me and grabs the other woman's arm. "What did you say?" she demands.



“Get off me,” the other woman says, shaking Morgan’s hand off her arm as she grips her son’s hand tightly. He is about five or six, maybe.

Morgan’s eyes drop to the child, and she gulps visibly, taking a step back. “Fiancé? Adam is your fiancé?”

“What of it? Do you work here?”

“No, I’m...I’m...” Morgan chokes back a sob, her hand clutching her stomach as she turns and reaches the door, pushing it instead of pulling it twice, cursing like a sailor under her breath before I reach over and pull it open for her.

*Fiancé.*

Ouch. I didn’t know it was possible for this douche bag to sink any lower in my expectations, but he just did.

Casting a glance at Morgan, she is crying silent tears, her anxiety is rolling off her in waves, which is affecting me in the strangest way. I feel anxious on her behalf, which is annoying as fuck. I don’t have time to *feel* for her. I need to get her back to the house, which hasn’t been frozen in the asset claiming because the crafty fuck put it in her name. There’s nothing we can do about that, but at least she has a place to go tonight, and I don’t have to drop her off on the side of the road.

Opening up the back door of the black SUV for her, she whimpers when I glare at her as she just stands there. But then it hits me right in the guts, almost taking my breath away.

She is remembering that her husband was in this back seat earlier. Hovering, I pause, wavering as I just have no idea what to do. She is so vulnerable that I want to take her in my arms and comfort her, but that is never going to happen. I don’t steal other men’s wives. No matter how I feel about Morgan Happs, she *is* a Happs. She is not mine, and she never will be. I need to push all of these crazy thoughts aside, drop her off, and forget about her.

“Sorry,” she mumbles as we stand there.

“It’s okay,” I mutter, wishing I had someone else to drive her home, but they are all busy processing the enormous drug ring we took down tonight. I still can’t believe it happened. All these years of working towards this coup, and it happened so easily.

For us.

But not so easily for Morgan.

Her whole world has been ripped away, and we are to blame for that.

Well, us and that utter piece of shit living a double life in more ways than one.

It makes me feel like a piece of shit as well.

She gathers herself and slides into the back. Slamming the door, hoping to get this over with as quickly as possible, I'm not sure how I'm going to survive this drive home.

Taking several deep breaths before I climb into the driver's seat, I set off, hunched over the steering wheel, pulling my black beanie further down my forehead.

"Will I get to see him?" she asks quietly after a few moments.

"I don't know. Right now, they are going through processing and sentencing, and it's going to take a while." I'm waiting for her to ask about the other woman. Did we know about her? No. She is another puzzle piece that was kept well under wraps.

I glance at her in the rear view mirror. She nods, pressing her lips together. "Is she lying?"

My blood spikes as Morgan brings up the fiancé. "No idea."

When she nods, almost stoically, I seriously hate that arsehole with every cell in my body for what he's done to her. He, Adam Happs, wouldn't even look at her. One of the business associates asked about her briefly, Pierce Jenson, which I found a bit odd, but her husband dismissed her as if she didn't even exist. Now, I see why, and it breaks my heart for her. I can't even begin to fathom how he could do any of this to her. If she were mine, she would be my world.

I let out a soft growl and hunch even further down if that's possible, a scowl etched into my face that will probably stay there for all eternity now, it's *that* embedded into my features.

"Here," she murmurs a few moments later.

I pull up to the pavement, never so grateful to have a car ride end in my entire life.

"Thanks."

"No worries."

I bite my tongue as she hesitates and then opens the car door.

I want to call her back in and ravage her on the back seat of my work vehicle, giving me memories to cherish, so I never have to be without them.

But I don't.

The car jostles as she slams the door closed, and she walks up to the

mansion in Kensington that, regardless of whose name it is in, has been paid for with blood money.

It makes me sick to my stomach that she has no idea.

Tearing my gaze away from her as she bends down to retrieve a key from the safe place they keep it, I know in my heart that I have to make good on our deal. I have found the woman I've been waiting for, but I can never have her.

So now it's time to settle.

There will be no other that makes me feel this way for her, so protective, so crazy possessive, so maddeningly jealous of anyone who gets to touch her, be with her, even get close enough to fill their lungs with the same air as her.

With a heavy heart and a sigh that bears the weight of my decision, I turn the car around and set off back to the station to give the guys the news that tomorrow we will start a serious search for a woman who is open to an unconventional relationship with the three of us and can hopefully hold down a meaningful conversation. Where the fuck do we even start? A dating agency? Probably seems the best way forward.

To my disgust, I blink back the tears that suddenly spring to my eyes. But I *am* full of sorrow that I will never get to know her.

“Goodbye, Morgan,” I whisper. “Happy Birthday, sweetheart.”

Then, I focus on getting my arse back to the station in one piece, forcing myself to concentrate on the drive so I don't end up in an accident, which will achieve nothing except maybe peace for my savagely battered soul.

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## MORGAN

I close the front door quietly, glad that we left a light on when we left.  
We.

Leaning against the door, dropping the key in the bowl on the table near it, I feel the freezing cold glass through my dress and on my bare shoulders. I shiver and bend down to pull my shoes off, glad to finally be out of them. Leaving them by the front door, I cross through the entrance hall to the foot of the stairs, only to stop and turn back. I race over to pick the shoes up, clutching them to my chest. Adam hates shoes left by the front door. Even though he isn't here, I know if he comes home tonight, he will be pissed if he sees them there.

"Adam." The name gets stuck in my throat. All I can see when I close my eyes is that woman and her son. Her son who has dark eyes just like my husband's. "Fuck..." The ugly sob is out before I can stop it, but who cares? Who is here to see me break down? Who is here to watch my life crumble away before me as my heart is ripped out of my chest and smashed into a million different pieces?

No one.

No fucking one.

So who cares?

Collapsing onto the bottom stair, I allow myself a few moments to just cry and be sorry for myself, knowing I need to be stronger than this. If Adam comes home and sees me like this, he will think I'm being weak and pathetic.

Feeling the debit card that Clive gave me dig into my breasts, as I force myself to rise, I scoop it out, glaring at it with loathing through eyes

swimming with tears. I want to cut it up and throw it in the bin, but I can't. I'm not stupid. I *know* they've frozen the bank accounts, and even if I had my own card, which I don't, I wouldn't be able to use it. This is all I've got.

Ten grand.

It sounds like a lot...it *is* a lot, but when I look around the house, I wonder how the fuck I'm going to pay for everything. The bills and the staff...I can't even get my head around needing to do that. The ten kay won't last a month.

"Fuck," I mutter and head up the stairs. I can't think about any of this anymore. I want to crawl into bed and fall into some semblance of sleep until morning, where hopefully I can think straight and make sense of what the fuck happened tonight. It's not that late now; only just past half nine, but I'm exhausted from the events that have brought me to my knees.

Taking the stairs one by one, I reach the top after an eternity. Feeling an ache in my soul that comes by every once in a while, I cross over to the small room that I always thought would be a nursery. Crushing disappointment wells up, knowing that I don't even have a part of him to comfort me. I blink, leaning against the white doorframe, as my brain shuts down for just one moment before I see the face of that young boy and hear his mother's voice: *fiancé*.

My husband has a fiancé and a son out there, living their lives and Adam called *her*. He didn't want me there, he wanted *her*. Her and her son. Their son.

Is it because I never gave him a child that he went and found someone who could?

So much time was wasted wondering why I wasn't getting pregnant. So many months passed with the weight of this on my shoulders and tolerating Adam's increasingly snide remarks when it didn't happen again.

*"Well, maybe next time, Mor. You're still young."*

*"Ah well, I wasn't expecting it this time, so I'm not hurt."*

*"Guess we should think about giving up."*

"Why?" I yell, suddenly throwing my shoes into the would-be nursery. "Why would you do this? How could you do this to me?"

Slumping to my knees, I feel like I want to die. He manipulated me, lied to me, used me and for what? I don't even know. None of this makes any sense. Curling up in a ball, sobbing my heart out, I know I have no one to turn to and no one to help me.

Just the way he wanted it.

He isolated me.

I can see it now.

Now that the rose tinted glasses have slipped, I can see snippets of how my life wasn't as perfect as I thought. How *he* wasn't as perfect as I thought.

My friends who weren't good enough and who supposedly tried to come on to him. My parents who saw what he was like and tried to warn me, but he said they were trying to tear us apart.

I was a convenience to him, nothing more. Someone to manipulate and mould to his liking. Somewhere to stick his dick and to build a home for him. Someone to give him kids.

Only that last thing didn't happen.

So he found someone who could.

Maybe, given time, I could look past the drugs thing. Maybe he was struggling, and it was easy money, so that's why he did it. Maybe he was forced into it by someone else? Blackmailed, that's the word. Fuck. There are half a dozen possibilities, but this?

I can't look past this no matter how much I want to. That child was born while Adam and I were married. Not before, during.

That knowledge hurts worse than anything else.

He never loved me.

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**DYLAN**

“Can you please stop hovering,” I mutter to Kaleb, who is still standing by my desk ages after Eli walked out of here with Morgan Happs.

“Not hovering.”

“Yeah, you are, and it’s distracting. Go find something to do.”

He sits with a huff in the plastic chair near my desk and hunches over. I ignore him. This paperwork has to be perfect. I will not let anything slide, forcing us to abandon this case after we’ve been after them for so long. I hunker down but find my mind wandering towards the woman that everyone seems to have their knickers in a twist over.

It sounds like she knocked Kal’s socks off as much as she did mine. But there are several things wrong with this picture, the least of which is that she is married. And not just to anyone, but to the criminal we arrested only a few hours ago. Add to that, it now comes out that she’s related to Harlow, and that Adam Happs has not only a fiancée waiting in the wings but a son with that fiancée as well.

No wonder there is an underlying brokenness that simmers under the surface of Morgan’s exterior. It won’t be apparent to anyone looking at her, she has mastered the smile, but I know. I can see it. She is timid and anxious. She wouldn’t look anyone in the eye and closed in on herself when Eli left her by the door on her own. Her husband has done a number on her for sure. I saw it all the time when I worked in the domestic violence division. The wounds aren’t visible. I don’t think for a second that he physically abused her, but the emotional and psychological damage is there, whether she

actually knows it or not.

However, whatever is going on with Eli and Kal, they need to get their heads out of their arses and forget about her, and so do I.

Moments later, Eli storms back into the station under a dark thundercloud. I brace myself for whatever is headed our way. I'm reasonably sure it's not going to be pretty, and we're about to all get our arses kicked in a big way.

Kal sits up straight, as Eli storms over to my desk and grabs me, hauling me to my feet.

*Fuck. He knows I opened my big mouth and now I'm about to get a fist in it.*

"Hey," I complain anyway as Eli has me by the collar. "What the fuck?"

"You, I will deal with later over what you said to Morgan... *Mrs Happs.*" He corrects himself with a grimace. "I know you're both getting bent out of shape about settling down, so tomorrow I'm having a dating agency send over a file of women who might be suitable for our situation. We'll go through them and pick one that we can all live with. Got it?"

He roughly lets go of me as we gape at him. He strides off to his office, where he slams the door shut so hard, the flimsy partitioned walls shake under his fury.

"Well, that was less climactic than I thought it would be when he finally came around," I mutter.

"Dating agency? One that we can all live with?" Kal spits out. "What the fuck is he on?"

"I think he's decided that, seeing as he can't have the Happs woman, he is jumping into this to forget about her."

His gaze lands on me in curiosity. "How do you figure that?" he asks, but his interest is piqued.

"I see things that no one else does, remember."

"Humph. Well, I say we take it at face value and find the best damn woman that agency has to offer because I'm telling you now if we don't, this house of cards will collapse on us, and we won't like the consequences."

Kal storms off as well, leaving me to glare after him.

"Well, this is just great," I murmur. We've been waiting for this moment for so long, and now it's been thrust onto us in a really shitty way that will ruin the entire experience.

However.



With a laboured sigh, I know Kaleb is right. We are doomed if we don't act fast and find someone for us. "This is going to end in disaster." I kick my bin over, which is probably the angriest I've ever been, and sit back with a sigh, twiddling with my pen.

"Dylan!" Eli bellows, opening his office door. "Where the fuck is that report?"

"Coming," I murmur and stand up, gathering the paperwork up into a neat pile and slipping it into a brown folder.

I know deep down that Kal will come around, but it still concerns me that he might possibly block this attempt for us to finally settle down, no matter how much he wants it. We don't need any more friction over it, seeing as Eli has thrown down the gauntlet.

I make a mental note to contact this dating agency first thing in the morning before they send the file over to Eli, making sure they understand the importance of someone who fits Elijah's very specific set of characteristics. Kal and I are more easy going and open-minded.

As I wind my way through the bullpen to Eli's office, I inhale deeply and keep my fingers crossed that this all works out and is a happy event, not the catastrophe I can, unfortunately, foresee in our near future.



## MORGAN

I wake up the following morning with a thumping headache and freezing cold. With a groan, I straighten my legs and lift my head off the carpet, running my hand through my tangled hair.

“Fuck,” I mutter and look down at myself, still dressed in the white dress, now crumpled and tear stained. Uncurling myself, stiff and achy, I catch sight of the anklet I’m still wearing. Growling, I grab it and yank it off my ankle, leaving a red welt in its place, but I don’t even feel the pain.

Getting to my feet, I freeze when I hear the front door open, but relax slightly when I hear Jess shout out, “It’s only me!”

Then I remember what Clive said about her.

“You,” I hiss, jabbing my finger in her direction as I storm down the hallway and take the stairs quickly. “You! Get out!”

She pauses, probably debating whether she should pretend or not. Then she sighs. “He told you.”

“That you’ve been spying on us? Yes, he told me everything.”

“I wasn’t spying,” she says carefully, her dark hair wafting around her face as she shakes her head. “That wasn’t why I was here. I was here to make sure you were okay.”

“So you didn’t spy? Not once go through our drawers?” I don’t believe it.

“There is nothing here. Never. He worked off-site, and we knew that. He was careful never to bring anything here. Ever.”

“So you did spy.”

She looks away, and it’s all the confirmation I needed. “Well, you can go. He isn’t here now, and I’m great, so buh-bye.” I wave her off dismissively.

She hesitates. But realising that I'm right and there is no point in her being here, she leaves me alone again.

All alone.

Maybe I should have asked her to stay.

Growling with anger and pain, I make a snap decision.

I can't stay here. I don't want to stay here.

I don't have anywhere else to go except a hotel, but it'll be better than creeping around this place jumping every time the boiler comes on in case he comes back. I don't want to talk to him or think about him. He has destroyed me, and as far as I'm concerned, he can go to hell. My anger outweighing my heartache now, I march up the stairs only to stop halfway and go back down.

Shoving open the door to Adam's office, I stride over to his desk and start pulling drawers out, tipping out the contents and riffling through them, but not finding anything of any note.

Until I get to the bottom one.

It's locked.

Tugging on it, I know it's not going to budge without the key. Dropping to my knees, I search under the desk, unable to believe it when I find the key taped to the underside near the front cover.

With a shaking hand, I insert it, turning it slowly. The lock snaps undone easily, and I slide the drawer open. A large brown envelope is the only thing in the drawer. Picking it up, I lift the flap and reach in.

My heart thumps like a hummingbird's wings when I grasp a set of papers and pull them out. Staring at them I gasp, my stomach lurching violently as I take in the divorce papers already signed by my husband and dated four days ago.

"Fucking cocksucker!"

The expletive is out of my mouth before I can even take my next breath. It feels like the hole in my heart just got punched through even more and I struggle to draw air into my lungs. My vision goes hazy, but I force myself to my feet, needing to get out of here as fast as I can. Moving quickly towards the door, the papers clutched in my hand, I stop.

*Think about this, Morgan. You can't just run out into the freezing cold with no shoes and nothing but a crumpled white dress on. Be smart. Be strong.*

Gasping, I inhale deeply and take a few minutes to just think about this.

*Be smart. Be strong.*

Turning on my heel, I take the stairs two at a time and burst into my room, my anger firing my engines in a big way. He wants a divorce, he'll fucking get one, the lying, cheating, drug dealing scumbag. Snatching up a pen from the top drawer of my dresser, I slam the papers down and lean heavily over them, panting like I've run a marathon.

Pressing the pen to paper, I scrawl my signature across the bottom where my name has been printed and date it before I draw a hand with the middle finger sticking up.

Regretting my childish action, I stare at it, but it's too late. No take-backs. Throwing down the pen, I back away and unzip my dress, letting it fall to the floor, where I leave it to step over on my way to the bathroom.

After a quick shower, where I'm running on nothing but adrenaline, I gather up my toiletries and drag a large holdall out of the wardrobe. I pack as many of my casual clothes into it as I can. Jeans, leggings, joggers, tees, and hoodies—several pairs of underwear and socks because who knows when I'll get to do some laundry. I cram in my flip-flops and another pair of trainers, intending to wear a pair out of the door. I fold my favourite fluffy deep blue blanket and stuff it into the bag, even though it means being unable to close it properly. Then I get dressed in black joggers with a long-sleeved tee and a hoodie. I dig out a black scarf I've never worn that came with a matching woollen hat and put those on, followed by two pairs of socks and my trainers. I can only carry so much in the bag, so I need to be savvy about this. Then I root through my drawers for the cheap white sunglasses I bought when I thought I'd lost my Ray-Bans at the zoo last summer. I slip them into the front of my hoodie and pick up my bag. I leave all of my jewellery behind, stopping on my way out of the door only for my phone and charger and those fucking divorce papers.

Stuffing them into the bag, I hold back the sob that my whole life has been taken from me and I was too stupid to see it coming.

Downstairs, I put my coat on and turn to the boiler to turn it off. Then I slip quickly into the utility to flick the electricity off at the fuse box.

Waste not, want not.

The house falls into a dark, cold silence, but I don't stop to dwell on it. I'm on a mission. I pull my phone out as I head back to my bag, which I left at the bottom of the stairs and quickly search for budget hotels in the surrounding area. I won't find anything here, nor do I want to.

I land on one in Shoreditch that looks okay and is cheap. It's also far

enough away from here that if Adam comes back home, he probably won't think to look for me there or run into me accidentally while going to the shops.

Booking an Uber, I stand and wait by the door for them to arrive.

Minutes pass, and just as I'm about to explode with anxiety about how long this is taking, there is a loud knock on the door, which makes me jump a mile.

"Shit!" I exclaim and pick up my bag, heading to the door cautiously. I open it a crack to see a delivery driver standing there with a big box.

"Morgan Happs?"

"Yeah?"

"Here, signed for."

I chew the inside of my lip and sign the PDA he holds out for me, before handing it back, and he gives me the box.

It's heavier than he made it appear, and I lower it to the floor quickly before it drops out of my grip.

Frowning at it as he disappears, I wonder not only what it is, but who sent it.

At that moment, the Uber arrives, so I pick it up again and dump it on my bag, needing to take it with me in case it's something from Clive. Then I bend down to pick the whole lot up in my arms and carry it out to the waiting taxi.



FIFTY MINUTES LATER, AFTER WE'VE SAT IN THE MORNING RUSH HOUR FOR ages, the taxi finally pulls up outside the hotel I'd booked online while I was sitting here doing fuck all. I peer up at it from the pavement, having paid my fare, with my bag and box in my arms, shaking with nerves and second-guessing my decision to leave my home and regretting signing those divorce papers in the heat of my anger and sadness. I'm seconds away from getting back into the taxi to drive me home, but when I turn, he is driving away and doesn't hear me when I shout for him to stop.

"Dammit!" I yell and look frantically back at the hotel as if it were a haunted house and I'm being dared to enter at my peril on Halloween night. "Pull yourself together, Morgan," I mutter. "You can do this. You can't go

back there after what he's done. Be strong. Be an adult and move forward.”

It doesn't work.

I'm lost and alone, and it drives it home even more now that I'm here, standing on the pavement outside of a cheap hotel with nothing but a few clothes, divorce papers and a mystery box.

Clenching my jaw tightly, I remember the woman and her son, and I surge forward, a mumble of thanks on my lips as someone holds the door open for me on their way out.





## DYLAN

**M**y feet hit the icy pavement with a steady beat on my morning jog around the area. It's freezing this morning, and I pull my beanie down a bit further over my ears.

I pull up, a cloud of condensation forming when I let out a huff and bend over to catch my breath. I've gone further than usual today, but I needed to run off the tension that has been building since we arrested Adam Happs and collided with his wife in the process. I straighten up and blink, thinking I'm seeing things as I think about the beautiful blonde woman who is as untouchable as they come. Squinting in the bright, low sunlight to get a better look, I edge closer.

"No way," I murmur, crossing the road to get a better look at the woman standing on the pavement with her arms laden down as she stares up at the budget hotel.

Catching the scent of her unique perfume immediately, my stomach clenches. She is bundled up in winter clothes, a hat and scarf with oversized sunglasses shielding her eyes, but her perfume is unmistakable.

"Morgan," I murmur, frozen to the spot.

A thousand thoughts drift through my head, but the one that is first and foremost is a question. A big, bold question that leaves me short of breath and slightly dizzy.

Has she left her dickhole husband?

What else would she be doing here, miles from her home, with a bag and a box, glaring up at a hotel like it's the gates of hell?

Every cell in my body is begging me to move forward, to speak to her, to

ask her these pertinent questions that I *need* to know the answers to, but I can't. I'm frozen to the spot, and it has nothing to do with the weather. The implications of this are just too significant and too monumental to ignore.

I stand there like a mug as she moves forward, and some asshole lets her in with a big smile and a more than overt glance at her pert backside.

"Pervert," I growl, finally moving forward.

But it's too late. She is inside, and a group of businessmen exits the hotel, cutting me off from her.

It doesn't matter, though. I know where she is and as it happens, that is less than a minute's jog from our house. Elijah needs to know about this right now. He has to call off the search for a woman, and we have to go about finding a way to make Morgan ours. I won't settle, and neither should they. When Kaleb hears about this, he will back me up. I'm sure of it.

Eli has fallen for her as badly as we have. That was plain from last night's shitshow and our astute observation about him trying to get over her by finding someone else.

Forcing my body to move, I start to pick up the pace the closer I get to the house until I'm sprinting as I burst through the front door and head straight for the kitchen, where I can smell freshly brewed coffee, signifying the presence of Kaleb. Eli has kept himself locked away, which is probably a good thing with the mood he was in when we finally got home in the early hours of this morning.

Shoving open the kitchen door to be confronted by Kal, I give him a smug smile. "You will never guess who I just saw checking into a hotel literally down the road."

He gives me a blank stare, taking a small sip of coffee as he raises his eyebrow.

"Do I have to actually guess, or are you going to cut out the bullshit and just tell me?" Kal asks.

"Morgan Happs!" I blurt out, unable to hold out any longer. His sharp intake of breath doesn't deter me from powering forward. "I was out jogging, and there she was, on the pavement outside some cheap hotel with a bag and box, clearly ready to go inside. And then she did. She's left him!"

Kal gives me a sceptical glance. "She lives in Kensington. That's like an hour away from here. You must've confused her with someone else."

"Nope. It was her," I say adamantly. "I crossed over the road to make sure and caught her perfume, that chocolate orange scent. It was her."

“I'm sure plenty of women have that perfume.”

“Don't you get it? She's left him.”

Silence.

“Who has left who?” Eli asks as he pushes his way into the kitchen with a folder in his hand.

“Morgan left her husband and has checked into a hotel down the road,” I say triumphantly.

He swallows, his eyes closing off completely. “Oh.” He flings the folder onto the kitchen island that is separating me from Kal. “Here. Pick your favourites, and we'll set up some meetings for tomorrow.”

He storms out without another word, leaving me gaping after him. “Didn't you hear what I said?” I call out, turning back to Kaleb. “Anyone?”

Kal opens the folder and starts to flick through the pages.

“Hello?” I wave my hand to see if he is listening to me.

“Look, Dyl. Even if it was her, we don't know why she's checked into a hotel. Could be a hundred reasons. Maybe the boiler broke, and it's freezing in her home, or a pipe burst, and the place is flooded,” Kal says carefully, placing the folder down on the island.

“Or she's realised that her cheating husband is a murdering drug lord, and she's left him,” I grit out.

“And so what if she has? That doesn't mean she is available. It doesn't mean she will jump into our lives with both feet and date us before next month or even next year. She is broken, even without being forced to start over, *if* that's the case here. We don't know. We don't know anything. You have to move forward and forget about her.”

“Me?” I ask, thunderstruck. “This isn't just about me. Kal? I know you feel it, and so does Eli.”

“Doesn't matter,” Kal says shortly. “We don't know shit. We need to move forward and take this opportunity that Eli has given us to find a woman to settle down with now.”

He snatches up the folder again and brushes past me, leaving me alone in the kitchen, gobsmacked that no one else is willing to explore this and to find out what's going on.

“Well, fine then. I guess it's up to me,” I mutter and irritated that the guys are being a bunch of pussies about this, I grab a mug and pour myself some coffee to contemplate exactly how I'm going to draw myself into Morgan's sphere without making her bolt like a deer after a shot is fired.



## MORGAN

**G**lancing around my tiny, basic room, I cross over to place the getting heavier by the second bag and box on the bed. It's a small double that appears to be clean enough on closer inspection. I examine the bathroom and decide that it's clean, but I'm going to nip to the shops that the receptionist told me about and pick up some cleaning products, just for something to do. I'll also grab some magazines and whatever food I can eat in my room for tonight and tomorrow. I want to lay low in my room for the next few days. I don't want to face the public feeling humiliated and abandoned, but also, I'm worried that Adam will find me.

Or will he even bother to try?

As I turn back to the door and slip out quietly to go to the shops, I have to wonder if he'll even care that I've gone. He'll probably be relieved not to have me hanging around, and he can conduct his shady business and screw his other woman without worrying about me. Besides, the more I think about it, the more I think Adam couldn't stand me. All the little things he said and did to chip away at my confidence, to isolate me from anyone I cared about. If he loved me, he wouldn't have done that. If he loved me, he wouldn't have found someone else and he wouldn't have done what they're accusing him of.

Trying not to cry as I stuff my hands in my pockets, I keep my head down as I tread carefully on the icy pavement. Soon, I reach the small supermarket and head inside to the warmth. Once I've picked up a basket, I go straight to the cleaning products. Picking out a few bits, I then veer back to the magazines and grab a couple before spending some time finding snacks and pre-packed sandwiches, drinks and crisps. On impulse, I walk down the

chocolate aisle and pick up about five chocolate bars to stuff my face with over the next two days. Sod Adam and his healthy-eating chocolate ban. He can get fucked. Totally and utterly get fucking fucked.

The angrier I get, the more chocolate I pick up until my basket is overflowing. Feeling a stupid sense of satisfaction, I go to the till to pay, making sure to get a receipt so I can keep track of this expenditure. I don't have access to the balance on hand, so I need the receipts for my own peace of mind.

Asking for a bag as well, I load up and place it over my arm as I head back out onto the pavement, feeling the icy chill as the wind has picked up. Quite frankly, it'll be nice to hole up for a few days in my room. I'll get comfy and curl up with chocolate, magazines and bad daytime TV.

Sounds like heaven, really instead of exercising to keep my weight down and picking at carrot sticks and cleaning every inch of dust off every surface on Jess's day off and even sometimes when she is working, and it will definitely be heaven not to have to walk around on eggshells worrying I might set off Adam's temper.

*How did I live like this?*

My brain just will not make sense of how I survived this existence for so long.

Survived.

It sounds so dramatic, but it's like a tidal wave as the floodgates have opened and I'm seeing everything for what it really was. I'm seeing *Adam* for who he really was.

Once back in my room, I unload all of my supplies and take my outdoor clothes off. Setting to work on cleaning up the place a bit, I spritz some of my expensive made to order perfume that I added to my toiletry bag, to make this room seem as homely as possible. Adam wasn't a fan of it, but I adore it.

Then I get to work on making it to my liking. I move the bag and box to the floor while I arrange my pillows and duvet into a comfy-looking resting place, adding the solo, slightly sad-looking throw cushion from the uncomfortable-looking chair in the corner. I throw my blue blanket gently in the middle so I can curl up with it and have a familiar cocoon of softness and warmth.

After unpacking, I pick up the box, placing it on my bed as I crawl in. I've been ignoring it on purpose, but now it's time to open it up.

I rip the tape off it and fold back the top to see two big brown envelopes,

which I pick up and place next to me, and then I stare at a big, black lockbox, which will account for the weight of the box.

Going back to the envelopes, I look at both. One says “open me” on it. The other is sealed and taped, chunky and heavy.

Shrugging, I focus on the ‘open me’ one and, well, open it.

I peer inside and then pull out a thick document with a handwritten note paperclipped to it.

My heart skips a beat when I see it is scrawled in Adam’s handwriting.

MOR,

If this has been delivered to you, I’ve been arrested. Don’t believe a word you hear about me. It’s all lies. But the fuckers will have frozen the bank accounts, so check the other envelope for some cash. Don’t use it all. In fact, hardly spend any of it, only on necessities. We’ll need it when we get out. Also, the house is in your name, so they can’t touch it. The deed is enclosed. Keep it safe.

Don’t worry about the lockbox, just keep it in a safe place and forget about it. Don’t mention it to anyone.

I’LL BE SEEING YOU SOON, GIRL.

Adam.

I gulp.

Trying not to glance at the lockbox, I flick through the documents attached to the letter that is less than remorseful or concerned about me in any way whatsoever. Also, it confuses me a bit. If he signed those divorce papers, shouldn’t he have sent this to his floozy on the side? Why me? Unless he didn’t get around to changing the instructions to whomever had this delivered.

God. How did I ever think he loved me? The more I learn about him, the more I think about the things he did, I know it was all a ruse.

And this proves it.

But *why*?

Maybe because I was a naïve idiot he could manipulate when things went south for him. Someone he could rely on to watch his drug money and keep

his house when everything else went to hell.

How pathetic can one girl be?

Very, unfortunately.

Feeling a whole load less than my thirty-one years, I clench my jaw so I don't cry again and chuck the papers back into the box in disgust, at myself, at Adam, at everyone. Packing it back up, I close the lid and pick it up, I climb off the bed, place it in the bottom of the wardrobe, and put my bag on top of it as if that's going to help me forget about it and him and my happy life that has gone down the crapper so fast, my head is still spinning.

It's not.

I should sell the house and jet off to Aruba with the proceeds, but it was bought with drug money. I don't want any part of any of it. I should call Clive and hand it all over, but I can't face him yet. Maybe that Commander who is built like a tree will take my call? The one whose cologne smells like Christmas.

I shake my head and decide that I'll think about it after I've wallowed and eaten chocolate until I feel sick and made crisp crumbs in my bed that I don't have to tidy up immediately, even if it means sleeping on them.

I'm free.

I'm hurt and embarrassed, and I don't think I will ever get over this betrayal or the knowledge that my happy life was all a farce.

But a win is a win.

My head can see that I'm better off.

I just need to heal my heart so it can catch up and maybe, one day, move forward, divorced and alone.





## ELIJAH

Sitting in the living room, across from the fifth woman we've seen today, I feel like this isn't going as well as I'd hoped, but exactly in line with how I'd expected.

Every one of them is falling flat for me. Kaleb is slightly more enthusiastic, asking questions. Dylan, on the other hand, is glaring out of the window and hasn't bothered to ask anything or even acknowledge any of them except for a cursory wave, if they're lucky.

The dating agency I'd contacted was slightly shocked at my request to have whomever they found interested in our proposal sent over to the house for interviews rather than actual dates, but this is quicker and weeds out the ones I know aren't a good fit. Both the dating agency and I were even more shocked at the sheer volume of women who lined up for this shitshow. Here we thought no woman in their right mind would want to date three guys in their thirties, and, ahem, extremely early forties, but here we are on prospect number five, with several more to go.

Now all I can think about is that song from 1999 sung by Lou Bega, Mambo No. 5.

Trying desperately to force back the snicker of how utterly appropriate, and at the same time *inappropriate* that is, I focus on the slight, blue-eyed blonde in front of me. But all I can think about are Morgan's forest-green eyes once I shove the song from my mind.

Number five is the best one we've come across so far today, even though we still have three more to go. She ticks a lot of boxes, so I push Morgan aside and say, "What are your thoughts on the cost-of-living crisis right

now?”

Kaleb groans softly.

He knows it's a test, and her answer will decide everything. But there is no point in her being suitable in every way except for the one way I need her.

She blinks, looking confused for a moment. Then she smiles and shrugs. “Well, my parents are rich, so...”

It's the kiss of death, and Kaleb knows it as he sits back and slumps in his seat. Dylan's disgusted snort from across the room is audible. There is no way that we can lumber ourselves with a selfish, self-centred person who relies on her parents' wealth.

We aren't rich.

Far from it.

We can afford this house because there are three decent salaries coming into the household. On our own, we'd be living in one-bedroom flats in a deprived area of London, probably miles away from our work base in the city.

So the fact that she has no opinion of current affairs rules her out completely. “Okay,” I say, standing up, so she knows it's over. “We'll be in touch.”

She beams in my direction, before pouting in a sultry manner as she brushes up against me. Not even a little bit turned on despite it being nearly twelve months since I bedded anyone, I step back. In theory, my dick should be leading the charge, but it's just not happening.

I follow her out and open the front door for her, closing it again and then heading for the kitchen. Opening the fridge, I stare into the lit-up cold depths, searching for something, anything. It makes no difference; I just can't go back in there and face the other two guys. Not yet.

“This is a waste of fucking time,” Dylan says, coming into the kitchen.

“Hmm.”

“You know we should be asking Morgan the important questions, not these random airheads who can barely stand without their parent's money propping them up.”

“Don't,” I say as mildly as I can. “She is not the one for us.”

“She is, but neither of you are willing to even speak to her.”

“Because she is off-limits.” I slam the fridge shut and turn on him with a fierce glare. “We are done talking about this, Dyl. No more.”

“I'm going to that hotel,” he says defiantly, turning and marching out of

the kitchen.

I surge forward and grab his arm. “If you walk out of that door...”

“What?” he snaps. “Don’t bother coming back? Is that what you were going to say? Don’t be a fucking idiot, Eli.”

I growl and let him go roughly.

“If you walk out that door, I don’t want to know,” I say quietly after we glare at each other for a few tense moments. “Do whatever the fuck you want, but don’t tell me and don’t tell Kaleb either. This is all on you.”

“Dammit!” he snarls, angrier than I’ve ever seen him. It’s eye-opening, the depth of feeling he has about this woman we can’t touch. “Why are you so fucking scared?”

It hits me in the heart, and I sigh. “Because if we get our hopes up and then don’t end up with her, it will destroy us.”

Understanding dawns on his face, but it makes him no less determined. He will go to Morgan and work whatever magic he can on her. However that will play out.

But I can’t be part of it.

I press my lips together and disappear back into the living room to await the arrival of the next candidate, who will hopefully meet our expectations and then some.



## KALEB

**N**eeding to get out of the living room, where Elijah's stifling thundercloud expression is doing my head in, I enter my bedroom and shut the door. Locking it, I grab the towel from the radiator as I move across to the double bed covered in a green and red tartan. I climb on and lie down with my head on the soft pillows, draping the towel over my lap. Staring at the ceiling for a few moments, I lean over and stick my hand under the other pillow and pull out the Terry's chocolate orange that I specifically left the house for at the crack of dawn this morning to get. I haven't been able to get Morgan Happs's perfume out of my senses, her gorgeous face out of my mind's eyes, and with Dylan's news yesterday, it's been taking everything I have not to go down there, tell her she is better off without that prick husband of hers and claim her.

Peeling back the orange foil, I stick my nose into the chocolate in the shape of an orange and inhale deeply with my eyes closed. It has melted slightly from being under the pillow, but I wanted the smell where my head goes when I sleep.

I broke it apart earlier, so I reach in and pull a segment out, feeling it warm and sticky between my fingers. It makes my cock hard. I reach down and unzip my smart black pants, the only pair I own, as I prefer combat pants, jeans, or joggers, and pull my erect cock out. Stroking it softly with a soft groan, I lick the segment of chocolate, pretending it's the sensitive part of Morgan's neck where she would spray her scent. I whimper and tug on myself, coaxing my dick to grow stiffer in my hand.

"Yes," I rasp and pop the chocolate into my mouth, licking my fingers

clean as I pump away at my cock. Sucking the segment, coating my tongue with the sweet orangey taste, I imagine it's Morgan's clit.

My body tenses and my balls tighten, expelling my hot seed onto my hand and the towel over my lap as I come unexpectedly quickly.

"Fuuuuck," I mumble around the chocolate, biting it and swallowing with a grunt as my heart pounds from the climax. "Fuck, yes."

But, sadly, no.

This is as close to her as I can get.

Wiping my hand before I re-wrap the ball of chocolate, stuffing it back under the pillow, I sit up. Removing the towel and bunching it up, knowing I have to do laundry later anyway, I drop it on the floor as I do up my pants. Reaching into the bedside cabinet drawer, I pull out my sketch pad and pencil, admiring the quick drawing I did of her last night. Turning the page to a blank one, I start again. Capturing her lowered eyes, the slight stoop of her shoulders, her hair swept up on top of her head and those lips that I want to see wrapped around my cock so badly, I ache for it.

"Married," I scoff, the hurt over the only woman who has taken over my senses has to already belong to another man claws my belly, making me feel slightly ill. Thirty-seven years old, and I want to cry in a corner when I think about her.

I think about the candidates and how perfectly fine they've been.

Perfectly fine but not *perfect*.

However, Eli is ruining it with his questions that are throwing them off. They aren't expecting an inquisition, which is making it difficult to narrow the selection down.

But maybe he's right to want what he wants instead of settling. I didn't think I would ever understand why he would choose to be single when he has his pick of women. I didn't think I would ever be as choosy as him, but I can't get past knowing Morgan is meant to be ours and that fate has dealt us a really shitty hand here.

I sigh and cross my arms. I obviously don't know the ins and outs, but I know emotional abuse when I see it. She is damaged. She might never get over it. She might crawl back to him the second he gets out because that's how he's groomed her.

"Forget about that woman and come back downstairs." Eli's voice cuts into my thoughts through the closed door.

"How do you know I'm thinking about her?" I ask, getting up to open it

and lean against the door frame with my arms crossed.

“She’s married, and she is fragile. Broken by that dick. There is no future there with her. There is nothing with her. So forget her.”

“That’s harsh,” I say, even knowing I thought the same thing about her fragility. “She’s stronger than that.”

“Is she? We don’t know that. We don’t know *her*.”

“Then we let Dylan find out. If anyone can, he can.”

“How do you know he went there?”

“Because I know him. He doesn’t have the sense of steering clear of a married woman. I don’t mean that in a nasty way,” I add when Eli raises his eyebrow. “I know he wouldn’t tear a family apart, but he can think with his heart. He is young and chock-full of emotions, and he runs with it. He isn’t lumbered with the weight of needing to be sensible and righteous and seeing how this would not only affect her, but us as well.”

“Neither are you.”

“But I am. If the three of us went after her, who do you think they’d rake over the coals first? Hmm? Not him, that’s for sure. No, it would be us because we are older and know better and all that BS. Remember, I’ve lived this. I saw my mother be alone year after year, trying to hide who she is but it always ended in tears. I won’t do that to myself, or any of us.”

He regards me closely. “You really feel that strongly about her? You don’t even know her.”

“Precisely. We don’t know anything and that is making this whole situation worse, don’t you think?”

“So what are you suggesting? That we march down the road and demand answers from her about where her head is at? Come on, Kal. Don’t be an asshole.”

“I don’t know.” I push past him and disappear into the bathroom, needing to get away from him and his responsible attitude. He’s pissing me off even though I know he’s right. When Eli told me that Dylan had left, I knew exactly where he had gone and I’m rooting for him. Still, as much as I hope he gets the answers we’re looking for, I know it won’t make any difference, and even if it did, when Happs finds out, and he will, there will be fucking hell to pay when he comes for her.

And that is definitely not good for her, or for us.





## MORGAN

Crawling out of my bed around the evening of the next day, I cringe at the mess. I'm not a naturally tidy person, but it was berated into me by Adam when I first started to live with him. I really had to stop and think a lot of the time and go back to tidy up to the point where I became obsessive about it, so I didn't get whined to. Thinking back, it makes me so angry that I start to cry again.

"I don't give a fuck that there are crumbs in the bed or that the magazines are strewn about or anything!"

I twist my lips after yelling out to nobody. The people in the rooms next door must think I'm nuts. I walk away from the mess, leaving it because who the fuck cares? Not me, I can tell you that for free.

I crawl into the shower, feeling weak and slightly off. When I turn my head, I feel the twinge over my ankle where the anklet was. My heart skips a beat when my stomach churns. My marriage is unravelling, and it makes me so sad at the same time as being apathetic if that's even possible. I don't give a shit at the same time, it hurts like fuck to my heart and my whole body. I loved him. For eight years, I've done everything for him and for what? To be treated like a piece of shit at the end of the day. Sure, I was taken care of, wanted for nothing, and was looked after, but the little things. The tender kisses, the cuddling outside of the bedroom, small tokens of affection that I didn't miss because they were never there in the first place. Now, it's all I can think about.

With a low growl, I snap off the taps and exit the shower under a cloud. I don't want to think about him. I want to be free of him. I know if he arrived

here now begging me to go back, I wouldn't.

In theory.

I suppose I don't know what I would actually do, and that's what scares me. Would I go back to him because I'm too scared to be on my own? Starting over terrifies me. I don't think I can actually do it. Not that I have much choice if he's stuck in jail, but what if he gets out and comes for me? If he even does. He wants a divorce and has a new woman and their son. He'll come for his money and the divorce papers, of that I'm sure, but *me*? The fact that I don't even know the answer to that question is what hurts the most. I gave him *everything*.

Feeling so low and alone, I get dressed in a pair of black jeans and the same long-sleeved tee I slept in. Again, who cares? I need to find where there's a laundrette around here soon. But for now, I'll have to re-wear what I can, when I can.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, I make a snap decision. I'm in too bad of a place to wallow up here on my own. I need not to have company but to be around people, so I don't do something stupid, like pack up and go home.

The bar area downstairs is cosy but not stifling, according to the leaflet on the dresser. Maybe I could grab a drink and something hot to eat while I'm down there.

Slipping my trainers on, I head out, sliding the keycard, my phone, and the debit card into the back pockets of my jeans.

Minutes later, I'm sitting at the end of the bar, far enough away from a couple of businesspeople on their laptops and phones, having an end-of-day beer.

"White wine," I murmur to the guy behind the bar when he asks. "Are you doing food?"

He slides a menu across to me, and I peruse it while also thinking of what I should text to my parents. If I should at all.

I end up ordering a hot roast beef sandwich, not really feeling like anything else, and wait for it to arrive, tapping my fingers on the dark wood of the bar with one hand while the other cradles the cheap glass of wine.

"Morgan."

The sound of my name freezes my tapping fingers, and I hunch further down into the seat, ignoring whoever it is, hoping they will go away when I don't respond.

No such luck.

He drags a bar stool over next to mine and sits down facing me, leaning his elbow on the bar, his fingers under his chin.

“I know it’s you; I’d recognise you anywhere.”

I turn with a stern expression to the officer who threw me into his car the other night. “Fuck off, Officer Dylloh.”

“Ouch,” he says before he bursts out laughing. “Geez, you seriously know how to hit a guy where it hurts. How long have you been sitting on that one?”

“I thought of it in the car.”

“Quick, aren’t you?”

Narrowing my eyes at him briefly, I turn back to my drink.

“What are you doing here, anyway? Don’t you live in Kensington?”

The question hangs there like a stinky, lingering fart, heating my cheeks as I don’t know how to answer him.

“Waiting for someone,” I lie, eventually, but he’s not daft. He knows it’s a fib.

“Pint of bitter,” he murmurs as the bartender comes over to take his order. “I’m sorry,” he adds, leaning forward.

I shake my head, sneaking a glance at him again before I tear my gaze away from his too-cute face. “Don’t.” My voice quivers, and I curse myself for being weak.

“I know this has been a difficult time for you, but you can talk to me...”

His words suddenly light a fire under me. One that has been simmering since I was left standing in Castello’s like a fuckwit while my husband was arrested for being a murdering drug seller.

“Difficult?” I roar, getting in his face. “You think this has been *difficult* for me? Losing everything, my husband, my home, my sense of everything?” I grab his shirt front, standing on the rail of the bar stool, so I loom over him. I bend down so close to him that I can smell his subtle aftershave that smells like sandalwood and embers. “You don’t even know the meaning of the word difficult, you sanctimonious prick!”

Everyone is staring at me acting like a crazy person, but I don’t give a shit. He has no right to come in here and speak to me like he knows what I’m going through.

He grabs my fingers and gently peels my hand out of his shirt. “I know,” he says quietly. “I’m sorry.”

“Stop apologising! *You* didn’t do anything wrong. The more you

apologise, the angrier I get, just stop it. Stop it!”

My cheeks are flushed with heat, and I’ve started sweating. My hands are shaking as I yank back the one he has hold of. It feels too perfect, too comfortable, too *comforting*. I sit heavily and pick up my wine, glugging back the rest of the nearly full glass in one sitting. It burns my throat and my nasal passages when I swallow it, and almost gag on it but keep it down by the sheer force of will that has come from my anger.

I glare into his light brown eyes. My head goes fuzzy, and I lower my gaze. “I’m sorry,” I murmur, feeling like an idiot.

He snorts. “You definitely don’t have anything to apologise for. I’m glad you got angry. You should be. That bellend completely fucked up by doing this and losing you.”

I meet his gaze again.

He narrows his eyes. “Did he lose you, Morgan?”

“I don’t know,” I whisper. “How can I answer that? I’m married to him. I love him.” But even as I say it, I know it’s over. It has to be. He cheated on me and had a son with her while he was selling drugs that are killing people. It practically rips my heart out, and with a sob, I scramble off the stool and head for the stairs, needing to get away from him and back to my room. This was a mistake. I wasn’t ready to face people, and I wasn’t ready to talk about this.

“Morgan, wait,” Dylan calls after me, following me into the reception area.

“No, go away. Leave me alone.” I keep moving towards the stairs, thankful I only have one flight to run up before I reach the safety of my room and my bed.

To my shock, he follows me. He catches up with me outside my room.

“Stop!” I say, putting my hand up.

“Please, Morgan. I hate that you’re hurting so badly.”

It takes me aback. “Why do you care so much?”

“I do care about you. You don’t deserve any of this.”

It’s more than I can bear. The kindness in his tone is my undoing. I let the tears escape and roll down my cheeks as he takes me in his arms. I lean against him, bunching my hands into his shirt again as I weep. He kisses the top of my head, which only makes me cry harder. The tenderness that was lacking in my marriage becomes even more glaring that this complete stranger can give it to me without even knowing me.

I look up at him, and everything I felt about my husband disintegrates in that one moment. My stomach clenches, and I feel sick and lightheaded as my vows and my love unravel, but at the same time, I feel like a weight has been lifted. I rise up on my tiptoes, bunching my hands tighter into his shirt and slam my lips against his, thrusting my tongue into his mouth to devour him with a kiss filled with more passion than I ever had from Adam. It is the final nail in the coffin.

I know he never loved me.

This just proves it.



## DYLAN

**M**y cock jumps to attention as my heart bangs against my ribs. Morgan's tongue in my mouth is exactly how I imagined it. I can *taste* her. It is beyond erotic, but as much as I want to pursue this, and however much I want her, I force myself on a cellular level to pull back, breathless, and so aroused, I want to cry.

"I need an answer," I practically whimper against her lips.

Her breath is warm on my damp mouth, panting softly as she cups my face.

"I know," she whispers. "The answer is yes. He has lost me, but..."

"I know." I pull back from her and drop my hands from her waist.

"I'm sorry."

"No, please, you have nothing to apologise for." My heart is breaking, but I know this is the right thing deep down. She might have decided that her husband has lost her, but she can't just switch off the feelings. It doesn't work like that. I wish to God it did, but these things take time. Maybe in a few years, depending on where she is emotionally. It has taken this kiss, this one perfect kiss with her, for me to realise that I, we, can't pursue her.

"The feelings for him are unravelling," she blurts out frantically. "I'm divorcing him."

She chews her lip nervously.

Her words sink in, and a glimmer of hope raises its head again. I try to push it back with all my might, but I'm just not strong enough. I can't do it.

"Okay," I murmur. "It's okay. You don't need to..."

"I want to. I don't want you to think that this kiss meant nothing. Fuck."



She looks away; her expression is despondent.

“I know it meant everything to me.” I say this so she knows how I feel without actually telling her and putting her in an even more awkward position.

She gives me a wobbly smile and pulls the room keycard out of her back pocket. “You’re sweet. Thank you for understanding.”

I nod, unable to form words. I will choke on them, especially if I have to lie and tell her that it’s nothing to worry about.

“Take care,” she mutters and disappears into her room.

It’s like a knife to the heart. I don’t know what to do except move away from her room and try to outrun the overload of emotions.

Before I hastily take the stairs, wondering what the fuck I’m going to tell Eli and Kaleb, I slip my card under her door so she can ring me if she needs or wants to. Do I mention this or not? Is it worth waiting for her? She didn’t say to, or give me any indication that we should.

“Fuck,” I mumble and leave the hotel quickly, drawing in a deep breath of cold fresh air to clear the scent of her sweet perfume from my nose.

I make my way back to the house quickly and steadily, almost marching along, my head in a total clusterfuck.

I burst through the front door and head straight for the stairs when Eli stops me.

“Dylan.”

I can tell by the tone of his voice that he is beyond pissed off.

“What?”

“Don’t give me attitude,” he says, coming closer.

“Look, I need to get upstairs and out of the way.” I’ve laid it down; it’s up to him now to leave it or pursue it, in which case I won’t be responsible for my actions or my words.

“We need you to come in here and meet this woman,” he states, crossing his arms defensively.

“Nope. Not doing that.” Is he fucked in the head?

“Now.”

It’s bordering on an order, but unless he pulls rank on me officially, I’m going to feel free to ignore him.

“Look, I don’t want to. I just want to go upstairs and get out of the way.” I hover on the first step, my hand resting on the polished wood bannister. He didn’t want to know, and the last thing I want to do is go into an explanation

of what happened at the hotel. There is nothing to tell right now. I want to tell them what she said, but what would be the point without having a clarification on what she *actually* said. I should've stuck around and pushed her, but I didn't want to. She's been through enough without me haranguing her on what she does or doesn't feel for me. And it is *me*. Kaleb spoke to her for five minutes, and Eli was probably so off-putting when he drove her home that she decided he was a bellend and that was that. All things that need rectifying *if* she were to give me a chance.

He moves in closer, his eyes narrowed. I move up a step, but then he is in front of me, gripping my arm tightly. He inhales deeply, a low growl rumbling out of his chest to echo around the entrance hall, which brings Kaleb to us almost instantly.

"What is it?" Kal asks.

"Nothing," I mutter. "Honestly, it's nothing. Leave it."

"Nothing," Eli says flatly.

I can see Kal inching closer. I move up another step. We need him to be the voice of reason between me and Eli. The fact that I'm even thinking about being reasonable is all down to Morgan. I'm not a hothead, but I don't analyse either. I just do. But doing isn't the right thing here. I thought it was, but when I saw her anger and her pain, it just swept everything else away and made me see sense again. She *is* married. She might not want to be, but until that and her feelings change, leaving her free to be with someone else, there is fuck all we can do except wait. And I'm going to wait. I know that much from my bracing walk home. If that means I wait alone, then so be it.

More and more irrational thoughts and decisions filter through my head, but it's unavoidable. Morgan has made it impossible for me to walk away from her, and to be frank, I think she needs me to be exactly where I am. Waiting in the wings, knowing I'm on *her* side.

Trying to convince the two men in front of me is going to be no joking matter. In fact, I don't think they are going to feel the same way about this as I do, at all.



## KALEB

**D**ylan is acting really weird. Even for him. It's shady as fuck, but I can't read him. Not from this far away.

He looks like he's been run over by a steam train.

"Kaleb," Eli grits out. "Please go and ask the woman in the living room to leave."

"Yep." This is so awkward. There is no way we want a potential girlfriend to be thrust into the middle of this shitshow.

I hear Eli growl to Dylan to go upstairs and get his head out of his arse as I disappear into the living room.

The woman smiles up at me. She is really sweet and might've passed Eli's cost of living crisis test. But even I know that something is missing.

"Something's come up," I say, crossing over to her. "Would you mind if we reschedule the rest of this for tomorrow if that's convenient for you?"

"Of course," she says, standing up. "Same time?"

"Yes, that's fine." I lead her back into the entrance hall, glad to see that the other two have dispersed.

Letting her out of the house, I close the door and lean against it, suddenly feeling like I'm missing out on this big thing in our lives. But it's in my nature to be the responsible one. Even as a child, I was this way. I was the one who tidied up and did my homework without being asked to. I chipped in, and my mum appreciated it, so it was reward enough to have her thanks and praise.

Pushing off from the door, I realise I'm curious about what happened with Dylan and Morgan. I head up the stairs, assuming Eli followed Dylan,

and I find the two of them clustered in Dyl's room while he strips off.

"You said you didn't want to know," Dylan says, unashamed of being naked in front of us.

Not that I give a crap, anyway. Once we find our woman, we will be naked in front of each all the time.

"I changed my mind," Eli says quietly. "Something happened that has shaken you and I need to know what it was."

"We kissed."

Silence descends. I chew the inside of my lip with a heavy sigh. "Dylan. That was inappropriate. She is married."

"Not anymore. Not in her mind," he says. "*She* kissed me, and I stopped her to make sure she knew what she was doing. I spoke to her a bit, and she said that her husband has lost her, and she is done with him. Good on her, I say. That wanker cheated on her and had a child, not to mention is one of London's biggest crims."

That hangs there like a thick rain cloud, waiting to burst and pour freezing cold rain all over us.

"Well, shit." I cross my arms. "What does she mean she is done with him?"

"It doesn't matter!" Eli roars, overly sensitive about this.

"She said she is divorcing him." Dylan presses on, regardless of Eli's temper.

"Wow," I mutter. "Okay...wow. That is...quick...."

"Right?" Dylan replies. "She doesn't deserve to be tied to him any longer. It's not fair when we could have her and cherish her like the gorgeous woman she is. She needs to lose that fucker, fast."

"Eli," I say. "What are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking that nothing has changed. It's been a few days, for fuck's sake. She is still married to him, and even if she gets divorced tomorrow, we can't just demand she marry us and love us. Not to mention how it looks..." He looks vastly uncomfortable as he says that.

"How it looks?" I explode, sore on this subject due to my mum. "Fuck how it looks. If we can care for her, and she wants to let us, fuck society."

"I agree," Dylan murmurs.

Eli looks up at me from his place, slumped on the edge of Dylan's bed. "You're saying you think this is right?"

I clench my jaw. "It's a difficult situation, but we all know that the

women who came through here today weren't right. I tried to be enthusiastic, but something is missing. They aren't doing it for me."

"Because they aren't Morgan," Dylan says.

"I need to think about this," Eli says and stands up. He pushes past me to storm into his own room, slamming the door behind him.

"What was it like?" I ask. "The kiss?"

Dylan groans. "It was like kissing a chocolate orange while floating on a cloud with angels singing all around me and a warm breeze drifting over my soul."

"Jesus," I croak, feeling wildly jealous that he experienced something so profound. I've kissed plenty of women in my time, but I could never describe any of those encounters the way Dylan just did.

"Yeah."

We stare at each other for a while until it does get a bit awkward when it becomes apparent that Dylan's cock enjoys the memory of the kiss a little too much.

"Go shower," I grumble as he snorts with mirth.

"Will do," he says.

I step back and give him room to get past me to the bathroom.

"Well, fuck," I murmur. "This is becoming even more complicated."

He turns back. "I know. I can't get over the fact that her husband cheated on her. What an absolute fucker. Fucking clueless as to what he had. Fucking clueless."

"What we know about him just keeps getting worse."

"We need to make sure he goes away for life so that he can never hurt anyone ever again, especially Morgan. She needs him gone from her life. A clean break now."

"If that's what she really wants. We still don't know much." I tread carefully, not wanting to dive in headfirst, all guns blazing.

He agrees reluctantly, and we part ways, him to shower, me going to my room to wallow or fantasise and whatever Eli is doing in his room with the low thump of heavy metal filtering through his door.

This is all moving too fast, and I have a horrible feeling that if we make a move too soon, we are all going to get burned, Morgan included.



## MORGAN

**A** lone in the hotel room, sunlight filters in through the window, its rays sending beams of light dancing across the small space. Outside, the streets are alive – people walk by, cars honk their horns, and the air is filled with life. But inside this room, everything is still. I’m curled up in my bed, my mind spinning with thoughts of heartache and confusion.

It all seems too much, is too overwhelming. My chest feels tight, and my eyes are heavy with the weight of the sadness and despair of losing my home and my life and becoming single. Or *divorced*. That’s even worse.

I roll over onto my back and stare up at the ceiling before I close my eyes, pushing away the thoughts that threaten to pull me further down into my own misery. Opening them again quickly, my gaze falls on the magazine sitting on the bedside table. I grab it and open it up to the first page.

My eyes skim the words, but they seem to blur together in a meaningless jumble. Sighing, I place it down again, settling back into the uncomfortable pillows. I’m too sad to read, so instead, I reach for the television remote control.

I flick on some random show, but instead of watching it, I let my thoughts drift back to the kiss I’d shared with Dylan.

It had been unexpected.

Actually, unexpected doesn’t really cover it.

A shock is more accurate.

“Fuck,” I mumble, pushing my hand into my hair.

I can’t seem to get away from it for very long. It had been beautiful. So full of tenderness and passion that I know now was missing in my kisses with



my husband, which makes me sad all over again. Why was it missing? What is so wrong with me that he didn't or couldn't love me?

I can't answer those questions. I'm not even sure if I want to know. All I want to focus on is the spark I'd felt inside me when my lips collided with Dylan's. It was an awakening, as though something was stirring deep inside me. But what did this even mean? Was it just a moment of passion, or something more? And if it was more, what more was it?

Reaching for a packet of crisps on the bedside table, I open them, the crackling of the bag filling the maudlin atmosphere of the room over the low volume of the TV. Biting into one, the salty flavour ignites my taste buds and makes my stomach rumble. I haven't eaten properly in days. I didn't even get to eat my hot sandwich last night before I yelled at Dylan and then threw myself at him. What must he think of me?

Finishing the bag off, I throw the empty packet on the floor in a mess that would drive Adam up the wall...but I don't give a flying fuck. It can stay there all week as far as I'm concerned.

As I commit this small act of defiance, I feel something stir in my gut, deeper even, my soul, a feeling of excitement, of endless possibility if I could open myself up to it, I don't have to be stuck in this room forever, growing old and alone and in fear that Adam will get out of jail and come for his money and box.

And the divorce papers. So he can go and live his life with that woman and their son.

Groaning with frustration, I turn over again and curl up, pulling the duvet over my head and leaving the TV on for a bit of background noise.

Still emotionally battered and exhausted, I close my eyes, and it's not long before I'm drifting off to sleep again, needing it to recover from the events of the last few days. Dylan's autumn leaf eyes pop into my mind's eye. His slightly wicked smile, which speaks of a thousand promises, fills my dreams.

I feel my lips curve up as I drift away on a sea of half-awareness, guiding the course of my dreams to a very satisfactory conclusion before I zone out completely, only waking up for a few minutes to go to the toilet before I hibernate again, hoping I can stay in my bed for as long as possible before I have to emerge and start living my life again. Not to mention eat something proper, but that can wait. Blissful oblivion is my priority.



## ELIJAH

I have barely left my bedroom for the last two days, in a complete quandary over what to do about Morgan Happs. Every cell in my body screams at me to go over there and claim her body and soul, but my head knows I have to do what's right. This will affect not only us but her as well. And I don't mean in a life partnership way, but with how it will look. I don't want any dirt thrown on her because of this, and if people are talking behind her back because of something *we* did, I couldn't live with myself.

I replace the weights I'm lifting as my phone rings and pick up a towel to wipe the sweat away. I've been working out non-stop to try and ease some of this aggravation. I don't even know if anyone cancelled the woman who was meant to come back. No one has been near me since I stormed out of Dylan's room.

"Yeah?" I bark into the phone, even more pissed off that my workout was interrupted.

"Eli." Clive Harlow's voice comes down the line. "We have a small situation."

Instantly, I'm on alert. "What is it?"

"One of the fuckers is going to roll, but he has a request." He sounds shady as fuck. I don't like where this is going one bit.

"Oh?"

"He wants to see Morgan."

My heart thumps. "Which one?" I grit out, hoping with all my soul he doesn't say Adam.

"Pierce Smythe. He said he would give us their supplier and snitch all the

dirt on Happs if he can have an hour with Morgan.”

“And the others don’t know about this?”

“No. We offered them each a deal for a lighter sentence if they grassed. He took it.”

“Happs will kill him if he finds out.”

“Not our problem.” His cold tone sends a shiver down my spine.

No, it’s not, *but* it is Morgan’s problem, and she is *my* problem, so this all rotates in a fucking vicious circle.

“What do you want me to do?” I ask. He clearly has a particular assignment for me, or he wouldn’t have rung me.

“I can’t face her, not after what I’ve done to her. She has every right to be hurt and upset, and she’s ignoring my calls. She probably blocked me. I don’t want to go over there and potentially blow this thing up so that the opportunity vanishes into thin air.”

“And?”

“I need you to go to her and tell her that Smythe wants to see her in exchange for information.”

“Me,” I say flatly. What is he doing to me?

“She is living down the road from you,” he points out, I want to say *menacingly* as if I had something to do with that when clearly it was fate, or some other fucked up deal.

“Does she have the option to refuse?” I ask openly.

“Obviously. Buuuut, try to persuade her that it’s in everyone’s best interests to get these geezers off the streets, yeah?”

“So basically, that’s a no.” I exhale loudly. “This isn’t my job. I’m the one you call to take down the bad guys, not the one to talk skittish innocents into doing their civic duty.”

“I know, but I can’t do it, and you drove her home the other night. Didn’t you talk to her or anything?”

“No.”

Silence.

“Well, tough shit. You’re it.”

“Nice. I’ll remember this at Christmas.”

He lets out a loud guffaw, not giving a single fuck.

I don’t blame him. But I do not relish this mission. I don’t know what I’m supposed to say. Words are difficult for me, especially when thrust into a situation that requires delicacy. I’m blunt and to the point. It has turned away

more women than I can count. Not that *I* give a fuck about that. They take me or leave me as far as I'm concerned. I know it stems from having parents who didn't listen to me. Always looking for the next party, the next high. If I prattled on too much, they lost interest, and I didn't get heard.

"Fine," I murmur. "But I'm taking Dylan. He does the words. I'll just stand there and look pretty."

"Whoever, don't care. And he is *way* prettier than you."

"Fuck you."

"Byeeeeeee!"

The dial tone hits my ear. "You're an asshole wanker."

I chuck the phone onto the bed and head for the door. I need to shower if I'm being forced to come face-to-face with the woman I can't stop dreaming about. I wonder if this is fate. Destiny forcing me to make the move I'm so reluctant to make, the decision I couldn't make on my own.

Is Harlow really cupid in disguise?



A FEW MINUTES LATER, I'M BACK IN MY ROOM AND DRESSED IN MY REGULAR work gear of black combat pants, steel-toe boots, a short-sleeved black tee, and a black hoodie. I pick up my coat and sling that on, grabbing my black beanie out of the pocket, which I shove on my head.

I open the door to find myself confronted with the other two guys.

"Where are you going?" Kaleb asks suspiciously.

"We are all going to see Morgan Happs. Get ready to move out in five."

Two stunned faces stare back at me, and I realise my words are completely inappropriate.

"It's not what you're thinking. Harlow needs us to convince her to talk to one of the men in exchange for him rolling on their supplier."

"No fucking way!" Dylan snaps. "He will drag her back in when she is clawing her way out."

"Not Adam. Pierce Smythe. And it's not up to us to decide. Harlow gave us a mission, and we're going. You can do the talking." I jab my finger at Dylan.

"No." He crosses his arms defiantly. "What does he want with her?"

"Yes, or you can explain to Harlow why this deal isn't happening. And

who cares if we get the dirt?”

That gives him pause.

He realises, like I do, that we have been given an order and we don't have a choice.

“Did you make a decision yet?” Kaleb asks the question on everyone's lips.

“No, but maybe this will help.”

I shove past them and don't wait for them to catch up. That's up to them.

Hearing them scramble into action, soon we are heading out on foot on this freezing cold, gloomy winter day.



## MORGAN

A couple of days have passed since I kissed Dylan. I've barely left my bed, not even to shower. I grimace as I stretch and hear last night's room service plate thump to the floor. I feel like I have wallowed enough, and now I need to get up and try to move on with my life. The first thing, after a shower, is to do some laundry. I Google it quickly and see that there is one not far from the supermarket I went to when I first arrived. The next things on my to-do list are slightly more difficult to come to terms with.

I have to find somewhere else to stay. This hotel is costing me more than a few hundred quid, and I can't waste any more of it. I need to find a flat that I can move into immediately, and also a job. Maybe the other way around. I'm not sure how this works. I went from my parent's house to Adam's flat and then to the house in Kensington, so living on my own is something I've never done. I've also never worked outside of the babysitting jobs I did when I was a teenager and a young adult. I have no idea what I'm good at, or even where to start. All I know is that I can't stay here, jobless.

I stand up and take charge. I'm an adult, and I can do this. The sooner I can wean myself off Clive's funds, the better. He's been trying to ring me, but I've ignored him. It's not personal, really, I just don't want to speak to anyone.

I pass by the dresser and catch a glimpse of the card Dylan left with his number on. I can't decide if it is sweet or wishful thinking. Or both. He is a really great kisser, and I know there's something there, but knowing and pursuing are two entirely different things. I don't think I'm ready.





AFTER A THOROUGH SHOWER, I SEARCH THROUGH THE DRESSING TABLE FOR A hairdryer and to my luck, I find one. Clean and dry, I feel like, well, less than a million bucks, but better than a quid, so I'll take it.

Getting dressed after my hair is dry and sort of styled, as the hairdryer leaves a lot to be desired, but beggars can't be choosers, and I left mine at the house in Kensington, I open the wardrobe and pull out the holdall. I scowl at the box and slam the doors closed, wishing I could decide what to do about it already. Something in my gut is telling me to keep hold of it, and not just in case Adam gets out of jail and comes for it.

I stuff my dirty clothes into the bag and put my coat on. It poured down last night and then froze, so I know the pavements will be icy, but I don't have anything besides my trainers to put on my feet, so I'll have to tread carefully.

Shoving my hat on my head, wincing when I think about my hair, I shrug it off as a necessity. I wrap my scarf around the lower part of my face and put the cheap sunglasses on. Looking entirely unrecognisable to anyone who knows me, I pick up my phone, the keycard, and the bank card, placing them in my coat pocket, and then scoop up the bag. Heading out the door, I feel the nerves hit my stomach, but I power through, knowing this conscious first step to my new life will be the hardest. Before, I was acting on instinct, now everything is clear.

I cast my gaze around the hotel reception, which is fairly busy with morning traffic and slip out unnoticed. As soon as my feet hit the pavement, I go skidding. Perhaps after the laundry, I should check out some shoe shops and buy some boots with a good tread on them. Or I could go back home and pick mine up...

Home.

Home, no longer.

No, it's out of the question. If I even think about going back, I won't move forward. New boots it is, regardless, that I'm reluctant to spend any more of Clive's money than I have to.

I steady myself and look down, making sure to step where the pavement looks less slippery. The crunch of the ice under my feet is an indication of whether I'm going to go skating or not, so I step forward slowly, staring at my feet.

Startled out of my progress when a loud car honks its horn, I look up, my heart pounding. Glaring in annoyance at the arsehole in question, I keep moving, only for my foot to cruise out from under me, and I go sliding across the pavement, somehow managing to stay on my feet and not hit the deck hard.

It's only when a hand reaches out to grab me under my elbow that I come to a halt, gasping and light-headed with the shock. "Shiiiiit!"

I freeze as the hand tightens.

Closing my eyes, I send up a silent prayer. *Please, please, don't let it be Adam.*

"Morgan Happs?" a deep voice that sounds somewhat familiar echoes all around me in my panic.

I turn my head to stare into the amused, forest-green eyes of Commander Christmas Candle as his grip on my arm tightens further and the scent of his aftershave washes over me.

"No," I bleat and yank my arm out of his grasp, turning to scurry away as fast as the icy pavement will let me.

Which is about the pace of a snail but also sends me skidding in my trainers past a lamppost. I flail my arms wildly, grasping for anything solid, but I topple over onto my arse, landing in a wet pile of slush on the side of the road.



## MORGAN

**T**he cold, wet slush is seeping up to my waist, and my coat and scarf are covered in a thick, icy coating. I shiver and glance around, embarrassed to have been dumped in such an awkward position. I had been so careful to take small steps, yet I have still slipped right into this mess, thanks to triple C and his cronies.

To make matters worse, my hat has fallen off in the process, and I feel exposed and vulnerable. My heart begins to race as I struggle to get up from the cold, wet slush. I try to push myself up, but my shoes keep slipping on the icy surface.

“Easy there,” C-cubed says, placing his hands under my armpits to help me up.

“I’m fine,” I snap, but my feet will not find purchase, and I’m scrambling all over the place like Bambi on ice. It must be the most hilarious thing to watch from the outside, but to me, I want the frozen ground to open up and swallow me whole. My arse is soaking and freezing, which is not helping my mood, at all.

The more I fight him, the worse I end up, and then the absolute worst happens.

“Oww!” I cry out as a painful twinge shoots through my ankle. I gasp and hobble on the leg as another guy, the cute blonde one to whom I spoke very briefly in the station, kneels in the freezing slush to grab my foot.

“Are you hurt?” he murmurs.

“I broke my ankle a year ago. I think it’s okay, just twisted slightly,” I mutter back, utterly humiliated.

We are still standing in the road, but he carefully places my foot back on the ground, and together they help me up the curb.

“Dylan,” I say briskly to get that out of the way when I spot him.

He is staring at me in half-amusement, half-pity. I want to kick him in his nuts. Pillock.

“Morgan,” he replies. “I’d ask how you are, but...”

“I’m all kinds of good, thank you. If I may have my bag, please?” I hold my hand out to him. “Please,” I say again when he doesn’t respond.

The other guy elbows him in the side, and he gulps. “Uhm...”

“We need to make sure that ankle is okay,” Mr Christmas says. I’m struggling to remember his name.

I let out a whoop as he scoops me up, cradling me in his arms, our faces coming within centimetres of each other. I inhale deeply and nearly groan. My stomach has twisted into a knot. My blood is racing through my veins as my heart pumps faster. We stare at each other, and I get lost in his emerald eyes for one moment before he starts walking forward.

“My hotel is back that way,” I stammer.

“Our house is this way.”

“But...”

“It’s easier than carrying you back up to your hotel room,” he states, averting his eyes, his jaw clenched tightly. He is trying not to breathe.

“I don’t stink,” I point out.

“No, you smell exquisite,” he mutters quietly, but I hear him.

“What’s your name again?” I ask, to deflect from the sudden need I have to plant my lips on his.

“Elijah Miller,” he says.

“Well, Elijah Miller, I’m fine. You can put me down. The laundrette is here, and this is where I was headed before you accosted me.”

“Accosted?” He chokes on the word.

“Well, I wouldn’t have gone flying if it hadn’t been for you.”

“She has a point,” Dylan pipes up.

“We have a washing machine at home,” Elijah says, ignoring this exchange. “You can use that while we check over your ankle.”

“It’s fine.”

“I’m a fully trained casualty medic used to working in the field. I can tell you if you need to go to A & E, or if you need to rest it.”

It doesn’t look like I have much choice. He’s still carrying me, and I’m in

no position to struggle out of his grip and try to make a run for it.

Been there and done that and look where it landed me.

I shift uncomfortably in my wet underwear. I wonder if they also have a dryer I could use. But then horror strikes, and my cheeks warm up as the kind blonde guy reaches up to stick my hat back on my head.

I can't put my filthy three-day-old knickers and my top that smells slightly of BO in their washing machine!

It's mortifying!

"No," I say, definitely struggling now regardless of the consequences. "You can put me down and be on your way."

"Our way was to see you," Elijah says.

My blood freezes at that ominous statement. I breathe in sharply and get that gorgeous scent, mingled with Mai Tai hitting my nasal passages. Adam is a good looking man, a heady mix of masculinity and sophistication, but looking at him never really *hit* me in the gut like it has with these three strangers. My mouth waters slightly as I think about kissing Dylan again.

*Fuck. What is wrong with me?*

"Morgan?" Dylan asks, falling into step beside us. "Don't you want to know why?"

"Not really," I croak.

It obviously has to do with Adam and his arrest. Or maybe they were coming to arrest me for aiding and abetting or whatever that thingy is that sweeps up bystanders to crimes, innocent or not.

"I didn't do anything!" I blurt out. "Don't arrest me, please. I had no idea what was going on. Call me stupid and naïve, whatever you want, but I swear..."

"Hush," Elijah murmurs as we stop outside a nice-looking house a very short distance from the hotel I randomly chose to move into.

*Hmm.*

"We aren't going to arrest you," Dylan says as he opens the front door and lingers in the doorway as Elijah struggles to get past him with me in his arms.

He lets out a frustrated noise and Dylan grins and winks at me before moving aside to let us through.

It's all too much.

In my soon-to-be-divorced state, they're too enticing. Too alluring. Too tempting.

“But we do need to talk to you. Let’s see to your ankle and washing first, and then we’ll make a nice cup of tea.”

“Coffee,” I murmur, suddenly overwhelmed with relief that I’m not in trouble. Well, trouble that will get me thrown in the clink. I am *definitely* in trouble that has nothing to do with my ex-husband.

*Ex-husband.*

Fuck

I gulp as I think about him that way for the first time. But he is. Even if he wanted me, which I’m guessing he doesn’t, I can’t go back, not knowing what I know now. Not now that my blinkers have been removed and the rose-coloured glasses smashed to smithereens along with my heart and my trust.

“Fuck,” I mutter and blink back the onslaught of tears that pour out of my eyes anyway.

“Hey,” Elijah says, lowering me carefully to a comfy, squishy, faded sofa which makes me cry even harder.

The one in Kensington was white leather and rock-hard. You couldn’t curl up on it and be *comfortable*. I thought I loved it only a few days ago, but now I realise it was Adam who wanted it, so time on it was limited.

I’m such a fool.

I cry harder and accept the tissue that Dylan pulls out of a box from a side table. I gulp back a breath, choking on the air. Coughing and crying and spluttering, I made a complete idiot out of myself in front of these men, which makes doing my disgusting laundry in their washer pale in comparison.

“I’m sorry,” I croak.

“No,” Elijah says, kneeling before me and gently cupping my face. He wipes my tears away with his thumbs in such a delicate, sweet gesture, I cry even more. “You are safe here, sweetheart. Let it all out.”

I want to yell at him for being so lovely. Who is *this* nice to complete strangers who sob all over their sofa and blow their nose practically clean through the tissue?

But when Dylan sits next to me and wraps his arm around me, I fall against him and feel safe and cared for in a real way for the first time I can remember.

I was so blind and so dumb. I hate myself for buying Adam’s lies.

I know I have to forgive myself and get over it, but right now, I want to cry one last time before I put it to bed and find out what these guys want with

me. Hopefully, it's not something where I'll have to run because those pavements are a hazard, and I've risked enough already.





## MORGAN

**P**ulling myself together after a few minutes of extreme self-pity, I pull away from Dylan and meet Elijah's gaze. He is staring at me, his eyes a turbulent mess of emotion. He masks it well, though, when he clears his throat and removes his hands from my knees. Ducking his head, he removes my shoe and sock and starts poking at my delicate ankle.

"Sore?"

"No."

He nods as if that's good.

I glance up as the blonde one, a slightly amused expression on his handsome, chiselled face. "I put your washing in with mine. Hope that's okay. I was doing a load anyway."

My mouth drops open in horror. "What?" I squeak, jumping up. "No, that wasn't necessary..."

"It's done," he says. "I'm Kaleb, if you don't remember."

"Kaleb. You really shouldn't have."

"Stop worrying about it. It's nothing."

But I can tell from his face it's not nothing. He finds something funny, but I can't figure out what. He and Elijah are making my head swim enough with their gentle kindness. I'm thankful that Dylan is so lovely, so I can think clearly around him.

"Sit, please," Elijah murmurs, still kneeling in front of me.

Gulping back my humiliation, I sit and avert my gaze to the floor next to where he is kneeling. He gently bends my ankle this way and that, assessing me and asking me questions.

He traces a finger lightly over the faded red welt from the anklet with a soft grunt. His hands are hot on my cold skin. I shiver when I think about him trailing them up my legs, up my body to cup my breasts before he sinks his cock into me.

Fuck. I've been without Adam for less than a week and already I'm thinking about my libido.

"Uhm," I stammer. "What did you want with me if it wasn't to arrest me?"

Three gazes land on me. I fix mine onto Kaleb as he seems the best option. He hasn't said much, is trying to keep his distance after manhandling my filthy knickers and isn't sitting next to me like Dylan, so I can stare at him without straining my neck.

Elijah stands up and holds his hands out for me to take. "Can you put weight on it?"

I glare at his big, manly, strong hands that are doing things to me and lick my lips. Hesitantly, I reach out and place mine in his.

It's like I've been hit with a thousand volts of pure electricity. I gasp when he pulls me to my feet, his gaze never leaving mine. His sexy, full red lips part slightly as he pants out a shallow breath.

"How does that feel?"

I blink. "Hmm?"

"Your ankle?"

"Oh, fine," I lie. It hurts, but I don't want him to waste any more of his time on me. I want to hear what they have to say, and then I need to leave before my body does something my head is going to regret. Severely, savagely, sinfully regret.

He narrows his eyes but takes me at my word. I sit again, pulling my hands out of his so I can replace my sock and shoe without grimacing with pain. I think I can walk on it, at least to get back to the hotel where I can call up for some ice and also rest it. I need to get busy with finding somewhere else to live and a job, but I can't do that if I can't walk properly. It's not efficient.

"Sooo? Anyone? Or am I free to leave?"

"Your washing hasn't finished yet," Dylan points out.

*Dammit.*

I'm going to be forced to wait for it or abandon my knickers and limited clothing to this lot. I chew my lip as Elijah inhales deeply.

“As you know, your husband and his associates are in some deep trouble.”

“Not my husband,” I spit out with more bitterness than I thought possible.

He blinks. I can see the thousand and one questions on his lips, but he presses them together and continues in a business-like tone. “Chief Justice Harlow...”

I scowl and cross my arms defensively.

“...offered them a deal,” he carries on as if a thundercloud hasn’t just descended in their living room to settle directly over my head.

He pauses as my scowl deepens. “What kind of deal?”

Suddenly, my hands start to shake, and my heart thumps erratically. ‘Deal’ usually means they get out in exchange for something else. Something bigger. I watch TV; I know how this goes.

Dylan’s hand rests on my shoulder, making me jump. I snap my head to the side, my loose blonde hair flicking me in the face.

“It’s okay,” he says. “He isn’t getting out.”

“But what then? What kind of deal, and what does it have to do with me?” I’m panicking now. Should I tell them about the box? But that would mean showing them the letter, and I don’t want to do that. I feel embarrassed that I let Adam treat me like shit for so long.

“One of them wants to see you in exchange for giving us some information on their supplier,” Elijah says slowly and carefully so that I understand his words.

“One of them?” I jump up again, wringing my hands in front of me as I push past him to cross over on my slightly twisted ankle to stare out of the bay window that overlooks the street. “No,” I stammer. “I can’t.”

*I don’t want to.*

“Don’t you want to know who?” Dylan asks quietly.

“I’m guessing it’s not Adam.” I bite my tongue to stop myself from blurting out my sob story to these guys. What do they care? They have a job to do, and apparently, I can help them do it.

“He is an asshole who didn’t know what he had.”

I turn and gulp to look over at Kaleb, who muttered these words almost reluctantly.

When I meet his gaze, I see something that I have never seen, and it makes me want to cry again. He has empathy for me. Not pity, not scorn, not anger. Understanding of my situation, however that is.

I can't tear my gaze away from his. His dark eyes are beautiful and soulful. He knows without me even telling him.

"He is a narcissistic, gaslighting fuckhead. You are better off without him," he murmurs.

I nod slowly. "You forgot liar and cheater."

"That too."

Swallowing, I rip my stare away from him and back to Elijah. "So I have all the information before I tell you to get fucked. Who was it if it wasn't Adam?"

"Pierce Smythe."

Okay. I wasn't expecting that. To be honest, I didn't know what to expect. I barely know him.

"Do you know what he wants with me?"

Elijah shakes his head. "Are you willing to find out?"

I turn my glare onto Kaleb, who appears startled that I singled him out suddenly. "Do I have a choice?"

"Of course."

"But not really."

His mouth twists into a sheepish smile. "Sort of. We really need that information. But it's up to you. You will be protected the entire time. I will be with you or Elijah."

"Or both," Elijah states with a low rumble that sends a thrill down my spine.

"Can I think about it?" The thought of standing in front of Pierce with these two badass, growly military type guys protecting me is something that appeals to my darker side. Maybe I should do this just to show Adam that I've moved on and have men who will defend me, not manipulate me. Not that I *have* them, but they don't need to know that. Maybe it's time for some manipulation of my own.

"Yes, but we would ask that you don't take too long."

"Got it, Commander," I reply with a mock salute.

He snorts softly with amusement, but I see the heat in his eyes. He enjoys me calling him that. I quite like it myself. It's all authoritative and commanding.

The tension dissipates, and Dylan rises from the couch. "Coffee, then?"

I nod. "Yes, please."

Turning back to the window to stare out of it, a tiny chill skitters over my

skin. My heart skips a beat when I see a big, black SUV drive slowly past the house, the tinted windows making it impossible to see in.

I watch as it rolls by and then shoots off, probably because they saw me looking.

Licking my lips, I turn away to see Elijah standing behind me, but a little bit away, glaring out of the window with extreme malice. He definitely saw what I did, and he absolutely did not like it one bit.

Shit.

I think these supplier guys just found me and my mystery box.



## KALEB

Dylan and I stand in the kitchen, the air thick with anticipation. The wind outside has whipped up, and the clouds have come scudding through the sky. The branches of the old oak tree on the pavement outside are waving about as if alive, almost like a warning for something that is about to happen.

It gives me the creeps. I'm not sure why, but something doesn't feel right. The silence is heavy, almost as if the wind has created a vacuum that cannot be filled. Dylan's presence next to me as we make coffee for all of us is comforting in the way that I'm not alone with these ominous thoughts.

I'm sure we're both thinking the same thing: what is going to happen now? What would Morgan, who has suddenly and unexpectedly arrived in our lives, do now? She hasn't run a mile, even though we haven't exactly given her a reason to stay. Well, apart from her washing. That was good, solid foresight on my part. Admittedly, I panicked and just chucked her stuff in with mine that was already ready to go. The thought of her lacy knickers tangling with my boxers gives me a weird tingling sensation that makes me want to giggle like a schoolboy but also to drive my dick into her like a man.

While I fill the kettle with water, Dylan gets the mugs, and soon the smell of freshly brewed coffee fills the kitchen.

But still, neither of us speaks.

Catching that perfect chocolate-orange scent, I look up and see Morgan standing in the doorway.

Her eyes are wide and emerald green, her face is pale, and her expression is vulnerable. Her hair is long and silky, and it falls around her shoulders in



gentle waves. She looks like an angel.

“Can I help?” she asks.

Dylan and I exchange a glance. We are both in awe of her. It’s a surreal feeling like it’s a dream, like she is a dream that I’m about to wake up from, and I can’t quite grasp her to cling to it.

“We’re done,” I mutter like an idiot.

“But you can grab the biscuits,” Dylan pipes up, a much smoother talker than me, it seems. Mind you, he has been around her more. Kissed her, even. That thought annoys the shit out of me.

She grins and grabs the tin from where Dyl has pointed it out.

Elijah suddenly bustles into the kitchen behind her. It’s not a massive room, so the four of us crammed into it is a bit awkward, especially as we are practically standing on top of her, panting like dickheads. I guess we are all hooked by this delicate creature and now we are done for.

Handing her a big black mug, she accepts it with a smile and blows on it gently. She takes a sip, and then she looks up and smiles. “Thank you,” she says. “This is exactly what I needed.”

We all beam at her like fools. Something has changed in the room since we all assembled in the close quarters. We can all feel it. We have been introduced to something new, something beautiful, mysterious and exciting. I am drawn to her in ways I’ve never experienced before. I know who she is to us. There is nothing we can do until she comes to the realisation herself, and time passes, so her feelings change. But she is our soulmate. Ours.

We stand there in the kitchen, just staring at her. I don’t know what Dylan, or Elijah are thinking, but I know that I feel something so powerful that I can barely contain it. I want to stay in this moment forever.

Morgan smiles shyly at us, and then she looks down into her raised mug, lost in her own thoughts.

“Morgan, would you mind if I had a quick word with the guys?” Elijah asks her suddenly. His serious expression sets off an alarm bell in my head.

I frown and place my mug on the counter.

“Sure,” she murmurs. “I’ll go and check on the washing.”

I point her in the direction of the utility room, and then we trail after our team leader.

“They’ve found her. And us,” he states without any beating around the bush, as is his way.

“Who?” Dylan asks.

“The suppliers, possibly, or maybe someone her husband has sent. Either way, the SUV that just cruised past the house wasn’t looking for the laundrette. They knew she was in here.”

“Fuck,” I mutter. “Have you told Harlow?”

“Not yet. Haven’t had a chance. I don’t want to frighten Morgan. I’m not sure if she noticed. She didn’t say anything if she did see them.”

I can’t help but notice that she is now *Morgan*. Not Mrs Happs. He is coming around, but it is still a moot point until she is ready, physically and emotionally. We can’t date her until her previous feelings dissipate.

I hope Dylan was right when he said it was happening. I look back over my shoulder to the kitchen, knowing there is no way I can move on with another woman after today. Fate has spoken and has chosen for us.

All there is left to do is protect her from whoever is after her, protect her at all costs from her husband and claim her when she is ready.

Not too much to ask of us who are already so consumed with thoughts of her. Not too much at all.



## MORGAN

Walking into the utility room is like walking into heaven. The cool air of the tiled room at the back of the house, where the washer and dryer are kept, hits my hot face like a kiss from the Ice Queen.

“Ah,” I mumble, closing my eyes and holding my sweaty hands out.

My eyes snap open, and with a loud groan, I put my hand to my head.

“No, this isn’t possible.”

But it is. I’ve had a migraine enough times to know that I’ve just started. I know my triggers and try to avoid them, so why has it hit me now? Maybe it’s the stress of everything that’s happened?

Flustered, I know I have to leave this house so I can curl up in the dark and sleep it off. Looking over my shoulder, chewing my lip, I launch forward to the washer. It clicks to unlock, having just finished with epic timing that doesn’t usually befall me. I can’t stay here while I’m battling a migraine. It’s inappropriate and awkward. I don’t know these guys, and they don’t owe me anything, let alone looking after me when I’m incapable of taking care of myself during the most intense times. I gulp when I wonder how this is going to go all by myself with no one to care for me. Adam has proven to be a huge dick, but he was capable of looking after me when the worst migraines struck. I need to get to bed and just settle in for the long haul, however long this takes to go away.

Panicking, I yank open the washer and drag the wet clothes out, searching for my own. I snatch them up, and I think possibly also one of Kaleb’s t-shirts that has tangled up in mine. I have to get back to the hotel and curl up in my bed to wait this out and hope I don’t suffer too badly, but that is

wishful thinking. It's already causing spots in front of my eyes and that is not a good sign. I pause, bordering on asking the guys to help me, but how would that look? No, I can do this on my own. I mean, that's how it's going to be now, so I might as well try to get used to it right off the bat.

Clutching my soggy clothes, I hobble over to grab my bag that Kaleb left near the dryer and stuff them into it. Turning to the back door, I slide the bolt back. Unlocking it with the key in the lock, I slip out, closing the door quietly behind me. I look around, finding myself in a large courtyard with potted plants that have been covered up against the winter, a washing line and a patio set.

"Shit. Shit." How do I get out?

Slowing down a fraction, I look again and see an arched gate in the high, red-bricked wall on the far side. I limp towards it and slide the bolt back before lifting the gate latch to open it. Looking forward as I get my bearings, I think I'm on a side street from the front entrance, so if I turn left here, I should be back on the main road. It's a straight road from here to the hotel, about a ten-minute hobble, probably.

Sweat is beading on my forehead under my hat, but I don't pull it off. I still need to be in disguise as much as I can, especially with that SUV lurking about.

Remembering that, I cast my glance around the busy street but see nothing suspicious, so I focus on moving forward and getting back to the hotel as quickly as possible, ramming my sunglasses further up my nose.

By the time I burst through the reception door, I'm a complete mess. The migraine has hit me so hard, so quickly, I feel like throwing up. I hold onto my stomach as I aim for the stairs, fumbling for my keycard in my coat pocket.

It takes me three tries to get the door to open, tears of frustration welling up until the green light flashes, and it clicks open. I drag the card out and stumble into the room, slamming the door behind me. I drop my bag, dragging off my hat and scarf to dump on the floor and strip off the rest of my clothes, feeling the cool air hit my fevered skin.

I sigh with a bit of relief and then fumble my way into the bathroom, my eyes half-closed against the light. I grab a sponge and run it under the cool tap, dousing my face and armpits with cold water, feeling it drip down my body in icy rivulets that feel wonderful.

Leaving the bathroom with the sponge, I cross over to the bag and

remove my wet clothing from it, along with Kaleb's tee. I place them on the radiator, still having the wherewithal to do this, so they don't go mouldy and gross while I'm curled up in my sickbed.

Falling into the bed and wrapping my blue blanket around me, I groan as the waves of pain hit me.

“Fuck.”

A haze drops over me, and everything slows down. I close my eyes, trying to force myself to sleep it off, but it doesn't work. That isn't how this works. I need medicine.

“Shit,” I mumble, my lips already cracked from me breathing heavily through my mouth, so I don't throw up on the floor.

However, the mere thought of that brings it to the forefront. My stomach churns, and I leap out of my bed, turning my twisted ankle more. I shriek as the sharp pain slices through me, but it's the least of my worries. I bend over the toilet just in time to see my meagre breakfast in reverse. With tears and panting, I wipe my mouth and flush, hoisting myself back to my feet. I rinse out my mouth with the small glass in the bathroom and then hobble back to my bed, hoping that this will pass before the usual couple of days I suffer with a migraine this bad. I can't do this alone. I can't.

*You can, and you will.*

“No,” I weep. “This isn't how it's supposed to be.”

Curling back up in my blanket, the pain eases long enough for me to drop into a daze before it returns tenfold, and I find myself back in the bathroom to repeat the process several times over before exhaustion, pain and probably dehydration drag me under.



## DYLAN

“What is it?” Eli asks as I’ve zoned out.

Something doesn’t feel right, and usually, I have a sixth sense about these things. I may not be a team leader, but I’m not ordinary by any means. Ever since I was a child, I could tell when things were going to go sideways. I knew when my dad was going to leave my mum for a woman half his age when I was thirteen, and the hits just kept on coming. Trauma response? Maybe. Or maybe it’s something that sets me apart from the other guys of this world and what caught Eli’s attention six years ago. He takes it very seriously, which is weird. Of all the men at the station, I’d expect Kaleb to be the one to have my back the most when it comes to this.

“She’s gone,” I murmur, turning and racing through the kitchen to the utility room. “She’s gone!”

The washing machine door is slightly open, and the back door is unbolted.

“Shit!” Eli thunders, coming up behind me. “How? They came over the wall?”

“Nope, she left on her own. Look, the back door is unbolted.” I move over to try the handle, and it opens wide when I pull it.

“Jesus,” he snaps. “Why? Did we do something to scare her off?”

I glance at Eli going into a slight meltdown with surprise. I’ve never seen him so panicked about anything.

“Who knows? Some of us were acting a bit weird.” I glare at Kaleb, who couldn’t have made it more obvious that he was into her in the kitchen



earlier.

“Don’t blame me,” Kaleb grumbles. “She is gorgeous.”

“None of that matters. I’m telling you that SUV that came past wasn’t lost. It was looking for her. And now we’ve driven her out of here straight into their path!” Elijah storms to the door, bolting out without a coat, but shit. Yeah. We all follow him because standing around here arguing about who drove her away is time wasted. Lunging for the door, I see Eli looking around the courtyard and then marching over to the gate. He opens it and sticks his head out.

“Definitely left on her own,” he mutters, crushingly disappointed.

His face is breaking my heart.

I ignore his tone and barge past him onto the street, running around to the main road and back in the direction of the hotel.

“She took her washing!” Kaleb pants, keeping stride next to me.

“And?”

“Something made her leave, but not in a massive hurry. She stopped for her washing.”

I blink. I don’t have a fucking clue what he’s getting at. I don’t think he does either, to be honest. I keep running with Kaleb and Eli behind me. Eli is breathing down my neck. I swear if the pavements weren’t so icy, he’d have shoved me out of the way ages ago.

When we reach the hotel and burst through the reception door, I halt and hold my hands up for them to stop behind me.

“Wait. We can’t all go thundering up to her room, scaring her half to death. Let me go. She knows me, and I know where it is.”

I avoid Elijah’s menacing glare. Yes, okay, I told them we kissed but neglected to tell them it was outside her room.

“Go,” he snarls. “If you need backup, we will be right behind you.”

I nod and take the stairs two at a time, not giving him the chance to change his mind. I feel like I know enough about her temperament to approach this with caution and not exactly expertise, but definitely more so than the other two.

I stop outside her door and breathe in as I hear retching noises coming through the door.

“Oh, fuck,” I mutter, placing my hand on it. “Morgan?” I call out. “It’s Dylan. I’m just checking to see if you are okay?” I scrunch my face up for sounding like a knob. Of course she isn’t okay.

“Dylan?” Her weak voice filters through the door. “Yes, I’m fine. Please go.”

“Are you sure? Do you need anything?”

“Please just go.” I hear the sound of vomiting again and cringe. I glance down the hallway to the stairs and wonder if I should do something unwarranted and something that will probably get me arrested. I place my hand on the door handle and test it, but it’s locked, of course.

“Morgan.” I rap on the door.

Nothing.

“Morgan!”

“Dylan, please just go,” she snaps.

I take a step back even further, chewing the inside of my lip. I’m at a crossroads and don’t know which way to go. I know we could and would willingly help her, but I have zero knowledge of how she would react to that. Probably not very well. But...she is clearly suffering. She has no one to ease her through this sickness bug.

“Go away,” she grits out. “I’m fine.”

I know I have to do as she asks. To do otherwise is a gross violation of her trust, but I can leave her with something. “You have my number. Ring, day or night, if you need *anything*. Got it, Morgan? Anything.”

“Grrrn,” she groans.

“Let me know you understood me.”

“Right, got it, Officer Dyldoh. Now fuck off, will you!”

I snort in surprise and walk slowly away from the door, not having a clue what to tell the other guys. If I mention her sickness, their protective sides will rear up, and it might not end well for any of us.

“Well?” Eli demands as I reach the bottom of the stairs.

I make a choice to protect her and them. “She’s in her room safe but throwing up a storm from food poisoning. She reckons it was a dodgy sausage roll she ate for breakfast that she bought a couple of days ago and left out in her room.”

He frowns so fiercely that I think his eyebrows are going to form a moustache. “What?” he snaps. “She’s sick?”

“Yeah. It’s not pretty.”

“You’re sure she wasn’t being coerced into saying that?”

“Not unless she was also coerced into vomiting while she was talking to me.”

His scowl eases, but not by much. “I don’t like this.”

“She said she’d ring me when she feels better. The best thing we can do now is to pick up some Lucozade for her and ask room service to take it up to her with some dry toast in a couple of hours.”

We lock gazes.

I don’t waiver.

Eventually, he huffs. “Fine. You sort that. I want to head back and look at the CCTV to see if it picked up anything on the SUV at the front of the house. Kal, ring Stewie and get him down here today to get that cam fixed at the back. I don’t care what you have to do. That is a massive blind spot, and this could’ve ended a lot differently today.”

Kaleb nods and pulls his phone out, disappearing with Eli, who gives me a grim look. I stare mildly back at him, not about to give the game away, and breathe out when they all leave the way we came. I could be right. Food poisoning hits you fast, but so does morning sickness. My cousin was a mess when she was newly pregnant and I swear, I don’t know how she survived it. It makes me feel like chundering at thought of Morgan being pregnant with Happs’s kid after all of this, but it doesn’t change *anything*. Without even asking them, I know the other two guys would step up as much as I would if that is what Morgan wanted. Speaking to reception about the toast and paying for it, I then run to the shop to get the energy drink and some paracetamol, returning to hand them to the receptionist to take up later as well.

I head into the bar area and order a drink, pulling my phone out of my back pocket to wait. I hope she does ring, just so I know she’s okay.

Thirty minutes later, I look up as Kaleb dumps a bag at my feet. “Are you convinced she is just sick?”

I nod. “Yeah, but I’m going to stay here in case that SUV shows up, ‘kay?”

“Figured. It’s your coat and some stuff to do while you sit here.”

“Thanks,” I mutter and reach in, rolling my eyes when I see a bunch of case files. “Tell Eli to go get fucked.”

“Cold cases always need fresh eyes. Might as well use your time wisely.”

“You can join him.”

He grins and waves, sauntering out, but I suspect he isn’t going anywhere either. We all know that Morgan is precious. Win or lose, we will protect her at all costs.



## MORGAN

I wake up from a fitful sleep where I alternated between tossing, turning and throwing up. This migraine is killing me. Probably not literally, but maybe? I glare at the bottle of Lucozade on the bedside table and the uneaten toast. It was sweet of Dylan to send it up, but I can't stomach anything. The paracetamol is much appreciated though, not helping as much as I need it to.

Grabbing my phone and squint at it, realising it's tomorrow already and bringing up Google to do a search for a chemist nearby that sells stronger pain medication.

I find one not too far away. Sitting up, my head swims, and sweat pools underneath me to soak the sheets. This fever is the worst. I'm starting to wonder if I have the flu and this migraine is just a side effect. Grimacing, I get unsteadily to my feet. Hobbling to the radiator, I grab the nearest t-shirt and pull it over my head. It's Kaleb's. It smells of fabric softener, which is comforting at the same time as nauseating.

There is no way I can get showered, dressed and walk down to the chemist, which is a good three miles away. I cannot get on a bus in my state. It would be asking for trouble. I'm going to have to place my faith in the cute, kind Officer to see if he will help me with this necessary endeavour.

Snatching up his card, I fall back into my bed and picking up my phone again, I dial.

It rings once, and then he answers. "Morgan?"

I blink. "How did you know it was me?"

"Wild guess. You okay?"

“Yes, but no. Is there any chance I could bother you to come over? When you have some time, of course.”

“I’ll be right up.”

The line goes dead.

“Up?”

I stare at the phone, not fully understanding what just happened when there is a soft knock on the door.

“Morgan, it’s Dylan.”

Frowning, I drop my phone and the card to the bed, haul my sorry arse out of bed, and stumble to the door.

I open it a crack and peer out.

To my surprise, yes, Dylan is definitely standing there looking like he hasn’t slept in two days.

“You okay?” I ask, shoving the door open and limping back to the bed. Seriously, at this point, I don’t give a fuck about propriety. I’m in pain and I’m nauseous at the same time as I’m starving and all of a sudden crazy horny. It must be those feverish sex dreams that kept plaguing me.

“Fuck me. Are you? You don’t look so hot.”

I give him a wry look. “Gee, thanks. Quite the charmer, aren’t you, Dyl-doh?”

“You know what I mean. You’re in a bad way. How can I help?”

I love that he gets right down to it. He knows I need help and is matter-of-fact about it.

I chew my lip. “You didn’t tell the others about this, did you?”

“I told them you were sick. Which apparently isn’t much of a lie.” He gives me a suspicious stare that makes me blush.

“Uhm. Thank you. I appreciate it. I don’t need an audience right now.”

“No need to thank me,” he says, hovering near the door, which he closed when he came in. “How can I help?”

He knows he doesn’t have to help me, but he is still here, ready to assist however he can. “You are really sweet, you know that?”

He snorts. “Not many say that.”

“No, you are. Sweet and kind. Here you are trying to help a complete stranger...”

“I know who you are, Morgan,” he whispers carefully. “I would do anything for you.”

His words take me aback. “What?” I murmur.

He changes the subject abruptly. “What do you need?”

“Migraine relief.”

“Can’t help you there, really, unless...”

“I need you to go to the chemist about three miles away to get me some stronger painkillers.”

“Ah, migraine. Okay. I can do that. Do you have the address?”

Closing my eyes, I nod as I thrust my phone at him.

“You’ll have to open your eyes for it to open.”

I frown and crack an eye. He is holding the phone up to my face, and I giggle. “Sorry.”

Eyes fully open, I stare into the screen, and it unlocks. He glances at my web browser and nods. “I know where it is.”

“Thanks, Dylan. I’m sorry I’ve put you in this position, but you are the only one I could call. I can’t go out there on my own like this...”

“Say no more. You did the right thing ringing me. You absolutely have to stay here. You’re in too much pain to go anywhere. I don’t know why I’m telling you that. You already know; that’s why you rang me.”

My amused snort ends with an epic groan as the pain flares again.

The strangled moan sets him on edge. “Jesus,” he mutters when I curl up in my bed. “Can I try something?”

“What?” I bleat.

I freeze when his warm hand caresses my forehead. “Do you consent to me touching you?” he asks.

My heart thumps. It’s been days since anyone touched me. Longer, that I was touched with affection or love. I can’t remember feeling this treasured by my husband, ever. And all Dylan did was touch my forehead and ask me a question.

I gulp. “What are you going to do?”

“I’m really good with massages, maybe I can ease your pain.”

“How?”

“Can I show you? It involves me touching you. Is that okay?”

I let out a small whimper. All I want, apart from the pain to go, is someone to care. I miss it. I need it. “Yes,” I murmur, as I close my eyes again.

He swallows and inhales deeply, gently rolling me so I’m lying on my back.

He reaches out to touch my head, gliding his fingers softly over my

forehead, and I moan as I feel his cool hands.

He gently brushes my hair away from my face and continues to smooth his hands over my forehead and my temples. He has magic hands; it's helping the pain. My brain is shrouded in fog. I cry out when he pulls back and shifts as if he's going to stop with the gentle massage.

I sigh as he continues to ease the vice-like grip my migraine has on me. He has selflessly given me what I need to end my suffering until he can get me what I need.

"Christ," he mutters, his voice quivering with emotion as his gentle hands work their healing magic. "You are so beautiful."

I try to ignore his words. If he carries on, I might get the wrong idea, and I can't do that. I need to protect myself.

But even my head knows it's too late. My heart has opened up to this generous, gorgeous man, and as I breathe slowly and quietly trying not to enrage the pain again. The feelings I had for Adam evaporate and I am no longer ripped to shreds by his actions, his lack of care for me and our vows. He doesn't deserve to have me mourning his loss. His idea of care was a cold washcloth on my forehead and closing the curtains. And I thought that was *good*. I mean what kind of an idiot am I?

Here is this man taking care of me in a way that Adam never did. It makes it even easier to let him go.

"Dylan," I sigh as the minutes tick away.

"How do you feel?"

"Much better. Thank you."

I can feel the pain ease up on my temples. He slowly withdraws, giving me the care I need and not just leaving me crying in pain.

He grins, that cheeky smile that makes my heart flutter all of a sudden. "You're welcome. I take snuggles as well as snacks for payment."

I snort and grab his shirt, pulling him down next to me on the bed. I turn into him and cup his face. "I have no words."

"You don't need them. I'm glad you're feeling better."

"How old are you?"

He frowns. "Why?"

"You look younger than I think you are."

"Twenty-seven. How old are you?"

"I turned thirty-one the day you arrested my husband."

"Ouch. Eli turned forty on the same day."



I raise an eyebrow. "Oh? Maybe it's fate."

His face tenses up, and his expression turns wary. "Maybe it is. I should get going, so I can be back before you need the meds."

He practically leaps out of my bed as I reluctantly let him go and I'm disappointed. I wanted more snuggles, and suddenly I'm ravenous, and not just for food. He has awoken something in me that I thought would never see the light of day again.

"I'll be back soon."

I nod, upset that he's rushing off, even though I'm grateful that he is.

He races out without another word, shutting the door quietly on his way out.



## KALEB

She took my t-shirt.

I don't think for one minute she meant to take it, but it's all I can think about.

She took my t-shirt.

It is now in her possession which gives me an excuse to go over there to take it back. Or maybe I won't. Maybe she can keep it and wear it.

I'm seriously confused. For the first time in my life, I can't make a decision and stick to it. I'm all wishy-washy, and it's irritating as fuck. But that is what she has done to me. Spending that small time with her has sent me into a freefall, and now I'm lost to her.

"Anything?" Eli snaps as I look up from the monitor where I've been combing CCTV footage for the past day. Eli got a warrant for every street cam in the area, somehow. Fuck knows who he threatened to get it, and I don't really want to know.

*Plausible deniability.*

"No, they are pros. No plates."

"Fuck!" He smashes his fist into the wall next to the hole he created a few hours ago when we were just as clueless.

"Can you stop hitting things, please?"

"Unless you want me to hit your face, shut the fuck up," he snarls, shaking out his damaged hand. His knuckles are bruised and bleeding.

"Nice."

He scowls. "So what now?"

The fact that he is asking *me* drives home how little we have in the way

of tracking down this SUV that is after Morgan. Ah, sweet, chocolate-orangey Morgan...

“Hmm?” he snaps as my mind wanders again to the woman who is consuming my every moment. She has blown me away. And she sees me. She knows I know what living with that asshole was like for her. She knows I don’t *pity* her, but I care, and I understand how battered her soul and her confidence is.

I hate him for it.

I’m usually pretty easy-going, for a tough guy law enforcement officer. Things don’t tend to wind me up as quickly as they do Eli. But this guy? I want to see him burn for what he’s done. Not just to Morgan, but to the people he and his dickhead associates blatantly and ruthlessly put in harm’s way.

“I’ll give Dyl a quick ring,” I mutter as Eli is actually waiting for something from me. “Maybe he’s seen something.”

It’s pointless. If he had, he would have rung, but Eli is about to snap every nerve he has if something isn’t done immediately.

I pick up my phone and watch him pace away. I dial, and it rings.

Then it rings some more, and I tap my finger.

On the seventh ring, and when it doesn’t flick to voicemail, I frown. “He’s not picking up.”

Eli spins back to face me. “Try again.”

I hang up and do as instructed.

On the third ring, he answers. “What?”

“You okay?”

“Yeah, busy.”

I hear the sound of the wind down the phone and cars driving past. I put it on speaker. “Where are you?”

“Running an errand.”

“You’re supposed to be watching Morgan,” Eli snaps.

“This is for Morgan. She was fine when I left her.”

“But you *left* her.”

“What did she want?” I ask over Eli’s comment.

“None of your business,” Dylan replies. “But this is essential for her wellbeing.”

Eli grunts. “You saw her? How is she?” His voice softens, which tells me everything I need to know about how he feels about her if I don’t already

know.

“She’ll be okay,” Dylan replies carefully.

“Okay, make sure you don’t leave your post again. Got it?” Eli says.

Silence.

Then we hear Dylan panting furiously as if he’s running.

“Dylan?” I ask, sitting forward. “What is it?”

“Get here now.”

The dial tone hits our ears in a harsh, loud *beep*.

We exchange a glance before I rise swiftly, and as one, we head outside, our feet thumping on the pavement as we race up the street to the hotel for the second time this week. It doesn’t matter what it is, Dylan wouldn’t have told us to move if he didn’t think we needed to. The only thing I can think of is that these guys have found Morgan. Panic sets in, driving me forward faster, trying to keep up with Eli, who is stronger and quicker than me anyway. His own fear has driven him to the edge of what he is capable of.

As the hotel comes in sight, we see a black SUV with no plates, pulled up haphazardly on the pavement and several men, if you could call them that, thugs, more like, enter the hotel rapidly and with purpose.

“Morgan,” I rasp as I push myself harder.

Dylan, while an expert in his training, is only one man. I counted at least four of them. Eli leaps over a dog’s lead, startling the pooch and the owner as I choose to go around, even though it costs me a few extra seconds. We burst into the hotel at the same time that we see Dylan lunging up the stairs, a carry bag swinging at his side.

The hotel staff are shouting at us and milling around, getting in the way.

Our only concern lies with the woman on the first floor, whose scream of terror that can be heard all through the hotel, slices through me and urges me forward.



## MORGAN

“**A** hhh! What the fuck!” I roar as my door is literally kicked in by a gang of dicks who look decidedly like they are out for trouble.

“Eep!” I shriek as they enter and pull my blue blanket up over me to cover my body.

Four strange men in my room, while I’m in pain, is *not* good. Well, it’s not good anyway, but this is worse.

“What is going on?” I yell as Dylan comes storming in with Kaleb and Elijah right behind him, swinging a carrier bag and clunking someone who instantly launches at Kaleb over the head with it.

“Are you okay?” Dylan shouts above the noise of a full-on fight. He punches another of the thugs in the face.

I gasp and rear back, getting to my feet but keeping the blanket held up to cover my practically naked body.

Kaleb kicks another in the gut, and he comes tumbling across the room *into my bed*.

It ignites my fury like nothing else on this earth. Without even a second thought, I kick him in the head with my bare foot.

“Get out of my bed, you fucking asshole!”

“Here!” Dylan throws me the carrier bag. I catch it, dropping the blanket and when the bed desecrator groans and tries to get up, I whack him over the head with a rather heavy bag that knocks him back and onto the floor.

“Nice!” Dylan calls and then gets a fist to his face, which busts his nose.

“Dylan!”

Elijah is swinging his fists left and right and the odds change. I stand

back, prepared to defend my bed and my body against all of them if they come one step closer. However, luckily for my body and the bed, the task force team are skilled fighters who soon have control of the other guys.

That is until my world stands still.

Distracted, I didn't notice that the man I whacked with the bag had gotten to his feet and pulled out a knife. He grabs me from the side and drags me off the bed.

I kick and scream, my bare legs going wild and riding up the tee that is leaving nothing to the imagination right now. He places the cold knife blade to my throat, and I freeze.

Weirdly, I'm not that scared, even though I should be terrified. This is more surreal than it is reality and I half wonder if I'm hallucinating with my mild fever.

"Give us the box," he snarls in my ear.

"What box?" I whimper, gripping his arm tightly as if I could pull it away and save myself. I'm weak, and the worst of the pain that Dylan eased is coming back tenfold. I expected a bit longer, but now that everyone seems to be in here, struggling and sweating, my brain slows down to the point of a complete stop. Everything starts to move in slow motion.

Elijah smashes the face of one of the thugs before he realises I'm caught.

Kaleb kicks one in the ribs while he's down before Elijah lunges at him to stop. Dylan, mid-punch, drops his fist, and they all turn to look at me.

"That's better," the one who has me states. His voice sounds like it's coming from a million miles away through a dense, dark fog.

"The box," my captor snarls in my ear again.

"What box?" I croak, feigning dumbness when really, I should be handing it over.

He digs the knife further into my neck.

I cry out and lock a frightened gaze onto Elijah's, but he is calm and cool, and it relaxes me.

"Tell us what you're after, and we can figure this out, just let her go," he says, holding his hand out.

"This bitch has something of ours, and we want it back," another of the thugs says, getting to his feet, battered and bruised from Kaleb's attack.

"I—I don't have anything!" I stammer. "Please."

"We know he sent it to you. Give it back, and you won't get hurt."

"Take your fucking hands off her or I will end you," Elijah growls as



Dylan and Kaleb prime their bodies, ready to pounce.

I try not to look at the cupboard where the lockbox is, but I'm not trained in being covert. I'm just me. My gaze lands on the wardrobe, and everyone sees.

The closest one to it rips the doors open and lets out a noise of satisfaction. He drags the box out and searches through it, discarding the letter from Adam and the deeds to the house.

"Take it!" I scream, just wanting them out of my room and out of my life with Adam along for the ride. This is the *last* straw. If I had any smidgen of hope that Adam and I could reconcile, despite everything, it is irrefutably dashed. He has placed me knowingly in danger and that is something that I cannot forgive. Not now. Not ever.

These arsefucks have the box now, which means they're probably going to kill me. Elijah isn't going to be able to stop it. He's too far away. I'm going to die without ever knowing my *true* fate, my true loves. It is them. I know it. It's as if I'm seeing everything from outside my body now and it's all crystal clear.

My heart doesn't just fling itself at every guy I come across. It knows. It wants. It craves. It has staked the claim on them, and the rest of me needs to fucking catch up.

My feelings for Adam have died. I felt it when Dylan was taking care of me. I want every trace of him gone from my life. I want the chance to be happy. Truly happy with someone who will love me and not just use me.

Seconds.

Seconds, mere seconds have passed but it feels like my life has flashed before my eyes.

"Please," I whimper. "Please just take the box and let me go."

My eyes snap open as he shoves me forward, walking me over to the door. The other thugs who are with him follow quickly, leaving with the box and leaving just me with a knife digging deeper into my neck.

He turns me to face the inside of the room, and then he gives me a forceful push, so I stumble forward into Elijah's arms as he is there to catch me.

"Go!" he roars.

Kaleb and Dylan lunge for the door to chase these guys down.

His body pressed close to mine, his arms wrapped around me, Elijah looks down from his considerable height and brushes my hair from my face.

“Are you okay?”

Dumbstruck, I nod. I want to tell him what I know. I want to kiss him and have him hold me close, stroking my hair while he tells me everything will be okay. He is my saviour, all three of them are and not just from these drug dealers who attacked me today, but from Adam and a life of misery that I didn't even know I was leading.

He wipes some blood away from my neck that is trickling down, his gaze hyper-focused on that one spot.

I think back to what Adam showed me of his love. It is pitiful. I didn't know any differently at the time. I accepted everything he said, everything he told me, because who was I to argue with him?

“Elijah,” I rasp and then my knees buckle.

He scoops me up and carries me back to my bed. He lays me down but then respectfully steps back.

“You're in pain,” he murmurs.

I nod. “Migraine. Maybe flu.”

His gaze rakes over my face, my body, exciting me in ways I've never felt before. He groans and turns away, punching his fist into his gut. He stalks off, slamming the door behind him, leaving me alone and terrified that those guys will come back because the lock is broken, leaving me even more vulnerable.

I open my mouth to call out to him not to leave me when it bursts open again, bouncing off the wall as I shriek with surprise, but when Elijah storms over to me, his face a mask of fear and desire all mingled into one expression that the I respond to with a loud, possessive noise that could only be described as a purr. He drops to his knees on the side of my bed and grabs my feet.

“Morgan,” he rasps.

We stare into each other's eyes, and we both know that we can't fight it. Fate is winning this hand, and there is nothing we can do but be swept away on the wave of destiny that has been thrust upon us so savagely, so sweetly, so unbelievably unexpectedly.



## ELIJAH

The way she looks at me leaves me in a state of perpetual awe. I hadn't wanted to admit it, but I know she is my soulmate. *Our* soulmate. I need her with an intensity that is almost tangible. I need her with a force that seems to be drawing me in like a tide, a force that is compelling me to ask her if I can hold her, even though I know that I shouldn't.

She still belongs to someone else. Even though I need her desperately, I know I can't have her. If I ask to move into her personal space, I'm setting myself up for heartbreak that I know will finish me. I will never get over it if I make myself vulnerable to her and she ends up back with her husband. I cannot allow myself to be the one who crosses the line.

Something deep within my heart stirs, begging me to tell her that we will wait for her, to tell her that my heart is open to her when she is ready to come to us.

She blinks. Her eyes glisten with unshed tears. Deep down, I think she knows everything I want to say but can't. She knows that our hearts are beating in the same rhythm and that we feel something between us that is so much more than physical. We both know this is fate, and we are destined to be together. But how? How can I say any of this when she is still wearing her wedding ring?

"We lost them," Dylan pants returning to the room with epically lousy timing.

He pauses in the doorway when he sees me on my knees, gripping Morgan's feet.

I rip my gaze away from hers and stand up. "Excuse me?" I snap, my

irritation made worse by the heartbreak tearing its way through my body. I can feel heaven within my grasp. My heart beats knowing I'm in the presence of *the one*.

"Lost them," Dylan mutters, his gaze on Morgan. "You can't stay here. If they come back and you're alone..."

"I have nowhere else to go," she whispers, her eyes still on me.

I know I should offer. They are expecting me to. But how can I be in the same house with her when she isn't ready for us? How will I stay away from her?

*You don't, fucking asshole. Take her.*

Grimacing at the inner thoughts that are urging me to make a choice that I will only end up regretting, Dylan does it for me.

"You will stay with us," he says, glaring at me. "I'll pack your stuff up while you get a shower if you feel up to it?"

I gaze at her. She lowers her eyes and nods. I stop the groan that threatens to come out. It will make it seem like I don't want her there. I do, so I know she is safe, but where does that leave us? Any of us?

"Stop thinking and move," Dylan mutters as he pushes past me.

Nodding dumbly, I take orders from my teammate. What the fuck is that all about?

I step forward to help her up, but Kaleb is already there, mooning over her like an abandoned puppy who has found his forever home. I watch them. She smiles up at him, and he helps her to her feet. He is gentle and loving, while he starts the shower running for her. Dylan is packing up her stuff, and I'm just standing here with my knob in my hand...so to speak.

"Wait," I say, turning, my mouth running away from my brain at a rapid pace. "What about your husband?"

Everyone freezes.

I hear Dylan's groan of protest.

She blinks again and purses her lips. "What husband?" she says and then turns back to the bathroom, walking steadily away from me after leaving me hanging with that question.

"What husband?" I call after her, getting my arse to move forward. "Adam fucking Happs? Where does he stand with you now?"

"Eli, shut the fuck up," Kaleb groans.

She gathers her inner strength as she faces me. She is grim and determined. "I have no husband."

“You are still wearing your ring,” I grit out.

She glances down and her mouth forms an ‘O’ shape as if she is surprised to see it. “Oh.” She blinks, the fingers of her other hand circling it around and around.

“Eli!” Dylan snaps. “Leave her alone.”

I zero in on him like a man possessed. “I want her to remove it so I know that claim is gone from her heart so I can replace it with my own. I want to know that she is walking away from him and her marriage, so I can make her mine,” I growl, grabbing his shirt and dragging him closer, taking my sudden fear and excitement out on him. “I want to go to that fucker and gloat that she now belongs to me and that he royally fucked up when he mistreated her, cheated on her and forced her to be alone.” I shove him away from me to a deathly silence, broken only by the water trickling out of the extremely poor shower over the bath in this dingy hotel bathroom we are all crammed into.

“Well, okay then,” he mutters. “Guess you’ve decided.”

“Guess so,” I snarl. “Anyone got a problem with that?” I glare at Kaleb, avoiding Morgan’s gaze altogether.

They shake their heads, completely gobsmacked.

Eventually, I get up the courage to look at the sweet, gorgeous woman who I’ve been trying desperately to respect and leave alone to grieve for her husband and her broken marriage.

She meets my gaze, bold and beautiful, fierce and full of fire. “Do I get a say in this?” she asks, but there is a sassy edge to it that is taunting me. She is goading me.

“No,” I snarl and turn to walk away, a smile growing on my lips as she snorts and giggles.

“Well, okay then, Commander,” she calls after me. “Guess that’s me told.”

My dick goes on alert, stiff and desperate to slide into her as she opens her legs for me.

I stop and turn around. “Do you still want him?”

Her face goes serious, and she shakes her head. “No. He is dead to me.”

Lunging forward, grasping her upper arms and crashing my lips against hers, she whimpers and clings to me, thrusting her tongue into my mouth as I explore hers deeply and possessively.

It is the single best kiss I have ever experienced, and there is nothing that will draw me away from her. She belongs to us now. She is ours.



## MORGAN

**T**his kiss is everything.

It's everything that was missing from my previous relationship. It's everything to my heart that craves this care and attention from a man who wants to kiss me. I deepen it, rising up on my tiptoes, ignoring the pain in my head that the migraine is causing, begging me to take these guys and claim them in every way.

As much as I want to do that to ease my heart, I'm not ready for that. Adam still has a claim on me, and until that is broken by filing the papers and starting the process, I'm not ready. Elijah's words both scared me and thrilled me to the point where arousal hit me hard at the thought of him taking me to his bed and claiming me. But I don't know how that works if I'm still technically married. Does that make me as bad as Adam for breaking our vows?

I just don't know.

With a sigh, I pull back, and he lets me, releasing me, the fire burning in his eyes, making this an even tougher decision to make.

He smiles a sweet, gentle smile that is in deep contrast to the scowl that usually adorns his face. "We will wait for you."

Five words that mean more than I can express in words.

I choke back the sob with a brief nod and watch him leave.

"Can you manage on your own?" Dylan asks quietly, knowing how monumental the last few minutes have been.

"Yes, thank you."

"We'll be waiting outside in the corridor. Take your time." He winks and



places the carrier bag he is clutching in the small white sink that has a crack near the tap. “Something to make you smile...”

My curiosity piqued, I wave them off, closing the door behind them as the wordless Kaleb leaves with Dylan. I guess there isn't much to say. It's all a bit of an anti-climax, and I hate that, but slow and steady wins the race and all that jazz.

I turn the lock and then switch the shower off. Cautiously, my curiosity piqued like crazy what could be so heavy that it knocked a guy clean off his feet, I reach in and pull a box out of the carrier with snort at what I see.

“Officer Dyldoh with the goods,” I murmur, lifting the enormous dildo and giving it a critical eye.

It is huge. Is he trying to tell me something *or* is it wishful thinking on his part? Either way, it brings a smile to my face, a genuine smile that I feel has evaded my features, my soul, in a really long time.

“Jesus,” I murmur, eyes wide. I unpack the monster cock and waggle it about. It definitely has some heft to it which makes it a veritable weapon. My eyes bulge when I wonder how this will fit inside me. It's definitely larger than I'm used to. My ex-husband, while quite skilled, wasn't oversized, that I know of. Adam took my virginity, and I've never been with anyone else, so I suppose I don't have a yardstick to go by, unless you count this dildo.

Licking my lips, I lower the toilet seat and sit, lifting my feet to place against the bath in this small room.

Feeling out of sorts with the migraine, the attack, and the declarations made, I lean back and close my eyes. I wouldn't say that I'm overly sexed, but these three men have drawn something out of me. Sex with Adam was enjoyable most of the time, but I spent an inordinate amount of time self servicing, so this isn't my first rodeo. However, it is my first time with a huge dildo. I daren't have one before in case Adam found it and went crazy. Turns out, he probably wouldn't have cared. Sighing and scrunching up my eyes as the headache pounds, I'm determined to see this through now that I'm halfway here. Inserting the silicone cock into my pussy, I groan as it feels really good.

My twenties were so sheltered living under Adam's thumb but now I have my thirties in front of me, and I intend to make the most of it. I want to experience all the things I never have, starting with this dildo. Thrusting it deeper, withdrawing to circle my clit and then thrusting again, I gasp, and climax quickly, trembling on the toilet as my thighs clench and I cry out

louder than I would've liked as I ride the high feeling both elated and nauseous as the same time.

Several minutes pass, and when I feel able to stand up, I turn to the shower back on and pulling Kaleb's tee over my head, I step under the feeble torrent, washing the dildo off as well.

Cleaning up quickly, leaving my hair for now because I want to get out of this hotel room as quickly as possible. The thought of moving down the road into the house where Elijah, Kaleb and Dylan live is exciting at the same time as terrifying. What will they expect of me and more importantly what am I prepared to give them?

Slipping out of the bathroom, I notice that the room door is shut, so I move swiftly to get dressed, noticing that the bed has been stripped and my blanket is rolled up on top of my bag. Dylan is such a sweetie. He is making it very difficult not to fall for him in a big way. Taking two of the stronger painkillers before replacing the dildo in the box, I shove it back in the bag and lay it on top of the blanket.

I smile, but it fades when I see the brown envelope stuffed into the bag as well. I don't know what to do about that house yet. Maybe the men can help me figure it out.

Dylan pokes his head around the door. "You ready?"

"Yes," I say, putting my coat on. "I feel a bit more human. I think the headache might be fading."

He nods but doesn't say anything. He picks up the bag and ducks into the bathroom to check for anything I've left, and then leads me out into the corridor. Kaleb is there but keeping his distance. I get it, and I appreciate it, he doesn't want to crowd me.

"Elijah paid up," Dylan mutters as we head down the stairs. "For the door as well."

"What? No, that's okay. I've got money."

He gives me a strained look. It takes me a minute to figure out why. He thinks I'm dealing with dodgy drug money.

"It's not what you think," I blurt out, my cheeks going hot with anger. "My uncle gave me money..."

"It's okay," Dylan says. "I'm not saying anything."

"Humph."

I throw him a filthy look, but all he does is grin at me, which makes it difficult to be angry with him.

He leads me to a big SUV that looks familiar. Elijah is at the wheel as Dylan opens the door for me.

“We aren’t walking?” I ask, slipping inside.

Dylan gets in beside me while Kalen goes to the passenger side and climbs in.

“This is safer and quicker,” Elijah says, setting off.

“I’ll see Pierce Smythe,” I say suddenly, not knowing where that came from.

I meet his gaze in the rear view mirror. Grim-faced he nods, and then breaks the stare to look back at the road. We fall into silence for the rest of the minutes’ drive to their house.



## DYLAN

I'm dying to ask her what was in the box. However, it doesn't take a genius to figure it out. Kaleb and I discussed it at length while we were waiting for Morgan, and we came to the same conclusion.

Drugs.

Drugs that Adam sent to Morgan and that she harboured for him because she didn't tell anyone about it.

This isn't good.

Not that I think she did it to protect him. She probably had no idea what was in it, but she didn't bring it to us, which is obviously a bit of a problem for *us* as well as her.

"Sorry about the box," she says as Elijah pulls up on the side road that leads to the back of the house.

Elijah tenses up and slowly cuts the engine. He turns to face her. "Do you know what's in it?"

She shakes her head. "No, but I'm guessing it isn't good."

"Why did you keep hold of it?" I venture now that it's out there, and I don't sound *as* accusing as I would've if I'd been the one to bring it up.

She sighs as we sit there in silence, the question hanging like a noose. Whatever she tells us now won't be able to be logged as evidence. None of this can. It's a small clusterfuck that we have looked the other way on because it's *her*. Anyone else would've been dragged to the station and raked over the coals.

"I hadn't decided what to do with any of the contents of the whole box that was delivered to me as I was leaving my home. I was in shock and

grieving, exhausted and pining, and then the migraine kicked in, and the days have escaped me. I know I should have said something, but I wanted to forget about it. The letter he sent was mean and cold, and I..."

"What letter?" Elijah asks, interrupting her. He glares at me.

So does she.

"Did you read it?" she croaks.

"I glanced at it, merely as I was putting it away," I lie. I read it. I read it three times to see if there was anything in it that would tell us something about the suppliers, who we had—sort of—and then lost, once again, because of *her*. Harlow is going to have our arses for this.

Morgan narrows her eyes and purses her lips. "So you know what a dick he is."

"I knew that anyway," I smirk, glad that she isn't monumentally pissed with me.

"Well, I wish I had."

I take her hand. "You do now."

We share a glance that warms me up from my soul outwards.

"Yep." She licks her lips. "I'll cooperate with anything you need to put him and his partners and anyone else responsible away. But to be honest, I don't know anything. I didn't even know he was cheating on me."

"That's the way he wanted it. He needed you on the outside to look after his assets," I say carefully, not wanting to upset her.

She nods and looks down. "Figured. But then he signed those divorce papers... God... You must think I'm such an idiot."

"No!" Elijah says forcefully. "Don't think like that. We don't think that about you at all. This guy was a pro. Master manipulator. He gave us the runaround for years. He shielded you, held nothing in the house. You are to never think that about yourself. He made sure you were protected from this for his own purposes."

"Do you know why Pierce wants to see me?"

He shakes his head.

"We will be with you every step of the way," I murmur, linking our fingers. I'm the only one who can reach her. She needs the comfort and I'm more than willing to give it to her.

I bring her fingers to my lips and kiss her knuckles. "Let's get you inside."

She smiles and lets me help her out of the car.

I'm in absolute awe of her. Older than me by four years, to me she is like a goddess, but one with an innocence that speaks to me. I want to protect her from any and all threats.

Elijah takes her bags and locks up the car, leading us into the courtyard and locking the gate behind us. Kaleb heads straight to the kitchen to make freshly brewed coffee.

"You are a prince," she exclaims, diving forward to grab the mug Kaleb holds out for her moments later.

He grins and gazes at her with the same dumb expression we all have. She is the final piece to our puzzle, and we have finally found her.

Elijah locks up the backdoor, sliding across the new bolt as well as the old one, turning the key and removing it.

She watches him.

"That's not for you," I say with a chuckle.

She snorts. "Oh, I don't give a shit if you lock me in. I'm not going anywhere. I wasn't cut out for being held at knifepoint by drug dealers. Nice and safe."

I smile, reassured by her words. We all are. "And safe you will be here with us."





## KALEB

**M**organ smiles at Dylan. It's a private, slightly sexy smile. I narrow my eyes and shoot him a curious glare. He avoids my gaze and that of Eli, focusing on her. Something has happened between them that is more than a kiss. Something soul deep and I want that with her, but I'm so dumbstruck in her presence, she probably thinks I'm a complete loser.

"Let's get you settled," I blurt out before anyone else has a chance to say anything.

She flicks her gaze to mine, her smile no less bright but less sexy than the one she shot Dylan in the heart with.

"Thanks," she murmurs and finishes off her scalding hot coffee before placing the mug down.

"What the fuck?" I chuckle. "Is your mouth made of asbestos?"

She snorts. It's pretty, and her nose wrinkles up in a really cute way. "One of my not-so-many talents."

"Don't sell yourself short," I murmur.

She shrugs, her face clouding over. "Didn't get too much in the way of praise over the last few years unless he wanted something, or to distract me, I guess."

"Fucker," Elijah growls before either of us can.

She smiles sadly and bends down to retrieve her bag where Dylan placed it next to him. I snatch it up before she can with a winning smile.

"Thanks," she says and follows me as I lead her out of the kitchen without another word. I try to remain focused on walking to the back of the house to the guest room on the ground floor.

“I hope this is okay?” I ask, pushing the door open. “I can swap with you if you’d prefer to be on the first floor?”

Part of me hopes she declines. It will be easier for her to be down here and us upstairs while she is thinking things through and making sure it's us she wants. I already know that I'm all in. We all just need to take a step back, or things will happen that I don't think she is ready for yet.

She steps into the sun-filled room, almost blinding in the low afternoon sun. I watch her as she takes everything in.

The room is decorated in a dark blue, the same as her blanket, which she has as part of her life. She dragged it all the way from her home with her so it's important.

Heavy, dark blue velvet curtains hang from the windows, pooling softly onto the deep, tan carpet. Across the room, a double bed is covered in a tartan throw, and two armchairs sit, flanking the disused hearth. The room also boasts its own small shower room, with a small sink and toilet.

Morgan's gaze slowly roams around the room. She crosses over to the curtains and pulls them half shut. I move across to the bedside table and flick the blue-shaded lamp on, casting a warm glow around the darkened room.

“It's perfect,” she says, turning to me with that smile playing on her lips.

“Good.” I place the bag on the bed and step back. “If you need anything, please shout, but make yourself at home.”

“Thanks. I'm going to put my things away and then sleep if that's okay. It's been an eventful day. Well, few days, really.”

“Of course. If you don't want to get up, ring Dylan and we'll bring you some food later.”

She snickers. “That's just being a lazy arse. What time is dinner?”

I blink, a bit taken aback that she would ask.

She returns my confused look but then understanding dawns. “Do you have dinner together, usually?”

“Well, we kind of do our own thing, so find one of us when you're ready to eat, and we'll walk you through it.”

She frowns slightly but nods. “Okay, thanks.”

I feel like I've disappointed her somehow. Was she expecting us all to sit down at a big table and share a meal together? Deciding that wouldn't be the worst thing, and it seems it would make her happy, I give her a small wave and back out, needing to tell the others that we are surprising Morgan with a big sit-down meal later.

When I mention this, I am confronted with dubious glares.

Which doesn't really surprise me.

"Who exactly is going to make this dinner?" Dylan asks, giving me an interested look. "You?"

"Fuck, no," I reply. I am no cook. Not for lack of trying, but, yeah, it's not for me. "We'll get takeaway from that Italian down the road. We know she likes it, she was there at Castello's that night, so this is a safe bet."

"It's a bit shit that we don't even know what she likes to eat," Dylan mutters, his face full of concern.

"We will learn," I say brightly. "Coffee and Italian. The rest will come."

"Did she like the room?" Elijah asks.

"She did. She's putting her things away."

"Does she want any help?"

I focus my astounded gaze on him. "If you want to go and ask the lady that we are trying to court if you want to help her settle in when she barely knows you, then be my guest. I, personally, will stay out of it."

Dylan lets out a loud guffaw, but Elijah considers my words seriously. He has been thoroughly swept off his feet by this tiny, blonde woman, and I don't even think he has asked her about the cost of living crisis yet.

I grimace. "Please don't ask her about the heating and electric bill," I say quickly. "We just got her here. I don't want her deciding you're a dick and hightailing it back out to face the dangers alone."

"It needs answering," he says defensively. "We aren't made of money."

"Neither is she. She's broke," Dylan points out. "Not that I think she's one of those."

I frown. "Those?"

"Those women who were paraded in front of us the other day. They are a bunch of self-entitled, spoiled brats. Morgan is..." He sighs, his eyes glazing over.

"A woman of substance," I murmur.

"A goddess," he says.

I stare at him for a long time after that comment. He is not wrong. She really is. "I'm going to ring my mum," I declare. "She might have a few tips on how best to approach the divorced thing..."

Elijah's gaze shoots to mine. "Yes, good thinking. We need all the help we can get to not royally fuck this up."

I couldn't agree more.



## MORGAN

**A**fter Kaleb leaves, I get to work. I'm exhausted, and now that I'm alone and without the need for pain relief, my hands start to shake after the ordeal with the knife. My knees give way, and I sit heavily on the bed before flopping back with a groan. I never thought I would end up this way. Homeless and alone.

Although, I am really neither of those two things if I choose not to be. I'm still just cautious about moving too quickly while the marriage license with Adam is still intact. A bit of paper, but unfortunately, still there and legal. In a way, I'm glad those thugs came for that lockbox. It means *my* hands are washed of it. Also, it means that when Adam wants it, it's tough shit.

My thoughts wander to Pierce Smythe and what he wants to see me for. Could it be about the box? I don't know him that well, so it's seems odd that he wants to see me. He must have something profound to say to lay this deal on the line and risk getting Adam severely pissed off with him. Not to mention the guys who came for the box. They are not to be messed with. I'm still surprised I wasn't hurt or worse. Probably because the guys were there. Had they not been...well, I dread to think.

With a sigh and a monumental physical effort, I pull myself together and stand up, reaching for my blanket from the top of the bag. I unroll it and place it over the top of the tartan throw, then I stretch my arms wide and bunch my hands into the bottom corners of the covers. I scrunch the blankets up to form a little nest in the middle of the bed, where I will be surrounded by a small wall of comfort. I shake out the four pillows from the top of the bed and place them neatly in the middle of it. I look around for other things to add

when there is a soft knock on the door.

I move across to open it, still distracted by all these thoughts going around my head.

It's Elijah.

He is hovering in the doorway.

"Everything okay?" I ask, immediately concerned.

"Yes, fine," he croaks. His cheeks have gone an adorable shade of pink as his eyes turn a deeper green. "Uhm, do you need any help?"

I shake my head. "No, I'm good, thanks."

He looks disappointed. "Okay, wanted to offer..." He trails off as our gazes lock. My body warms up from the tips of my toes to the top of my head. It's nothing to do with the slight fever I was sporting a few hours ago.

No, it's all *him*.

Fuck, he is gorgeous.

Now that I have a marginally clear head to take in his features, I can't believe I didn't see this before.

I lick my lips, forcing my body not to fling itself in his direction.

"Can I ask you something?" he murmurs.

"Anything," I practically pant.

"How do you feel about the cost of living crisis?"

Time stands still for a moment but not in a good way.

"What?" I ask, shaking my head.

"Sorry," he mumbles. "It's a thing..."

"It's awful," I say. "So many are suffering and going without just to survive this winter. It's heartbreaking. Please know that I won't be inconsiderate about staying here and driving your energy bills up. I'm very conscious of..."

I don't get to finish my sentence because he takes a step forward and sweeps me into his arms, crushing his mouth to mine in a kiss that rivals the first one on the passion-o-metre as the best kiss I've ever had.

Breathlessly, I claim his mouth with mine, clawing at his t-shirt, wishing I had the guts to whip it over his head and ride him like a cowgirl. Sadly, I don't. I realise with a sinking feeling that I have no confidence to do much of anything except follow his lead.

"Morgan," he rasps against my lips, nipping them with his sharp teeth, which drives me into a state of desire so profound, I whimper against his mouth. "You are perfect."

He tugs gently on my hair and then steps back, clearing his throat, leaving me a wanting, panting mess.

*Do it!*

*Dooooooooo itttttttt!*

I stand there like a statue, unable to form words, as I watch him walk away.

“Elijah!”

Horrified, I place my hand over my mouth when he turns back at my call.

“Yes, Morgan?” His voice is gruff and manly, and it does things to my body that lights it up like a Christmas Tree.

His gaze penetrates mine curiously as I remain silent, trying to convey with my eyes what my mouth is refusing to say.

He takes a step back toward me, his curious gaze going heated.

“Elijah,” I breathe.

“Morgan,” he rasps.

Then he is in my personal space again, crushing his body against mine, his hands going into my hair and fisting tightly. He devours my mouth with his, twisting his tongue around mine fiercely, almost violently.

I feel wetness soak my knickers, and I moan loudly into his mouth, responding to his kiss with my own pent-up aggression.

He walks me back a few steps and then kicks the door closed behind me, shutting out the rest of the world as we get lost in this beautiful kiss.





## MORGAN

**T**he low growl that rumbles out of Elijah in response to my heated moan sends a shiver of delight skittering over my skin. Panting, I cup his face, rising on my tiptoes to deepen the kiss further.

He nips my lips, an action that speaks to my heart. It's possessive and attentive. He breathes heavily, bringing his hands up to my wrists.

"Don't say anything," I murmur, knowing he is about to end this before it even starts. "We are both consenting adults."

He leans his forehead on mine, his eyes closed. Letting go of my wrists to grasp my waist, he trails his mouth down the side of my neck, pausing over the place where my neck meets my shoulder.

He licks it, kisses it, and places his mouth over it, his teeth digging into my skin.

I want to scream at him to bite me, to mark me in a weirdly aggressive way, but he sighs and pulls back. "I want to speak to him first. Tell him of my intention. It's only right."

"He doesn't deserve it," I spit out, unnaturally angry that Elijah thinks Adam is worthy of that respect.

That just proves to me once again that he is a man of honour and I would be the luckiest woman alive to be his, or theirs, even? It's crazy to think this way, but I can't deny this connection I have with them. It's like I've been waiting my whole life to have them in it.

"Oh, I didn't say I wouldn't enjoy it. I'm quite looking forward to it," he adds darkly.

I gasp softly, feeling my body react to his words. My nipples harden, and

my pussy clenches at the thought of him telling Adam I belong to him now. My heart beats wildly. I drag his face back to mine so I can thrust my tongue into his mouth.

“Can I be there when you tell him? I want to see if it hurts.”

He shakes his head. “No, this is something I need to do alone.”

Disappointment hits me hard. I want to see his pride ripped to shreds when he hears someone else, someone as gorgeous and good as Elijah, wants me.

I nod, expecting this tryst to be at its end, but he surprises me by picking me up by my waist and holding me close. I wrap my legs around him, our lips colliding again.

“Do you want this?” he murmurs.

“More than anything.”

“You aren’t just doing this to hurt him?”

“No,” I say seriously. “You and me and the other two have nothing to do with him. This is for us.”

“I want you, Morgan. Can I have you?”

“Yes. I am free to be with you in my head and my heart.”

“I need you to do something first.”

“Take off my ring?”

He nods slowly. “Can you do that? I’m not rushing you; this has to be about you and where you are at.”

He lowers me to the floor, and I stare at my hand. It’s been there for so long, I don’t even feel its presence anymore. Circling it carefully, I tug on it. It stops at my knuckle, and I freeze.

*Am I ready for this?*

Forcing myself to stop overthinking everything, I yank it off and flex my fingers feeling weird and naked without it.

Moving away from him, I drop it in the top drawer of the dresser and then bend to pull the divorce papers out of my bag.

“These need to be filed.”

“I can arrange that.”

Shoving them at him, he folds them up and places them in his back pocket. “You’re sure?”

“More than anything.”

He takes a couple of strides forward and leads me to the bed. Sitting me down, he removes my shoes and socks before he leans over to flick my jeans

undone. I raise my hips so he can pull them down, bringing my knickers along for the ride.

He inhales deeply, his eyes going dark with unfettered desire when he smells my arousal. “You are gorgeous,” he whispers. “You are mine.”

Sitting up, I remove my top and bra, watching for his reaction as my breasts tumble free.

His gaze drops from my eyes to my tits. His expression tells me how much he finds me attractive. It’s like nothing I’ve ever seen before, and it thrills me.

Licking my lips, urging him to remove his own clothes so I can see his hard body and run my hands and my tongue over his warm skin. I want to kiss him all over before I slide over his cock.

“Fuck, Morgan,” he rasps, getting naked, and dropping to his knees. He drags me down the bed by my ankles.

I giggle, but he shuts me up by burying his face between my legs.

I gasp as his tongue licks my clit, flicking it gently as he eases two fingers inside me. Tongue fucking me with an expertise that makes me climax quickly and thoroughly, I arch my back as my heated blood rushes through my veins.

“Yes,” I pant.

“I need to be inside you; my desire is only for you.”

“I want that.”

His response is to drive his tongue further into my pussy as his fingers take over on my clit.

“What about the others?” I gasp, breathless already from the attention to my clit.

“Is that something you want?” He pauses to look up at me.

Nodding, feeling shy and almost wanton at the thought, he smiles. “Later then. I want you first.”

It’s not a question. It’s a demand, and one I give in to without a second thought. There will be time for everyone. Right now, he wants me, and I will give him anything he wants if he keeps on coaxing orgasms out of me with just his tongue. I tremble when I imagine how his cock will feel. I caught a glimpse of it before he dropped to his knees. It’s long and thick and nearly as big as the dildo. I can’t wait to have him enter me.

Bucking on the bed as another climax rips through my body, wetness pools underneath me, I cry out.

He laps at my arousal, drinking it, enjoying it.

“Will you allow me into your bed and let me take you?” he asks quietly, his lips damp with my desire.

I nod and sit up, scooting back so he can join me. Grabbing his face, I kiss him, tasting myself on his lips. He devours my mouth, looming over me, solid and reassuring. Nerves hit my stomach hard, so much so that I go lightheaded and pull back.

Instantly, he freezes. “We don’t have to do this if you aren’t ready.”

Our gaze locks. His sincerity brings me to my knees. “I’ve never been with anyone except Adam,” I admit quietly. “I want to do this. I’m just nervous.”

Understanding fills his eyes. “We will go slowly. And you have nothing to be nervous about.”

“I know he groomed me...”

“It’s okay,” he says, cupping my face.

I bite my lip. “I’m not sure what you want me to do.”

“Whatever you want to do, but to be honest, Morgan. This is about you. I want to please you. You don’t have to do anything.”

I frown. “That’s not right. It’s selfish.”

“Is that what he told you?”

I nod reluctantly.

His face goes so fierce that I almost draw back from him.

When he sees my hesitation, his face softens. “I want to punish him for how he treated you.”

I gulp and shake my head. “Forget about him. I don’t want him ruining this.”

“Done,” he says, stroking my face gently.

It feels so good; I close my eyes and turn into his hand.

“I adore you, Morgan. I didn’t think I would ever feel this way about anyone, but you came into my life like a tornado and whipped me off my feet. I will do anything for you.”

“You have no idea how much that means to me.” Tears fill my eyes to my annoyance. I’ve done more crying this last week than I ever have.

“Please don’t cry, sweetheart. It breaks my heart to see you so upset.”

The love and care he is giving me right now stops my tears. I am done being upset by the past. I want the present. I want the future.

I shove him back to the bed and straddle him in a move that catches him

off guard. I rub my damp pussy over his length, gasping at the size of it. Placing my hand on his broad chest, taking in his six-pack, practically drooling all over him, I grip his cock in my other hand.

“I want you inside me,” I purr.

“Yes. Use my body to please you. I need you to be happy, Morgan. Do whatever you want to me. I need you.”

Words like those have never hit my ears before. It gives me all the confidence I need to push the anxiety aside and rise over him, guiding his cock into me.

I moan as I slide down his stiff cock. He stretches me wide, filling me up until I can't get him any deeper, and I settle on top of him, staring into his eyes.

“Exquisite,” he murmurs. “I never want to leave you.”

He rests his hands lightly on my hips, but there is no demand in them as I'm used to. He lets me take complete control of him. I ride him slowly, feeling every millimetre of him rubbing the inside of my pussy with an intoxicating, heady mix of scents from our arousal. Circling my hips, I watch as he groans, closing his eyes as I rile him up. He grows even harder inside me, which I didn't think was possible.

“Fuck,” I gasp, leaning forward to press my tits against his chest.

He grabs my arse but still doesn't guide my actions. He lets me do what I want, just as he promised.

The thing is, I want him to take over now. Pressing my lips to his chest, I nip him sharply.

He grunts and flips us over, pressing my hips into the bed. “You sure?”

I nod.

He needs nothing else to ram into me so hard, I scream. He pulls his hips back, withdrawing almost entirely before he slams into me again and again.

“Fuck,” he roars. “Fuck, you feel good. This is right, this is...” He buries his mouth in the crook of my neck, licking me, kissing me. I want him. I desperately want to be his in every way.

He moves his mouth further down, rising on his hands planted on either side of me. He takes my right nipple in his mouth and clamps his teeth around it, biting me gently.

“Yes!” I cry. “Elijah!”

Coating his cock with more of my juices as I come again, clenching around him tightly.

“Morgan,” he growls and pounds into me a few more times before he shoots his load, locking our hearts together. I arch my back and wrap my legs around him, needing to be even closer to him if that’s possible.

“You’re perfect, my sweetheart,” he rasps. “We fit together perfectly.”

“Yes,” I pant. “Mine.”

“Yours,” he replies before he presses his lips to mine, rocking our bodies gently as we lie together, joined in such an intimate, beautiful way, it’s almost as if a ribbon has wrapped around us and tied us together.

It's our souls. I know it, it exists because it is true.

It is fate.



## ELIJAH

I have never felt anything so profound in my life as the emotions I feel towards Morgan at this moment. I already know we are fated to be together. I don't need to marry her, though I will when I can, and I will relish taking her from that scum to show her the life she deserves and the love she should've had. It kills me that she had to live the way she did with that asshole. Why did fate not put her in our path years ago?

Resting my forehead lightly on hers, my eyes closed as our bodies remain wrapped around each other. I want nothing more than to stay here for as long as I can.

But it doesn't surprise me when there is a sharp rap on the door. "Morgan?" Kaleb's voice filters through. "Is everything okay in there?"

I snicker and open my eyes. Hers are dancing with amusement as well.

"Yep, all good," she replies.

"Are you sure?"

"She's shagging Eli," Dylan's voice joins in. "A bit rude but leave them to it."

"How does he know that?" she murmurs, her expression turning quizzical.

"He knows shit. It's annoying as fuck," I grumble. "Can they come in?" I feel bad for taking her without them, but I needed this moment to be just for us.

She nods, smiling brightly. "Of course."

"You can come in if you don't mind seeing my bare arse."

Dylan lets out a loud guffaw and shoves the door open. "Jesus. I've seen



better.”

“Fuck off,” I chuckle and roll us over so that they have a much better view in front of them.

I hear Kaleb pant softly as her bare back is exposed to him. “Fuck. Party started already then?”

“It was spontaneous.”

“We needed it,” Morgan adds, “but I need all of you too.”

“Is this squared away in your heart?” Kaleb asks seriously.

“Completely,” she replies just as earnestly. “I am free.”

“Do we get to join in?” Dylan asks.

To my disappointment, I move releasing her body from mine, but I know she will be properly taken care of.

She climbs off me and curls up in her bed, suddenly shy. I understand her reservations. We have never shared a woman before, so this is also new to us.

“This is our first time as well,” I murmur, so she knows she isn’t alone.

“Oh?” she asks in surprise. “I thought when you all showed an interest in me, it was common practice.”

“Fuck, no,” Dylan says. “None of us have ever found the one, you know? So we decided one night that when Eli turned forty, if we were all still single, we’d start looking for a group effort.”

“Oh?” She raises her eyebrow. “And how did that go?”

“Terribly,” I chime in. “There is no shortage of women looking to be involved in a foursome, but the quality leaves a lot to be desired.”

“Ouch,” she giggles. “So why me?”

“Why you?” My own eyebrow goes up as I take in her delicate, guileless features. “You are perfection, and you were made for us. I know it in my heart.”

“Same,” she murmurs.

“May I?” Dylan asks, indicating the bed.

She nods, and I scoot over to make room for him and then Kaleb when she says, “All of you are welcome. Please join me.”

Kaleb is slower to move forward than Dylan, who practically leaps onto the bed next to her, a cheeky grin on his face.

I sit back and watch as he kisses her, feeling no jealousy or envy to be where he is. I know what we have, and I know it will only grow deeper and more intense as the others get involved.

If anything, it’s actually turning me on. It’s my own live porn show, and I

realise that I like it.

A lot.

My dick grows hard again, eager to be inside her, but it's time for the others now.

I frown as a loud banging resounds through the house and I glare at Kaleb. "What the fuck? Are we expecting someone?"

He shakes his head, concern on his features.

"Wait here," I instruct them all.

Morgan and Dylan pull apart, but I give them a smile to show I'm not worried and that they should continue.

Dylan shrugs and goes back to sucking her lips into his mouth, his fingers moving down to flick her clit. I am mesmerised for a moment before the incessant banging starts again.

Hastily getting dressed, I slip out, closing the bedroom door behind me.

Crossing through the hallway and out to the small entrance hall, I yank open the door with a fierce scowl. "What?"

"You don't answer your phone all of a sudden?" Harlow barks, standing there with his fist in mid-air, about to beat on the door again.

"I've been busy," I mutter, taking a giant step back, knowing I've just fucked his niece. The implications of that hit me hard and makes me a little lightheaded.

His face grows scarily dark all of a sudden, and he reaches out to slap his hand to my chest. "You had better be eating Christmas fucking chocolate like a sloppy pig and not fucking my niece, you absolute cunt!"

"Excuse me?" Fixing him with a ruthless glare, I prepare to lie through my teeth.

"I know of one woman who wears that perfume. My wife went with her to get it made specially for her." He shoves me back into the entrance hall, leaving the door wide open. "Morgan!" He yells. "Are you in here?"

Usually, I would have the asshole who laid his hands on me in my own home, flat on his back with my knee in his throat by now, but Harlow... he's my boss. Talk about awkward and irritating.

"Morgan!"

"She's fine," I assure him. "More than fine. Wait here, and I'll get her."

"Clive?" she asks, running down the hallway, her clothes thrown on haphazardly. "What are you doing here?"

The low rumble is threatening, and I take it very seriously. I'm about to

get my arse kicked from here to the middle of next week.

“Are these fuckers taking advantage of you?” he roars as the other guys join me, half-clothed and barefoot.

“No!” she yells back, putting her hands up when he takes a menacing step forward. “It’s not like that. We are meant to be together.”

“You are already married. Granted to a fucking criminal, but there are proprieties to be observed, girl.” He is furious.

“I don’t give a *fuck* about him or your *proprieties!*” she shouts, shoving me out of the way and showing us her fire. “He treated me like shit from day one, but I was too naïve to recognise it. I can assure you that I do not appreciate you barging in here and telling me how to live my life, regardless of who you think you are. I know my feelings. I know what’s happening to *me*. You can fuck off out of my business and out of my life.”

We all stand there, thunderstruck by her outburst. Harlow looks like he is about to have an apoplexy.

“Morgan, maybe you should...”

“What?” she turns on me. “Should what? Go and wait in another room while you all talk about me? No! I am done being treated like a spare part. You want to talk about this, then you do it with me here.”

Her eyes are sheer fire. I get lost in them for a moment as well as her. “That’s not what I was going to say,” I point out with a soft smirk. “That’s not how we do things here. I was going to say maybe you should pull your top down a bit if we are going to have a screaming match with your uncle with the door wide open.”

She freezes and then looks down at herself. While she isn’t on show, she might as well be.

Her cheeks flame, and she grabs the hem of her tee and pulls it down quickly. “Uhm...okay, this is exactly what it looks like, but Clive, you have to understand...”

“Your marriage is broken?” he interrupts her, his face still dark but showing signs of concern.

She smiles and nods. “How can it not be? He is a lying cheating scumbag who doesn’t deserve to have me anymore. I am okay. I am more okay than I’ve ever been. I’m where I’m supposed to be, Clive. Don’t take it out on these guys who have shown me such kindness and affection.”

He blinks, not knowing what to say. When she slips her hand into mine and gazes up at me, he clears his throat.

“Err,” he stammers. “This has caught me off guard. He cheated on you?”

Morgan nods, her lower lip quivering as she recalls seeing that woman with her son at the station. “He did.”

“That fucking prick! I should kick his arse from here...”

“Never mind that. Why were you beating down the door?” I ask to get back to the matter at hand before Harlow does something he will regret.

“Oh, yes,” he says, appearing to be grateful for the abrupt change in topic. “Smythe. He has given us two hours to get Morgan to the station to talk to him, or he takes his lumps and doesn’t give us fuck all. I came here to see if you’d managed to convince her.” He narrows his eyes at his niece. “Did they mention this?”

“They did,” she says, definitely happy he included her and asked her directly. “And I said I would. Two hours? Let me get freshened up, and we’ll go.”

When she turns to leave, I pull her back. “Are you absolutely sure?”

“You and Kaleb will be there, right?”

I nod quickly.

“Then, yeah. Let me help you with this. I’ll be okay.”

I know then that this overwhelming feeling for her is love. I have fallen in love with her, and it takes every ounce of strength I have not to draw her to me and ravish her in front of her uncle.

“Soon,” I murmur, knowing she will get my drift.

Her eyes light up, and with a small, secret smile, she tugs on my hand to let her go.



## KALEB

“Is this a good idea?”

Elijah gives me that penetrating stare that used to unnerve the crap out of me when I first joined the team. We worked together at the station. I like action and being with the Police force made that happen. When I was asked to join the task force, it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Until now.

Morgan is a delight, and one I hope to sample soon. I am gutted that our time was cut short, but it's for a good reason. We *need* that information, especially since we lost them the other day. The SUV was already gone when we got downstairs, which is why the last guy kept hold of Morgan for so long, and he vanished into thin air. I wonder if Elijah ever did tell Harlow. My best guess is not.

“We need that information,” Harlow replies for Elijah, leaving me in no doubt that if I get in the way of Morgan's consent, I'm finished. His stare is hard as steel, so I let it go. Morgan is an adult who can make up her own mind, but I just have this horrible feeling that Happs is going to try to worm his way back into her life somehow through this encounter with this partner. As far as he is concerned, she never left it. He just expected her to wait for him like a good little girl, like the good little girl he groomed her to be.

It makes me sick.

These arseholes, all of them, belong where no one else can ever be hurt by them. Especially Morgan.

“We won't leave her. I promise,” Elijah adds, and then indicates for me to

edge away from the others.

“What is it?” I ask as we slip into the kitchen, leaving Dylan to deal with Harlow’s vicious glower.

“I need you to record the entire thing,” he says. “Unofficially.”

“Okay, why?” I ask suspiciously. The conversation will be recorded for evidence. We don’t need a dodgy copy lying around.

His eyes meet mine steadily, and it all becomes blindingly apparent. I don’t need him to say it. He’s going to use it against Adam, which in turn will come back on Pierce and break up their partnership in a massive way that will set the gangs on fire in London. It’s risky—more than. If anyone finds out, not only will he get sacked, but he will also be indicted.

I nod slowly, knowing it is futile to talk him out of it and not worth the aggro I will get from him if I don’t do it. What do I care about Happs or Smythe or any of them? I really don’t. My only concern lies with my team leader and Commander, my *friend*. But this is what I do—tech guy. If I have to, I can make it look like the recording came from across the street.

“You ready?” Dylan sticks his head around the door, giving us filthy looks for leaving him out there with Harlow.

“Is Morgan?”

He nods, grim-faced. “I don’t like this.”

“We need to let her see it through,” Elijah states. “Closure.”

“She will only get that once she cuts ties with Adam,” I murmur.

“Oh, don’t worry about that. You are about to witness the showdown of the century,” Elijah says cryptically.

I don’t have a great feeling about this.

At all.

“Let’s go.”

Elijah leads the way back out of the kitchen, and we are greeted with Dylan and Morgan holding hands, making goo-goo eyes at each other. It’s cute. I get that they have something there that I don’t. Not yet. I was last on the Morgan train, but it won’t stay that way forever. She has laid bare her feelings and intentions, and so have we. She will be ours just as soon as we are left alone for long enough to see it through.

Harlow is quiet, contemplatively staring at them. I don’t think he is going to cause trouble. If anything, he seems happy she has moved on. I suppose he has to be. He can’t force her to remain married to a cheating criminal. Not that he could. He is her uncle. It makes me wonder about her dad and mum.

Does she even have parents? These are all things that we need to know, but they will come with time. We already know everything that is important about her. She is kind and sweet but fierce when she needs to be and is considerate of other people and their wants and needs. She is everything we have ever wanted. I can't believe we finally found her. But more importantly, I'm glad we can take her away from the life she was leading before and care for her as she should be. It may take her some time to really trust us after everything she has been through, but that is just something we will have to show her every day until she knows she can count on us for everything.

"You're quiet," Dylan mutters.

"Thinking."

"That this is a terrible idea?"

"That, but other stuff. I guess this day is going to get worse before it gets better again."

He narrows his eyes. "What do you know?"

I sigh. "You don't want to know. Plausible deniability and all that."

"Fuck," he groans, knowing Eli is up to something bad. "Fuck. Do we need to stop him?"

Meeting Dylan's gaze, I contemplate those words. "No," I say eventually and follow the rest of them out of the door, knowing they are waiting for us, and time is running out.

"Fuck!" Dylan exclaims. "Fuck."

Yeah, there isn't really another word for how this day is about to pan out. Never let it be said that we were boring.





## MORGAN

When we pull into the Station, this time, I'm not alone, nor am I in shock. I'm clear-headed and actually looking forward to telling Pierce that he and Adam can get fucked. I'm chomping at the bit, so when the car pulls to a stop, I'm already opening the backdoor to climb out.

"Whoa," Elijah says, grabbing my hand. "Slow your roll, sweetheart. You can't just barge in there, all guns blazing. There's protocol."

Glaring up at him, I concede that he is right, but it still annoys me. I'm pumped. Ready to get this show on the road.

He takes my hand and leads me into the station, where I have to hand over my bag and coat. I remember that I didn't have any of this stuff with me last time.

Kaleb kisses the top of my head. I'm glad that they are happy to be seen with me in public, although I'm sure the affection will be pulled to a halt fairly soon as we step further into the bullpen. All eyes swivel towards me, and my anxiety hits the roof. The adrenaline rush has already died down, and now I'm a nervous wreck. My laboured breathing catches Kaleb's attention, and he draws me to a stop.

"Relax. You want to go in there with your head held high."

I gulp and nod, knowing he's right. I can't come face-to-face with Pierce looking like a kicked puppy. He needs to know without any doubt that I'm stronger than that.

I breathe in and relax almost instantly. Smiling up at him, I take his hand and give it a quick squeeze. He goes one further and brings my hand up to his mouth to kiss.

“Don’t you care about what people will say?” I murmur.

“You need never ask me that. My mum was dumped by my dad and became divorced. I know how difficult it was for her to overcome the stigma of that. Year after year, I watched her struggle, but all it took was one guy who knew none of it mattered to change that. That’s what you have. You have all of us, and we don’t care.”

“I feel like I should take offence to that somewhere,” I say with a giggle, “but I appreciate your sentiment.”

He laughs as well. “That was my long version short pep talk.”

I rise to my tiptoes and kiss his nose quickly. “Consider me pepped.”

He grins but then goes serious. “My mum wants to meet you. Maybe you could talk to her about some stuff if you have any worries?”

My heart feels full as I reply, “I’d love that so much. Thank you.”

My attention is caught as I see Elijah a few feet away talking earnestly with someone in a suit, who is nodding thoughtfully. Heart pounding, my mouth goes dry when I see Elijah hand over a wad of papers, that I know without fail are my divorce papers. He said he would take care of it, and he has. There is no going back now.

When Elijah turns and sees me staring, he narrows his eyes and tilts his head in question. Smiling, I know that this is right. I don’t want to go back. I want to be divorced as quickly as possible so that I can truly move on with my life.

He nods and comes closer with Clive.

“Where is he?”

“In there,” Elijah points to the room he interrogated me in the other week. It seems like a lifetime ago.

My blood spikes with nerves again. “Adam doesn't know he’s here?”

“No. And we’d like to keep it that way. If you speak to Adam or his other partners for whatever reason, don’t mention this deal,” Clive states.

I nod, but I don’t really understand why. Speaking to the other partners is definitely not on my to-do list but Adam? Yeah, I need to speak to that fucker to tell him where he can shove the last eight years he stole from me.

“I’ll be back in sec.” Kaleb murmurs and disappears.

“What do I say?” I ask nervously.

“As little as possible,” Elijah instructs. “He will possibly try to draw you into a conversation, don’t fall for it. Ask him what he wants, and if he doesn’t give it to you, threaten to leave. Try not to leave, though, until he has given

us what we need.”

I nod, taking that in.

“Ready?”

“Yep.”

Clive grasps my elbow as I walk past. “If you need to get out of there, go. Don’t worry about anything else.”

My expression softens as he looks out for me. “I’ll be okay, but thanks for clarifying.”

Elijah snorts behind his hand as I give him a filthy look. “I’m doing my job; he’s allowed to be your uncle.”

“Understood.”

I let him lead me into the room where Pierce Smythe is sitting, unshaven and dishevelled. “Morgan!” he says, and tries to stand up, but the handcuffs attached to the metal rod in the middle of the table stop him. Elijah slaps a hand on his shoulder, forcing him to sit from the half hover he was doing over the chair as Kalen joins us and closes the door.

“What do you want?” I ask stiffly.

“Can we talk alone?”

“No.”

“Please? It’s important.”

I bite my tongue, wanting to tell him to fuck off, but I just stare at him, breathing out slowly.

“She said no,” Elijah growls roughly. “You wanted to see her. Here she is. Tell us what we want to know, and then you can talk to her.”

“Cyrus Blackstock. He’s the guy you want. He runs out of the deli on Broad Street.” Pierce’s eyes never leave mine.

I watch Elijah and Kaleb exchange a glance. They clearly know who this guy is.

Then the penny drops. “The deli Adam used to bring me sandwiches from?” I snap furiously, not that I expect him to know or answer me.

“That’s the one,” he replies with a sheepish expression, surprising me.

“That fucker,” I grit out, my fists clenched.

“I’m so sorry for all of this. You deserve better than this. You deserve better than Adam.”

“Don’t say that name to me. You don’t know anything.”

“We know more than you’d think,” he says.

“Did you know about *her*?”

Peirce's eyes narrow, and he avoids my stare.

"I'll take that as a yes," I state bitterly.

"Adam is a dangerous man. No one would go against him."

"But you are doing it now when it suits you."

"I know, and I'm so sorry. I should've said something. I care about you, love you even."

"What?" I spit out. I want him to shut up. He is making this a thousand times worse. If he knew all this shit and didn't say anything, that makes him as bad as Adam. And he's talking about caring about me? What a fucking pile of horse manure.

"You can go to hell and rot there for what you've done to me, you, *him*, all of them! All those people you've hurt with your criminal ways! What kind of monsters are you? I hate you!" I launch myself at him, slapping his face so hard I scratch his cheek with my fingernails.

Kaleb grabs me around the waist, hauling me away as I kick and scream obscenities at one of the men who was partly responsible for ruining my life, knowing I really want to say this to Adam.

"You're a prick! A fucking asshole, and I hate you! I loathe you!"

Kaleb carries me out of the room and into the silent station, placing me on my feet with an amused expression tinged with mild horror as everyone stares at me.

"Wow. Guess you needed that, huh?"

"You don't say," I snap, but push my hair out of my sweaty face with a huff as I calm myself. "Sorry. I got lost for a second there."

"You did good, sweetheart," Elijah says, coming out of the room and shutting the door behind him.

"Did you get what you needed? Was that name and location enough? I can go back in there and strangle him until he blabs some more."

Elijah bursts out laughing and draws me to him in an embrace which shocks me. He has done this in front of the Police force. "As much as I'd love to see that, we got what we needed. You can go home now."

"Home?" I scrunch up my nose, thinking he means Kensington, but when I gaze up into his eyes, I know he means *his* home. Our home. "What about you?"

"Dylan will take you. Now that we have a name, I've got some stuff to do here."

"Oh, of course," I say, having a 'duh' moment. "Sorry, I yelled. It was

everything I wanted to say to Adam, I guess.”

“Don’t ever apologise for expressing your feelings. You needed that, and I’m glad you got the opportunity to get it all off your chest, even if it wasn’t to the right man.”

“I want to see Adam,” I blurt out. “I want to tell him all those things, only much, *much* worse.”

He looks across at Clive, and they come to a decision without words.

It’s also not what I want to hear.

“Maybe that’s not such a great idea right now. Maybe in a few weeks, when you’ve calmed down a bit.”

“Strike while the iron is hot,” I counter stiffly.

“Not yet,” he says, going slightly Commander-y on me. “You are too volatile, and from what we’ve heard about him, he isn’t the type you want to lose your cool with. He will find an opening and stab you in the guts with it. I’m sorry, Morgan. I know you want to speak to him, and you can, eventually. Besides,” he leans down to whisper in my ear. “I want that conversation with him first.”

If there were anything he could’ve said that would get me to back down, that was it.

“Okay,” I murmur. “I’ll go.”

“Good girl,” he whispers.

Dragging him with me, I stride over to shove the door of the interrogation room open. Pulling Elijah closer to me, I plant my lips on his before I turn to give Pierce a ‘fuck-you’ triumphant glare before I stick my middle finger up at him. “Tell Adam about that!”

His shocked expression is one I will take with me to keep me warm on the nights when this situation catches up to me. But laughing almost maniacally, I spin and storm over to pick up my bag and coat, leaving Dylan to run and catch up to drive me *home*.



## DYLAN

“That was spectacular.”

She giggles. “I’m shaking.” She holds her hand up to show me. I glance briefly before I grab it and kiss her knuckles, placing it on my thigh so I can keep touching her but keep driving.

“You’re magnificent. Do you feel better, though?”

She sighs. “Yes, but I really want to say all of that to Adam.”

“I know. Maybe one day.”

“Maybe.”

Curiosity is bubbling up inside me, the likes of which I have never felt before. I want to know if she really did have a migraine before or if she is carrying that dickhead’s baby. “Did you ever want kids?” I ask cautiously.

She snorts. “Every damn day for as long as I can remember. It’s etched into my soul and being childless at this age has left me empty and sad. Guess it wasn’t meant to be.”

“Not with him, anyway and you’re hardly an old crone.”

“No, but that’s not the point.”

“I know. I’m sorry.”

“You need to stop apologising for the stuff that *he* caused.”

“I know.” I twist my mouth into a half smile, half grimace. “It’s a throwback from my youth. When my dad left my mum, it became an automatic reaction whenever I upset her or even thought I’d upset her, which was all the time.”

“Your dad also left your mum?”

“You too?”



She shakes her head. “No, Kaleb mentioned his parents earlier. My parents are still together. I presume. I haven’t spoken to them in years. Adam isolated me from them.”

“Of course he did,” I mutter.

“What a shitshow.”

“You can say that again, but you are here now, and we are so excited to have you as part of our life. We want to take care of you and give you all the love you deserve.” I turn to give her a soft smile.

She returns it before I look back at the road. We are nearly home.

As I pull up, she says, “I want to work and contribute as a valuable roommate. But you will have to bear with me. I’ve never worked a proper job, and I don’t know how hireable I am or what I’m good at. I hope that’s okay?”

“More than okay. You don’t even have to do that. We want to take care of you in every way.” I can say this with the utmost confidence. Even Elijah would agree that if she wanted to lie about all day doing nothing but existing, he would welcome it.

She shakes her head defiantly as I put the car into park and turn to look at her. “No. I will pay my way. I am done being *kept*.”

Her bitterness hurts my heart. “That’s not what you would be.”

“I know,” she says, cupping my face. “But it’s how I would feel. I’m already a ball of anxiety and worry. I don’t need that adding to it.”

“You are stronger than you think.”

She shakes her head sadly. “No, all of this has been about anger and adrenaline.”

“I think this is the real you, and the ball of anxiety is what *he* made you think and turned you into as a result.” I hesitate to say my next words but follow through. “This is typical narcissistic sociopathic behaviour, Morgan. He gaslighted you into believing all of these things that weren’t true.”

“I’ve realised that.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Fuuuuck’s sake, Dylan,” she snaps. “Stop it.”

“Sorry.”

We both burst out laughing, and then she leans forward to kiss me. “Thank you for believing I’m stronger than I am.”

“You are, and with us, you will flourish. I can promise you that. We will never treat you the way he did. It’s sick and evil. You are to be treasured, not

manipulated.”

“Do you know how long the others will be? I want to pick up where we left off.” Her sudden change of topic is welcome, and her heated gaze alerts my dick that hot sex is on the horizon.

“Me too. But I think they’ll be a while yet. Your involvement in getting Pierce to give up their supplier is huge.”

She sighs. “Bummer.”

“Huge one...” I bite my lip. “But I’m here.”

She snickers. “Won’t they be annoyed?”

“Are we annoyed that you and Eli had time alone?”

She shakes her head, scrunching her nose up. “I don’t think so?”

I grab her fingers. “The answer is an unequivocal no, Morgan. There is no expectation for you to be with all of us all of the time. If you want alone time, then take it.”

She gives me a sly glare. “Are you just saying that?”

I let out a loud laugh. “No, honestly, I know Elijah and Kaleb won’t be mad if we had some time alone now. Just as I wasn’t mad earlier, and I won’t be when you’re with Kaleb later. In fact, I think it’s a *good* idea to have him alone. You haven’t interacted much with him. Alone is probably better first, don’t you think?”

She nods slowly, a smile adorning her features. “I may not have interacted that much with Kaleb one on one, but he knows me.”

“He does. We all do. Like it’s meant to be.” I lean forward and kiss her nose.

“Thank you, Dylan. I’m glad I have you.”

“And I’m ecstatic to have you. Can I show you how much?” I waggle my eyebrows salaciously at her.

“Yes,” she giggles. “Yes, you can show me.”

“Thank fuck.” I take her hand and place it over my stiff cock. “This is what you do to me.”

“Then let’s do something about that.” She climbs through the front seats into the back of the large SUV.

“Oh?” I ask, excitement raging through me. “Here?”

“Carpe Diem.”

I groan. “Fuck, yes!”

Diving onto the back seat with her, I gather her close to me, kissing her fervently. She responds with the same enthusiasm. I want to impale her

immediately, but I give this to her. It's all about her. Always.



## MORGAN

**A**s the sun sets, I find myself about to fulfil a fantasy I've had for a while. Adam would never entertain it. He thought it was vulgar and would be uncomfortable, and people might see. Dick. The point is that people might see.

Dylan, on the other hand, couldn't be more into it. It excites me to the point where my arousal is soaking my knickers practically all the way through to my jeans.

"Fuck, yes," I murmur as I remove my coat and climb onto his lap. I gaze into his eyes, the intense emotion between us palpable in the air. He leans in, and our lips meet, our passionate kiss melting away all thoughts of Adam and his dickish ways.

Dylan's hands cup my face, stroking it as if it were a priceless work of art. His fingertips linger on my neck, skating over the pulse before moving down to lightly caress my collarbone. His lips trail along my jawline, down my neck, before he nips me sharply on my shoulder.

I giggle, my breath heavier as the desire for him overcomes me.

Gasping with pleasure as Dylan's lips brush against the tops of my breasts, exposed by the low-cut tee he is tugging on.

His lips move lower, coming to rest between my breasts as he cups them into two small mounds with a low groan. "So beautiful."

He lifts his hips, pressing his body against mine. I feel his arousal. His cock is bursting at his combat pants, ready for me to claim with my soaking wet pussy. His hands move lower, slipping under the fabric of the tee before he slides it up and over my head. His light brown eyes go darker with his

desire when he gazes at me. His fingers trace the contours of my body, exploring the swell of my hips, the dip of my waist, and the curve of my arse.

“You are driving me wild,” I purr.

He grins. “I want to worship you. You are my goddess.”

He moves his hands to the back of my bra and unclips it with a quick snap. It falls away, exposing my breasts. I take a sharp breath as Dylan looks at my body hungrily, his desire tangible.

He pulls me closer. His hands moving up and down my body, exploring every inch of my skin before he dips his hand lower to flick the button on my jeans and lower the zipper. I rise and shove them down, falling back to the seat next to him to struggle out of my shoes and jeans with a soft giggle.

He helps, stripping me of my clothes. His fingertips trail up my thighs and linger on my hips. He hooks his hands into the sides of my skimpy black cotton thong, but I stop him.

“I want to leave it on.”

He lets out a harsh rasp. “Yes, fuck, yes.”

He ducks his head as I lie back on the cold black leather as he lowers his mouth. His lips move lightly over my body, coming to rest over my nipple. He pinches one lightly as his mouth sucks the other one gently, flicking it and teasing me before he slides his hand down.

His touch ignites a fire deep inside me. I can feel my desire growing with each caress.

Dylan cups my pussy and squeezes it, making me buck against him with a low moan. He pushes the fabric aside and slips a finger inside me, fucking me slowly. His thumb rests on my clit lightly, driving me into a state of extreme pleasure. I lift my hips, eager for him to increase the pressure. I feel his lips curve up into a smile.

He moves his lips to my ear. “Eager, aren’t you, kitten?”

“Always for you.”

He closes his eyes and whispers sweet words of love and desire. His breath is hot against my skin as he eventually moves his mouth to mine. Our lips collide forcefully. We kiss passionately, our tongues twining and exploring each other’s mouths.

Dylan gently parts my thighs, pushing my legs apart. He moves between them, and I gasp as I feel the hardness of his arousal. I reach out to undo the button on his pants and yank the zipper down in my haste to have him inside me. He grins when my hand dips into his pants to find him going commando.

“Cheeky fucker. I love it,” I murmur.

I wrap my legs around him and pull him closer, wanting and needing more.

His fingertips trace circles around my nipples, and he takes one in his mouth again, gently sucking and teasing. I quiver in anticipation as Dylan moves his mouth lower, pulling his body away as he explores the sensitive skin of my belly, hips, and thighs.

“Fucking hell, Dylan!” I yell suddenly. “I need you.”

He removes his hands from me and settles back on the seat. “Take me then, kitten. I’ve been waiting for you.”

“Grr,” I growl and pounce on him, shoving my tongue into his mouth as I roughly cup his face, rubbing my pussy over his engorged cock. I grab him and guide him to my entrance, shoving the knickers aside so I can ride him. He thrusts up, pushing his cock inside me. We both moan with pleasure as our bodies move together in perfect harmony. I cling to him when wave after wave of pleasure crashes over me as I ride him hard and with abandon. I have no inhibitions, even though the back windows are tinted. I’m actually a bit disappointed. I’d have loved this even more if they weren’t, and anyone could’ve come past and seen us. As our passion reaches its peak, my heart thunders in my chest, my heated blood races through my veins. My pussy gushes cum, coating his cock as I move my hips over him faster, trying to get him even deeper as we edge closer to our climax. I know we are going to come together. I want it. I need our bodies to be so in sync with each other.

My breath comes as a harsh pant. I move my mouth to his neck, kissing him and nipping at his skin. “Yes,” he cries out. “Morgan!”

His victorious cry as we reach our orgasm together fills the car and my heart with joy. He wants me. He needs me.

And that does make me feel like his goddess.





## KALEB

**C**lenching my fist around the arm of the basic office chair I'm sitting in, to stop myself from going back in that room to punch that asshole in the face, I growl.

"He claims to love her? What a douche."

Eli's disgusted, dark expression makes me shudder. He is beyond pissed. I've never seen him so livid before, and he's had his moments over the years. I've been with the team for five years now. My mum talked me into it, saying that Elijah would be a good, strong influence for me. She's not wrong. She rarely is. But she wanted me to have people I could count on. I'm glad I took her advice, although it's not all been plain sailing.

However, I get it now, and I'm grateful that Eli waited on settling down. Imagine if all of this had been set into motion, yet we'd already been with someone. It would've been a disaster. Somehow, he knew.

"Do you think she's okay?" I ask when he doesn't say anything.

"Dylan knows how to treat her. He knows the right things to say. He is really good with her."

"You make her sound like a puppy."

"My words aren't great today."

"If ever," I snort.

A filthy look is aimed in my direction. "This situation...I had no expectations of any of them, to begin with, but that has plummeted into negative territory. How can someone claim to love another and then stand back and watch them be destroyed?"

"You are asking the wrong guy."

“Go and be with her. I need to talk to that Adam fucker. I can’t concentrate on anything else until I’ve told him exactly what I think of him.”

“Harlow will...”

“I’ll sort it with Harlow. I know you need to be near her and to finish what you started. Go. I’ll be back shortly. We can’t close in on Blackstock yet anyway.”

“You sure?” I ask, already standing up.

“Yeah. Go.”

I slap my hand on his shoulder. “If they ring asking for bail money, know we haven’t got shit to help you with.”

He smirks, but it’s full of arrogance and self-confidence. “I won’t touch him. Do you think I’d risk losing Morgan when I’ve just found her? Besides, I won’t give him the satisfaction.”

“You say that now,” I point out.

“Go, I’ll be fine.”

I nod and take him at his word. I could stand here arguing with him all day, but that won’t get me anywhere, and I *do* want to finish what I started with Morgan. My dick hasn’t really gone down since I saw her naked on top of Eli. I’ve been sporting a semi this entire time.

Leaving him, I grab the keys to one of the pool cars and head out.

The drive home doesn’t take long after dark, and soon I’m pulling up outside the house next to the SUV, which is rocking slightly. I frown, thinking someone is trying to break in, but then I jump back when one of the back windows lowers, and I see Dylan and Morgan wrapped around each other.

I raise an eyebrow. “Like that, is it?”

“She couldn’t keep her hands off me.”

“Nice for some.”

“You’ll get your turn,” she murmurs, cheeks pink and adorable. “Although, it is getting cramped and sweaty in here. Do you have some time to be with me?”

“Honey, I’d make time to be with you if the world was falling down around my ears.”

She giggles. I love that sound. More so because I know she is happy.

“Good,” she says and struggles back into her clothes. She leaves her feet shoeless though, as she climbs out, soaking her socks wet through as she hauls her bag onto her shoulder and slings her coat over her arm. Her jeans

are still undone, and I've never seen a woman look so fucking sexy as she does right now.

"Jesus," I pant, my eyes swivelling to Dylan and going wide. He is completely, madly in love with her. She has well and truly claimed him body and soul.

Without a second thought, I pick her up, cradling her in my arms, bag, coat and all and carry her into the house while she screams with laughter. It's light and easy, and I'm guessing she is just fine after her encounter with Pierce Smythe. But it's still something I want to be absolutely sure about.

"I'll leave you two alone," Dylan says.

I shoot him a grateful smile as he takes the stairs two at a time.

"Where do you want to go?" I ask.

"Your room," she says decisively. "I want to get to know you."

Nodding, I carry her up the stairs, dropping her lightly on the bed after I've stumbled into my room.

She smiles shyly when I close the door.

"Are you hungry?" I ask.

She shakes her head. "Not yet. The adrenaline from seeing Pierce has made me lose my appetite. But you get something if you are."

"I can wait."

She nods and drops her belongings and takes her wet socks off but leaves her jeans undone as she curls up on the end of the bed, propping herself up on her elbow. "When can I meet your mum, then?"

Surprised she mentioned that, I say, "Whenever you like. Except now. This is me time."

"Definitely you time," she murmurs, grabbing my hand when I move closer.

"You are gorgeous," I pant like a fool, dropping to my knees in front of her. "Are you okay after earlier?" I want to get it out of the way.

She nods. "I am. Still want to speak to Adam, though."

"You'll get your chance. Eli is speaking with him tonight. Once he has done that, then maybe you can soon."

"I want Elijah to talk to him before I see him," she blurts out. "I want him to know that not only has he lost me but there are men that truly want me for me."

"You won't have long to wait," I murmur. "We want to make you so happy."

She nods slowly. “I am happy. I didn’t think I would ever be happy again after Adam got arrested and then finding everything else out. But I am. You three have done that for me and I owe you everything.”

“You don’t owe us, Morgan. We care so much about you. Your happiness makes us happy. That’s all we want for you.”

She drags me closer to her by my tee and plants her lips on mine.

It pushes everything else out of the way. Her soft lips on mine are a revelation that drives home that this is real, perfect, and right.

I move closer, pulling her to her feet. Wrapping my arms around her, my body traces the curves of hers, her soft warmth radiating throughout my being. I run my hands lightly along her arms, trailing over the back of her neck and sliding down her spine. I feel a surge of electricity flash through my body as she presses herself closer to me. The warmth of her touch ignites a spark deep in my soul. I pause, removing her tee and then mine. She didn’t put her bra back on after her time with Dylan, so I’m free to stare in wonder at her magnificent breasts, plump and ripe, her nipples biteable and pink. I lower my mouth, so my lips brush lightly against her neck, sending shivers of pleasure through her body and mine. I cup her face, and our eyes lock, the intensity of our gaze melting away the barriers between us.

Crushing her to me, my lips move against hers, sending waves of pleasure throughout my body. My tongue explores her mouth, dancing with hers in a passionate embrace. My heart is racing, my breath catching in my throat as we melt into one another. As we kiss, our bodies move in perfect rhythm, our hands exploring each other’s curves, our skin feverish with desire.

Dropping to my knees in front of her, her hands in my hair, my lips trail a path down her body, pausing at her most sensitive places. My tongue flicks lightly against her nipples when she leans forward so her breasts are near my mouth. The spark of pleasure and desire coursing through my body mirrors hers as her breath comes in short gasps. I move my mouth lower, exploring her body with infinite tenderness, each touch setting off a ripple of pleasure through both of us. Every cell in my body is alive and vibrating.

I push her jeans down and help her out of them, leaving her in a damp thong filled with the scent of her time with Dylan. I groan as I inhale deeply, pressing my nose between her legs.

She cries out, throwing her head back when my fingers hook into the sides of the thong, dragging it down her thighs. I flick my tongue lightly against her inner thigh before finally finding my way between her legs. She

steps out of the knickers as my mouth moves against her clit, the sensation of my lips and tongue driving her wild with desire. As her pleasure grows, so does mine. My cock is busting against my pants, but I won't rush this. It is heaven, and she is a goddess that needs to be worshipped. I increase the intensity of my movements, flicking her clit and driving my tongue into her. Each stroke sends her higher and higher until her body is flooded with pleasure, and she climaxes against my mouth, gushing cum over my tongue.

"Fuck, Morgan," I groan. "You taste fucking delicious."

"Take me, Kaleb. I need to feel you inside me."

Needing no more encouragement, I stand and strip off, lowering her to the bed. I crawl up her body and settle between her legs. Our eyes meet, and in that moment, I feel so safe, so loved, and so cherished. I know she will never hurt me, and she will love me for who I am. I didn't realise how insecure I was about that until this one perfect moment in time. I hope I am conveying the same to her. Suddenly, I can't speak. The words are stuck in my throat, thick with desire and longing. Her eyes seem to pour into mine, and I feel the deep connection between us that transcends body and soul. She knows. She knows, and we will hold each other close for the rest of eternity. I slowly enter her, guiding my cock deep inside her wet pussy. Her breath catches as I move inside her, thrusting deeply, slowly filled with a hunger that stems only from being with her. Her passionate movements are gentle, yet strong in return as she meets my thrusts and wraps her legs around me possessively. Our connection deepens as we move together in perfect harmony.

Kissing her again, I move my hands to her hips and push down so I can drive even deeper into her. She cries out into my mouth, followed by a loud moan that ignites the caveman in me. I growl and slam into her with force now, needing to possess her, claim her. Her breathing goes ragged, and when she closes her eyes, I know her climax is close. She arches her back as my cock glides in her pussy before I withdraw and slam back into her. Unloading into her with a loud grunt, she orgasms, clutching at my dick as it pulses inside her. We lie together, panting and entwined in each other's arms. Our desires have been spent, but our connection is even deeper now. We lie there for a long moment in blissful silence, each savouring the intimacy of the moment, our love and trust for one another deepening with each passing second.

"That was perfect," she murmurs. "Now, I'm fucking starving, so when

you let me go, we can eat.”

I laugh in agreement. “Five minutes, and we can go foraging.”

“Done,” she says and kisses me softly, sealing our future with a beautiful embrace.



## ELIJAH

**W**ith Harlow behind locked doors with the bigger higher-ups than him, discussing the best way forward with Blackstock, I'm glad this gives me the opportunity I've been waiting for. I won't be needed until the second phase of the discussions, so I have hours, maybe even a day or so, before they ask me to join them.

I stride purposefully down the hallway to the other end of the building, glad that Happs hasn't been charged yet. They are still in our custody, so my going to see Adam isn't going to be seen as suspicious. I know everyone saw Morgan and me together earlier. I don't care. Now that I have her, I want the whole world to know. But does it place me in a precarious position within the task force? I guess we'll find out. Harlow already knows, and after an initial confrontation, he backed down, so I'm hoping that's the last he has to say about it. Everyone else, though? I can't answer that. She is connected to Happs, and there is no getting away from that. I've been Commander for three years. It was easy for me to get to this position because all I focused on was work. There was no one else even close to being qualified or dedicated enough when Harlow handpicked the task force that cleans up the streets. We've done a lot of good work, but it's an uphill battle. We put one away, and another pops up. Taking down Happs is a massive dent in that, but Blackstock will be even more significant.

I shove open the door to the holding cells and flash my badge to the officer in charge. "Here to see Adam Happs."

He nods and inspects my badge closely, even though he knows me and sees me almost every day.



“Ten minutes,” he growls.

“That’s all I need.”

Grimly, I push open the door when he buzzes me through.

Walking steadily down the brightly lit hall, past woefully empty cells, my boots thumping on the cheap linoleum floor, I reach the cell where Adam is and stop, turning to glare at him.

He is sitting, slumped on the small metal bed, his elbows on his knees. He looks up, his gaze meeting mine, and he sneers.

“Commander.”

“Happs.”

“What do you want?”

“Get up.”

“Fuck you.”

“Get the fuck up, you piece of shit.”

If he wants to have a pissing contest, he will find that I’m bigger and badder than he is.

The sneer deepens as he rises, his hands outstretched when he takes two steps closer to me. I move in as close as the iron bars will let me.

“You’re an arsewipe.”

He narrows his eyes with suspicion but draws in a deep breath. “Never claimed to be otherwise.”

“You did to Morgan.”

“Morgan...”

“Your wife? Or soon-to-be ex-wife?”

He smiles sinisterly. “She found the divorce papers. Question is, how do *you* know that?”

“A lot has happened since I arrested you. She has seen the light.”

He nods. “Probably for the best. Clean break.”

“How could you be so cold?”

“What do you care?” He gives me a searching stare meant to unnerve me, however, it does nothing but irritate me.

He is probably used to being the top dog, but not with me.

*Never* with me.

“Actually, I do care, but you see, Morgan needs me. I’ve realised that you are a worthless piece of shit that means nothing to her or me. But more importantly, *she* has realised that. You are a blip in her life that she will forget and move on from as soon as I claim her. I will bury my cock deep

inside her, cherish her while she coats me with her sweet cum until she screams my name so loudly, the neighbours will hear her. I will take her every single day and cherish her, hold her, and tell her how much I love her. I will keep her secure in the knowledge that she *never* has to fear being used and manipulated by us. I will impregnate her and watch her grow my baby inside her, knowing how much joy that will bring to her life and mine. You will become a distant memory as she becomes the woman she was meant to be to *me and my guys*. She will flourish where you stifled; she will be happy where you made her miserable. And when you are at your absolute rock bottom, *Adam*, I will bring her to you, her belly swollen with my child, so she can tell you that you mean nothing to her anymore and that you can get fucked. How the fuck does that sound?”

I give him a victorious sneer and walk away, banging on the door for the guard to open it. Shoving it open forcefully, I stride through, kicking it closed behind me.

Leaving the station without a second look back, knowing exactly what needs to be done when I return home.



## MORGAN

**S**tanding in the kitchen, laughing with Kalen and Dylan as we make a meal fit for a queen and her kings, the mood shifts when Elijah stalks in with a thundercloud over his head.

“What?” I ask instantly, filled with dread.

“Are you done? I want to talk to you. All of you.”

“Can you spit it out? I don’t think I can take any more bad news, so if you have some, please just say it.”

“It’s not bad news.” Elijah turns and walks out of the kitchen.

Dylan, Kaleb and I exchanged worried glances anyway before we follow cautiously.

We sit as Elijah starts to pace. “I know I want to marry you,” he says, thankfully not beating around the bush as he’s making me nervous now—old habits. When Adam paced, it was because he was angry about something.

Surprised and yet, not really that shocked by this bold statement, I debate what to say. I’m not divorced yet, so it’s...a lot to take in right now.

“I know that is sudden and brazen, but I know. If you were one hundred per cent free, I’d be on my knees now asking you to be my wife, but I know that’s not possible right now. However, I want something now. Something tangible that tells everyone we belong to each other.”

“Okay...what are you getting at then?”

I glance at Dylan, but he doesn’t seem to have a clue, either.

“I want to get engaged to you. All of us, obviously.”

My eyebrows skyrocket. “Uhm. Right now?” I mutter.

“It’s okay,” he says, giving me that smile that makes my knees weak. “I

don't mean *right now*, but now-adjacent. Soon.”

“It’s a fucking great idea!” Dylan exclaims.

“I want it,” Elijah croaks. “Do you?”

Rising, I reach up to cup his face. “Yes, more than anything.”

He beams, clinging to me, staring at me with a loving expression, which fills my heart with joy.

“I love this idea if everyone is in agreement?”

“Wild horses couldn’t stop me.” Kaleb’s response makes my smile widen.

“Then we’ll do this soon.”

“I’ll plan it,” Dylan says. “Can I?”

I nod. “Fuck, yes. You can have that responsibility.”

It makes them all laugh, and we fall into a beautiful night of plans and dreams that has come as such a surprise but a beautiful gift, nonetheless.



## MORGAN

The days roll by, and soon it is the day that I've arranged to meet Amy, Kaleb's mum. Elijah doesn't see his parents, and Dylan wants to keep me at arm's distance from his mum, which is fair enough. I know she is judgemental and picky, although he tells me that she never used to be before his dad left. He is trying to protect me from undergoing yet more narcissistic and gaslighting behaviour. As much as I'd love to meet her, I'm really not into experiencing more shit just because she decides I'm too old for her son, or too blonde, or I don't work, or I'm about to be divorced.

For now, it's Amy, and I'm both excited and nervous to meet her. What if she decides she hates me and that I'm not good enough for her son? But what if she is amazing, and I want her to be in my life? All these questions are making me feel sick.

"Stop worrying," Kaleb says with a soft laugh. "She already loves you."

"She hasn't met me yet," I practically screech at him.

He takes my wringing hands and kisses them. "She knows what I've told her, and that is enough. This isn't an inspection; it's for you to get to know each other and for you to ask her any questions you might have about being divorced and with moving forward with someone else."

I grimace. I dislike that there is a stigma about this. There shouldn't be. Maybe it's all in my head. Probably is. Surely if I can handle the comments about being with three men at the same time, I can handle comments about being divorced as well. All I know is that when the time comes, I want to make this official. It brings my own parents to mind, but I can't contact them yet. I literally have no words for them. I'm sure Clive would've said

something to them by now, but they haven't contacted me. And even if he hasn't, I don't want to see them. Not yet. I don't think I can handle the I-told-you-so that will most definitely come out of my mother's mouth before she has even said hello. It's upsetting, but I don't want *any* toxicity in my life, even if it means keeping my parents at bay. I'm all about protecting myself so I can heal and be myself again.

The knock at the door rings through the ground floor of the house. I want to curl up in my bed and stick my head under the duvet, but that is not an option. I've agreed to this, and have been looking forward to it, so now I have to press forward.

Kaleb takes my hand and leads me to the front door. He kisses my knuckles before he opens it with a big smile.

"Hi, Mum," he says and lets go of me to give her a quick kiss before he steps back. "This is Morgan."

Bright blue eyes, just like her son's, fix me with a stare, but it's friendly and inviting.

"Hi," I say with a stupid half-wave, making me inwardly cringe.

"Morgan!" she says with enthusiasm that is hard to fake. She swoops in, practically shoving Kaleb out of the way to embrace me, pressing me up against her enormous bosom as she gives me the type of hug a loving grandparent would when they haven't seen you in years.

She rocks me from side to side, squeezing tightly. "Oh, you are as pretty as a picture," she booms in my ear. "Just like Kal said."

"Thank you!" I say loudly back, as her tone is infectious. "It's lovely to meet you."

"About time!" she exclaims. "But I get why you were a bit hesitant. I hear you've come from a bit of a shitty situation."

Okay. No beating about the bush with this woman.

"You could say that," I murmur, going nervous again.

She releases me and steps back. "Well, I know all about that, but you are safe here. These are good boys. Especially this one..." She whacks Kaleb in the chest. "I raised him to be a proper man who treats his lady like gold."

"Oh, he does," I'm quick to reassure her, in case she decides Kaleb is doing a crap job and whacks him some more. She's got a meaty fist on her. Plump and gorgeous with those blue eyes and blonde hair swept up into a messy bun, she is the epitome of a 'mum', and I aspire to be just like her one day, if it's in the cards for me. Us. I know that already, and I've only been in



her presence for two seconds. I can see Kaleb adores her, and she loves him back. I get a wave of sadness that I don't have this yet. But I'm hopeful for the future.

"Tea?" I ask brightly.

"Coffee," she says with a decisive nod.

I grin. "A woman after my own heart."

Kaleb snickers and waves as he leaves us alone.

All of my nerves dissipate as we walk to the kitchen, and Amy bustles around like she owns the place. I love that.

"It's not easy being divorced," Amy says, her eyes boring into mine as the kettle boils away merrily. "But I can reassure you that you have a good group here, love. They are stand-up men who will always do what's right, and I know how much they love and adore you already."

"I feel the same," I murmur. "You don't seem to find it strange that they decided to find someone together."

"I'll admit, I was a little surprised when Kaleb first told me of their arrangement, but to be honest, why wouldn't they want to be included? They are so close and a woman coming into their individual lives would split them up. I find *that* to be a little bit strange."

Impressed with her frank attitude, I nod readily, glad that I don't have to stop and explain my actions to her or worry about her thinking I'm some kind of hussy.

"You don't have to worry about any of that. You are with men now, love. Real *men*. They don't care about anything except you. Besides, you're all consenting adults so it's up to you at the end of the day, right?"

"Right." She *is* right. If I had any doubts before, which I didn't, I would say that it has made me see for sure that we belong together.

"It doesn't have to be something that you regret, you know, being with your previous man. He made you who you are today, scars and all. I know there are hurdles you still have to climb over, but you have the men to help lift you over them."

I take the steaming mug Amy hands me, feeling the warmth spread through my body. Deep down, I think I needed to hear that I don't have to regret my past. That what's done is done, and now it's time to move forward.

"You should look at the positives. You are now free to live your life as you choose. And you can be with the someones who truly love you for who you are. That's something to be thankful for."

I smile gently, feeling Amy's words wash over me. "It is. I'm so lucky I found them."

"And they are lucky to have found you, love. Don't ever forget that."

She pats my hand and then takes a big gulp of scalding hot coffee. I snicker. Kaleb went after someone who is exactly like his mum. Like, not in a creepy way, but it shows me how much he admires her.

She gives me a quizzical look. I raise my mug to her and take just as big a gulp of mine, and she snorts with mirth.

"Oh, my. I do like you a lot, Morgan."

"I like you too, Amy. Thanks for saying all of that. It's nice to hear it from someone who has lived it and who has no ulterior motive for me getting over it, you know?"

"I do," she says sagely. "I'm always here if you want to talk about anything."

"Thanks. But right now, I want to hear about what Kaleb was like as a child. Do you have pictures?"

"Do I have pictures?" she exclaims, pulling her phone out. "I had them all scanned and downloaded to my cloud!"

I grin and lean in as she shows me a picture of a naked baby Kaleb in the bathtub, which seems to be the go-to pic for mums to show their son's significant others. I giggle, and soon, we're howling with laughter as she goes through all of them one by one, telling me the story behind them.



## MORGAN

Later that night, the wind is howling around the corner house, making an eerie whistling sound past my bedroom windows. I've decided that someone is taking me into their bedroom later because I'm not sleeping down here on my own with these creepy noises. Inside, however, the atmosphere was altogether different. A cheery fire crackles and pops in the hearth, filling the room with a warm glow. The smell of pot roast, that Amy insisted on making before she left, permeates the air, mingling with the pleasant aroma of the burning embers.

The scene is one of domestic bliss, and it makes my heart so happy. We are all curled up in the sitting room, waiting for the slow cooker to ding and tell us that our food is ready. We are all starving, and the mouthwatering aroma is killing us. I glance around the sitting room again, marvelling at how cosy and lovely it is. In the centre of the room is an oversized, comfortable couch surrounded by four chairs. The three men of the house are seated in those chairs, each dressed in comfy sweats and tees, enjoying the warmth of the fire and peaceful atmosphere. I'm alone on the couch, but I'm okay with that for now. I'm stretched out under my blue blanket. It's a silly old thing but it's a comfort to me. I've had it for years, before Adam, so it seemed only right to bring it with me after Adam.

The men laugh about something Dylan is regaling them with and I enjoy the sounds of happiness and laughter. I switch off a little bit to sit back and contemplate this beautiful new adventure that I can see stretched out in years.

I'm at peace, enjoying the moment. I'm content with the knowledge that I'm safe and surrounded by real love.

I let my gaze wander to each of the men, lingering on them for a few seconds before moving on. They are all very different in looks and personality, yet they all have one thing in common: they all love me. I still can't believe my luck. Every one of them is devoted to me, and each of them in his own way. Sometimes they bicker, but it's always done in good fun and with love. I should thank Adam when Elijah finally lets me see him for being a cheating, criminal prick who got caught and made me realise who I was meant to be all along.

Gazing fondly at my men, I smile slightly and snuggle deeper into the cushions.

*Ding.*

Never has a sound made three grown men move as quickly as they do then. Kaleb grabs my hand on the way to the kitchen, dragging me up and alongside him.

I let go of Kaleb and head straight for the slow cooker, lifting the lid and sticking my face over the aromatic steam that rises.

"Fuck, that smells divine," I murmur.

"So do you," Elijah murmurs, coming up behind me, wrapping his arms around my waist, and kissing the back of my neck.

I feel his cock digging into me and wiggle my backside enticingly, wanting him desperately. None of us has much restraint, and I'm fucking them several times a day. But separately. Especially Dylan. He is like a cute little puppy with his youthful enthusiasm. But when he gets nakey, it's hot and adult in more ways than one. I feel like a porn star goddess the way they all worship me. I cannot wait to get the three of them into my bed together. We want to wait until the right moment to all come together.

"Who's taking me in tonight?" I ask, dishing out the pot roast after Elijah lets me go. "That wind is freaking me the fuck out, and I don't want to be alone." I bite the inside of my lip as two of them jump at the chance, but my gaze finds Elijah's, questioning him.

"Not me, sweetheart. I've got an early morning. You won't tempt me. I've got the willpower of a thousand men."

"He's not joking, either," Dylan says with a laugh. "I think it's my turn."

"We had sex an hour ago," I point out.

"So?"

I snicker. So indeed. I love this. I love this dynamic. It's the polar opposite of what I can now see, was the cold atmosphere in the Kensington

house. The thought of that makes me sigh.

“What about that house?” I ask, changing the subject abruptly. “I need to decide what to do with it because it’s pissing me off, hanging over me like a turd about to burst and rain shit down all over us.”

“Lovely image,” Kaleb mutters. “But I’m glad you mention it. It’s yours; it’s paid for, albeit with drug money. Why don’t you give back a bit? Make it a halfway house for those in need?”

I freeze, a slice of beef dangling from the big fork I was using to slice it up. “Fuck,” I mutter. “Fuck!” I fling the beef and fork down before I launch myself at Kaleb, wrapping my arms around him and squeezing tightly. “You are a genius. A kind-hearted genius, and you get to have me in your bed tonight for this suggestion! It’s fucking perfect!”

“Yay!” he exclaims, hugging me back fiercely. “I’m glad you like the idea.”

“I love it.”

“Not fucking fair,” Dylan complains.

“You snooze, you lose,” Elijah says, taking over dishing up duty on account of his stomach growling like a fiend. “Let’s go.”

We each pick up our overfilled plates and carry them to the dining room. Kaleb sits next to me so he can feed me morsels. He enjoys feeding me, and I adore it. Again, it’s that goddess thing. Elijah sits on my other side, as close as our elbows will allow, while Dylan is opposite to play footsie with me.

“I love you all so much,” I blurt out, not having said that word yet, feeling it might be too soon.

Everyone goes still.

I panic. My blood runs cold.

But then Dylan grins. “Thank fuck. We’ve been waiting days for that.”

“Days,” I repeat, shaking my head. “Is this crazy?”

“Love is crazy,” Kaleb says with a shrug and shoves mashed potato into my mouth.

“We love you more than words can express, kitten,” Dylan says. “And that is a fact. We’ve tried.”

I nod as I chew, swallowing quickly. “Good, because I don’t want anything to get in the way of how I picture my future right now.”

“And what is that?” Elijah asks quietly, taking my hand and linking our fingers tightly.

“Us together with a hundred babies running around until we are old and

grey, and Dylan has to look after us.”

I throw him a bright smile.

The men laugh at my joke, and I adore them for it.

“Sounds good to me,” Elijah murmurs but then lets me go to feed his face, as do the rest of us.

The four of us spend the rest of the evening talking, eating biscuits, drinking hot chocolate, and playing card games. Eventually, we switch on the TV and settle in to watch a movie, all cuddled together on the sofa like puppies in a pile.

It’s heaven.

All worries and troubles melt away in the cosy atmosphere of the home, and all that remains is peace, harmony and love.





## ELIJAH

I'm dreading this.

I'm actually nervous about telling Morgan what I need to, but half of it she deserves to know, and the second half, well, she needs to know.

I rap lightly on the open door after sunset. She is curled up in her bed, dressed in Kaleb's tee and a pair of my boxers that wandered from the washing machine a couple of weeks ago.

"So that's where they went," I murmur when she looks up from the book she's reading.

She raises an eyebrow but then looks down and shrugs. "You don't mind, do you?"

"No, have all of them. They look better on you anyway."

She laughs softly. "Thanks. What's up?"

"Why do you think something is up?"

"You have serious face." She closes her book and sits up.

"My face always looks like this."

"Not when you look at me." Her cheeks heat up, and she lowers her eyes. The only word for it is, coquettishly. It's fucking adorable and ignites the fire in me. But I can't get distracted with her right now, as much as I want to.

"May I?" I ask, indicating the chair next to her bed.

"Of course. You don't have to ask."

"I don't have to, but I want to."

"Understood," she murmurs. "So, is shit about to hit the fan?"

"Not really. I hope. It's about Adam."

"Oh." Her flat tone and blank expression tell me all I needed to know

how she feels about him if I didn't already know, of course.

"He was denied bail, remanded and trial set for a few months' time."

"Oh." Her tone becomes more interested.

I sit down on the chair.

"Do I need to do anything?"

"No, at this stage, you won't be called for evidence. Maybe later on, but you don't know anything, so it might be redundant. We don't know yet, but I wanted you to know."

"Thanks," she mutters, looking at her book.

"There's something else. We are finally able to move in on Blackstock. Pierce has been more than cooperative."

"That's good."

"We go tonight. That means that you will be alone here probably until morning."

Her eyes widen, but she doesn't say anything. I know this will cause her anxiety. She hasn't left the house since she arrived here a few weeks ago, with the exception of going to see Pierce, after the knife incident in the hotel room. We have also made sure to have someone here with her at all times. But tonight, it just isn't possible. We need the entire task force in the field.

"I want you to go and sleep in my bed. Lock the door if you want to. We will make sure all the doors and windows are locked, and the alarm set when we leave. We will also have someone watching the house while we're gone. You will be safe."

She blinks and looks up, those green eyes swimming with emotion. "Is that necessary?" she asks.

"To be completely transparent with you, Morgan, yes, it is. Those thugs who took the lockbox are still at large, and they knew you were here. I saw the SUV come past the house when you were here. Not to mention the countless other criminals who know about you *now* and don't know what you know or don't know about them. It is serious, and it is non-negotiable. I think you know this, or you would have at least left the house in the last four weeks."

"I'm sorry. I know I've been a shut-in, and I will get up and find a job so I can contribute more."

I frown, not following. "What?"

"You're accusing me of not leaving the house. I wanted to explain."

"Who is accusing?" I ask carefully.

She chews her lip. “You?”

The fact that she formed it as a question makes me roll my eyes at her. “Don’t be ridiculous. I couldn’t care less if you stayed in your bed all day, every day. I’m not accusing you of anything. I’m pointing out that there are dangers out there, and I *want* you to stay indoors where you are safe.”

“Oh. Sorry, it’s bugging me and a sore subject. I’m sorry I took offence but know that the sentiment is no less true. I will get out there. Eventually. I don’t think I realised how much of a toll this all took on me.”

“That’s expected. It was harrowing. Your life has been turned completely upside down with a terrifying situation thrust onto you. I’m impressed you are handling it so well.”

She gives me a shaky smile. “Thanks. I think.”

I take her hand and kiss it. “So you’ll go up to my room?”

She nods. “Yes.”

“And take your phone. If you hear anything, even if it’s the wind outside and it worries you, ring me. I will answer.”

She shakes her head. “No, I will be fine. You cannot let anything get in the way of taking Blackstock off the streets. Don’t worry about me. I’ll be fine. Someone will be outside?”

“All the time. In fact, they haven’t left since you got here. Well, okay, *they* have left, but someone has been there twenty-four-seven.” I smile to try to reassure her, but the fact is, I’m terrified. If anything happens to her, it will kill me. I seriously pissed Adam off when I went to see him, and I’ve been waiting for the fallout—which hasn’t come. And *that* scares me the most. I just want to protect her at all costs, so leaving her alone tonight is going to be one of the hardest things I’ve ever done. I know the other men feel the same. We debated leaving Dylan here with her, but it’s just not an option this time.

“Okay, well, that makes me feel better.” She gets to her knees and leans over to cup my face. She kisses me and crawls off the bed and into my lap.

“I wish we had time,” I mutter, pulling back and fixing her with a fierce glare.

She drops her hand between us and squeezes my rock-hard cock. “Make time or I will break you, Commander.”

“Fuck, I love it when you call me that.”

“Commander Miller,” she purrs against my lips.

I groan and pick her up, standing as I do so and lower her back to her bed. “Gather your things and go to my room.”

“You do know what I intend to do when I’m in it, don’t you?”

“Fuuuuck, Morgan,” I growl. “You are a bad little girl.”

I can see it thrills her. I want to give in, I really do, but I won’t. On principle now.

“You love it, though.”

“I do,” I say, leaning down to grasp the back of her neck before I press my lips to hers, giving her a kiss she will remember and that will see me through the next few hours. “I’ll settle you before we leave.”

She nods and climbs off the bed to gather her things, including the blanket she always has with her.

On impulse, I ask, “Can I have something of yours?”

She grins and nods, indicating the drawers on the other side of the room.

With a wicked look, I shake my head and head into the small shower room and open the laundry basket. I root around and find a pair of worn knickers, twirling them around my finger and replacing the lid on the basket.

I return to her with a smirk. She gapes at me, her cheeks bright red, but she can do nothing when I stuff them into the pocket of my pants.

“Noooo!” she cries.

“Oh, yes, sweetheart. Mine now.”

“Ewww!”

“Mmmm.”

“Fuck.” She runs her hands through her hair. “You’re a pervert.”

“Only for you.”

“Elijah!”

“Sorry, but finders keepers. Are you ready to head upstairs?”

She growls, but it’s futile. “You’re a menace.”

“But you love me, so…” I shrug, unconcerned.

She shoots a fiery expression in my direction, but I smile sexily, and it melts her. I love that so much. She is my love, and she responds to me beautifully.

“I do, for my sins,” she huffs, stalking past me, her arms filled with her things to take upstairs.

I grin and follow her, closing the door behind me and watching her arse wiggle slightly as she ascends the stairs ahead of me. Biting my lip, I stifle my groan of frustration. She is going to wear me down before I leave the house for the night; I just know it.



## MORGAN

Putting on a brave face as Elijah settles me in his room, I barely notice my surroundings. I'm too nervous. But I'm not stupid. I know they have worked to make sure that at least one of them has been with me in the house since I moved in. It's been about four weeks now.

I'm counting down the days until my divorce. There is so much riding on this. Pun not intended. The lawyer Elijah handed my papers to that day I spoke to Pierce is one of the best in the city and owed Elijah a favour. Somehow, this thing is being pushed through the courts way faster than normal. I'm told it will be finalised in days and it can't come soon enough. I need it done so that I can be with my three loves without that shitshow hanging over our heads. Knowing that Elijah is holding back on the proposal because of it, doesn't make it any less annoying that it's taking so damn long, despite it being rushed.

"Remember to ring if you need anything," Elijah says determinedly.

I nod, knowing there is no point in arguing with him. I have no intention of ringing him, even if the house is stormed by Cyrus Blackstock himself.

Although, if Blackstock is *here*, then ringing them would be in everyone's best interests, but my point is made in my head.

I will do this alone, regardless. I'm a grown-ass woman. I can be alone in my home without going into a meltdown.

Surely.

I lick my lips as my doubts rear their nasty head. My anxiety has taken a bit of a backseat these last few weeks. I've had no need for it. I'm constantly reassured by these men. I'm taken care of. I'm shown affection. I'm listened

to, even if I have nothing profound to say, what with being cooped up in the house all day, every day. They don't care if I lie around in my pj's eating chocolate or leave my mess untidied. They are so attentive, it makes my heart so full of joy, sometimes I think it might burst.

"Anything," he growls, knowing that I've tuned out.

"Yes, yes. Go now. Do your job. Take down the baddies." I wave him away.

He shakes his head. "You are impossible."

"What can I say? I like to keep you on your toes."

"Please be okay while we're gone," he begs me.

"I will be perfect. I've got a comfy bed that smells like you, plans to defile it and my book. What more do I need?"

*Them.* I need them.

"Food?" Kaleb asks, coming in with a tray laden with snacks and drinks.

My eyes light up. I adore the snacks in this house. I'm probably going to end up the size of it, but who cares when I have three men who will slap my thigh and ride the next wave in? I can joke because I know it's true. There isn't anything I can do to turn them off me, and the feeling is very definitely mutual. After being told day and night that thin is beautiful by my mother firstly and then Adam, I'm actually looking forward to gaining a bit of weight. It's extra hard for me, who is naturally curvy, to be skeletal. It was an uphill battle but one I thought I wanted. It turns out, I really don't. And if I'm lucky enough to fall pregnant, I will be huge; I'll make sure of it.

"Have I told you lately you are a prince among men?"

"Yes, but I will never tire of it, so feel free to mention it again," he says with a smile, placing it on the bedside table.

"A prince. A king, even," I say, noticing the full Terry's chocolate orange in amongst all the other stuff.

"I'm gutted I can't feed all of this to you," Kaleb complains as Dylan joins us.

"Me too. I'll save you some. When do you think you'll be back?" I ask casually.

"Right, that's it, I'm staying," Dylan says, catching my tone that I obviously didn't do enough to disguise.

"Agreed," Elijah says. "Harlow will just have to accept it."

I waver, but then I do the right thing.

"No," I shake my head defiantly. "Go to work. You can't stay here when

they're all playing hero. Go.”

I really need them to hurry up and leave before I beg them all to stay.

Meeting his gaze steadily, I urge him to get a move on.

He sighs. “Are you sure? Say the word, and I’m here.”

“Go.”

They nod and reluctantly file out after giving me a quick kiss each.

I wait a beat and then leap out of bed, turning the key in the lock before I go to the window and glare out of it, taking in everything out there with extreme suspicion.

“The SUV with the official-looking badge is our guy,” Elijah calls through the door. “Okay? Do you see him?”

I snort with laughter as Dylan waves to me, jabbing in the SUV's direction.

“Yeah, I see him.” I smile, loving that they knew exactly what I would do. They know me. It’s perfect.

After I watch them pile into the car and drive off, Dylan hanging out of the back window waving dolefully, I turn and climb back into Elijah’s bed. I flop back and inhale deeply. The sheets have his aftershave lingering in the cotton-y goodness. I feel an unexpected surge of excitement course through me as I look around his room. The walls are dark green, with white trim from the ceiling to the floor. He has a bookshelf lined with books and trinkets, and to my surprise, a photo of me that he took without my knowledge. At least it's an attractive one that doesn't show a double chin or squinty eyes.

The room is so filled with his presence I find myself feeling lost in it without him. I feel engulfed by his energy, yet it is somehow comforting as well, like he is here with me even though he is driving away from me. My heart swells, and their images flood my mind when I close my eyes.

I run my hands down my body, already exploring as I prepare to masturbate. I told him I would, and I won't be a liar. I know he will expect it now. My eyes fly open when I realise he took my dirty knickers with him to work.

“Nooooo!” I cry out and practically fly off the bed back to the window, but they are long gone. I dither about whether to ring him but then clench my fists. I won't ring. He needs to focus, not be worried about me or listening to me yell at him for taking my underwear out into the field with him.

With a huff, I climb back into the bed and resume my exploration. My breathing becomes heavy. I let my fingers slowly trace the curves of my



breasts under the tee. The heat and tension build in my body, and I close my eyes again, enjoying the sensation of my own touch. I move my fingers in circles around my nipples, feeling the tingles ripple throughout my body. My pussy gets wetter as I move my hands lower to the apex of my thighs. I let my fingers explore and play, feeling the pleasure grow stronger and stronger, imagining the men watching me. The thought fills me with even more pleasure. I let myself be consumed by this thought as I bring my fingers to my clit, feeling the desire course through me. As my climax approaches, I let out a soft moan and imagine Elijah's hands replacing mine.

The thought of him watching me, and touching me, makes my climax even more intense. My body shudders with extreme desire as my clit thuds under my attention. Panting, I ride the orgasm, turning over, so I'm face down and dampening his sheets with my wetness. I'm so horny now, I wish I'd brought the dildo upstairs with me. I contemplate going back down for it but decide I'm too comfortable and lethargic now.

I lie there in the quiet, feeling my body come down from the high. A sense of peace and satisfaction, knowing I've just fulfilled my craving for the Commander in his own bed settling over me. At that moment, I feel closer to him than ever before, knowing that even while he is away from me, I can feel his presence and share an intimate moment with him. Feeling a sense of connection and love for all of them that is unlike anything I've ever experienced before, I yawn, feeling the warmth of Elijah's bed enveloping me. I smile, knowing that even when we are apart, we are still connected in a way that can never be broken.



## DYLAN

**A**s I shove the gang member in my grip who held Morgan at knife point, into the back of the van, the feeling of dread and impending doom hits my stomach like a freight train.

Grunting, I shake my head. “Morgan.”

Nodding to the officer in charge of the criminals in the van, I glance frantically around for the others.

“Dammit.”

Elijah currently has his knee in the back of Blackstock’s back, which is what the fucker gets for trying to run. He is in no mood to fuck about as he handcuffs the leader with extreme malice.

“What is it?” Kaleb asks, shoving his guy into the van behind mine.

“Morgan. Something’s up.”

His gaze fixes onto mine, panic rearing up. “Go!” he practically yells at me.

I don’t need anything other than a superior officer yelling at me to move my arse in the direction of the police car I drove here, digging in my pocket for the key.

Storming past Elijah, I see him look up and start to say something, but I keep going. Kaleb can fill him in. Besides, I don’t know what this is yet. It could be me projecting my fears of leaving Morgan alone, and I’ll turn up back at home, and she will be fine.

Unlocking the car, I scramble to open the driver’s side, finally getting it open and launching myself inside. Firing up the engine, I do a U-turn, gunning it out of the side road without a moment's hesitation.

My mouth is dry when I pull up at the house more minutes later than I'd like. Our guy is still parked up, watching the house. But that doesn't mean jack-shit. I need to see with my own eyes that she is okay.

I burst through the front door, only just remembering to switch the alarm off before I aim for the stairs, two at a time—no need to involve a shrieking menace if she is fast asleep and completely fine.

“Morgan!” I call out, trying not to convey the panic in my voice. “You okay, kitten?”

Silence.

I move my backside faster, taking the stairs three at a time.

“Morgan?” I shove Elijah's bedroom door open, and my heart stops.

Morgan is lying in the middle of the bed haphazardly, her phone on the floor from where her dangling hand dropped it. Her eyes are closed, and she is sweating.

Flu? Another migraine? Pregnancy? Food poisoning? *Poisoning?*

These increasingly intense thoughts race through my head.

“Morgan, kitten,” I murmur quieter now, approaching her rapidly. I kneel and stroke her forehead.

“Dylan,” she croaks. “Is that you?”

“Yes, kitten, it's me.”

“I can't see you,” she says, her panic flaring.

I smile. “You've got a sleep mask on.”

She turns her head towards me and lifts it up, squinting at me.

“Can you see me now?”

“Yeah, what's wrong?” She sits up, ripping the mask off her face.

“Can I ask you that? I felt...something.”

“Something?”

“I have this thing...doesn't matter. Are you okay?”

“I'm fine.”

“No, try again. This Spidey sense doesn't ping for no reason.”

She looks glum when she sighs. “I had a nightmare that I was back with Adam and Pierce was there and they were being mean and... You know what? It doesn't fucking matter. I'm *done* going over this. I'm sick to death of Adam and I swear you all must be as well.” She climbs off the bed and starts to gather her things. “I'm going back to my room.”

“Morgan.”

She ignores me.

“Morgan, look at me.”

She still ignores me, so grasp her arm slightly. “Morgan. If you need to talk about him or whatever, please do. None of us are tired of hearing you speak about anything.”

“You’re sweet, but seriously. This has gone on for long enough.”

“It’s been a couple of months,” I point out. “Things with us moved fast. Very fast.”

“Yeah, maybe too fast,” she mutters and pulls her arm out of my grip and marches down the stairs, leaving me staring after her, my heart plummeting to my feet at the implication of her words.

Grabbing my phone out of my back pocket, I dial Kaleb. “You and Eli need to get home now. Things are going sideways.”

“Fuck,” he mutters, panic in his tone. “Right, right.”

He hangs up, and I replace my phone, hoping they can extract themselves quickly but without jeopardising the case. This was epically lousy timing, but I have to wonder if it happened because we left her alone. Even though I feared this might happen, I was hoping that it wouldn’t and that she would be happy and carefree and know that we made her this way. But she has gone from a shitty marriage to a hellish time in the hotel to a relationship with three guys who are practically breathing down her neck every second of every day. Maybe she is starting to think she needs time on her own to figure out who she is now.

“Fuck. Fuck.” I’m speculating. But she isn’t talking to me, and I don’t want to push her and potentially push her out of the door.

I try to calm down. My shaking hands are no good to her.

But I have to move. Taking the stairs quickly, I hover outside her bedroom door where she is replacing her things and climbing back into bed.

“Morgan.”

“What?”

“Please talk to me.”

“There is nothing left to say about this except I’m sorry.”

“Sorry...”

“Yeah.” She turns her back to me and curls up in a ball, pulling the duvet over her head.

Backing away, my heart frozen in time, I will the others to hurry the fuck up, giving them two minutes before I start ringing them non-stop to get their arses home so we can fix this.

Luckily for them, they burst into the house a few minutes later, crowding around me and bombarding me with questions about what is going on. I try to answer them as best I can but end with a very definite, “Look. I don’t fucking know where her head is at. She won’t talk to me.”

Their faces drop and I know how they feel.

I want to tell her that I’m planning our wedding for when she gets divorced because I want to be tied to her in every way. I want it sooner rather than later now. I love her more than anything, and I want the whole world to know how much. But something tells me that right now, that would be a mistake.



## MORGAN

“How do you feel?”

Looking up from where I'm curled up in my bed reading, the morning after that godawful nightmare, I feel terrible. I haven't moved in hours and haven't spoken to any of the guys, not knowing really what to say. Not really wanting to tell them I had a slight meltdown because the guys in the nightmare weren't Adam and Pierce but the three of them. I just figured being quiet was better while I ridiculously had to get over the severe emotions I felt from the dream.

“Good,” I say, smiling at Elijah and closing the book. He is lingering in the doorway with a single red rose. “For me?”

“Well, not for me,” he replies, his face serious. More serious than usual, and I know I have to say something.

“I'm sorry about the way I've been acting.”

We stare at each other, his face ashen as I bring up the subject.

“Are you really okay?”

“Yes, I'm fine.”

“Do you still want to be with us?” he blurts out. “I mean it's fine if you don't, you can still stay here while we find you a place to live...”

“What?” I ask, dumbfounded. “Do you want me to go?”

“What?”

More staring.

“Shit, Elijah, no. I don't want to leave you. I'm the happiest I've ever been...”

“Then what happened yesterday while we were out?”



Sighing, I explain.

He sits in the chair near the bed and places the rose down on the bedside table. “Us?”

“Yeah. It was horrible and it hit me right where it hurts, but I know you three would never, ever treat me like that. I’m sorry.”

“I don't expect you to apologise, but I do expect you to tell us stuff. We want to know so we can help you. I know you are probably used to dealing with these types of things on your own, and that’s fine. But if we’d known about this, we could’ve properly taken care of you, reassured you.”

“I know.”

He nods, and I know that it’s over.

“Did you get him?”

“Who?”

“Blackstock.”

He snorts. “Oh, him. Shows you how high up on my list of things I don’t give a shit about he is.”

Giggling, I pat the bed, so he can sit next to me.

He moves over and says, “Yeah, we got him and his whole operation. Thanks to you.”

“Me?”

“You got Pierce to snitch.”

“Oh, well, I think he was ready to blab anyway just to get a lighter sentence. He doesn’t strike me as the selfless type.”

“I can assure you, he is not.”

“Good. I’m glad he is behind bars.”

Elijah scoots closer to me and cups my face. “I love you, Morgan Happs.”

Scrunching up my nose, I say, “Eww. Don’t call me that. Morgan Harlow.”

He snickers. “Suits you better. But you know what you suit you more?” He waggles his eyebrows at me.

Narrowing my eyes at him, I smile. “Go on.”

“Morgan Miller-Walker-Harris.”

“I like the sound of that.”

He presses his lips to mine. “You scared the undying shit out of Dylan. He thought you were leaving us.”

Feeling bad, I smile sadly. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to scare any of you.”

“Please stop apologising. You have PTSD, and you have every right to

feel skittish. We understand though, so please tell us in future if you aren't happy or if you think we aren't paying you the attention you deserve."

Nodding slowly, I know I won't do that. I can't. I daren't.

He takes my hand and places it on his lap, making me giggle as I feel the hard shaft pressing against his combat pants.

"Do you want me, Commander Miller?"

"My dick doesn't lie."

I laugh quietly. "No, it doesn't."

"I've had word from Chris that your divorce will be finalised any day now."

"Really?"

"Does that make you happy?"

He asks me which is so cute. "Perhaps." I'm being annoyingly coy, but I want to get him riled up so when he takes me it's possessive and caveman-like. You know, just for funsies.

"I'll take that as yes because I'm a glass half full kind of guy."

Eyes wide, I choke back my laugh. "Are you now? I wouldn't have guessed."

"Rude. Just for that diss on my character, I won't have sex with you now until the divorce is final."

"Fucking hell. Ouch, man. You know where to hit a girl hard." Testing that theory, I squeeze his cock gently and then rub him enticingly.

He groans but doesn't move my hand away.

"May I?"

He gestures to me under the covers, and I nod, lifting the duvet up so he can slide in fully clothed after kicking his shoes off. "Can I sleep with you?"

"Fuck, yeah!" I exclaim in victory. "Knew I'd break you!"

"Ha. Ha," he says dryly. "I mean *sleep*, sweetheart. I told you; you can't break me."

"Dammit!" I pout, hoping my bratty sulk will draw him in.

It doesn't. He slides in next to me and gathers me to him gently, turning me away from him so he can curl up around my back.

"I'm exhausted," he mutters.

I blink in surprise. He doesn't admit his weaknesses, even being tired.

"Sleep then, my love."

He pushes my hair over my shoulder and kisses the back of my neck. "I love it when you call me that."

I grin and turn over to stare into his gorgeous face. I stroke him as he opens his eyes, and we get lost in each other. “You are my love. My life. You all are. I am so glad I found you. So lucky that I did.”

“We are the lucky ones. We have been waiting for you for a long time, Morgan. It’s been...” He sighs.

“Exhausting?”

“Yeah.”

“Rest now, Eli,” I murmur, trying out this shortening of his name to see if he accepts it.

He smiles, closing his eyes again. “I know you hate Mor. What can I call you when sweetheart doesn’t fit?”

“I won’t hate it if you call me that,” I answer truthfully.

He nods, and we fall into silence. Within moments he is fast asleep.

I spend ages watching him, wondering what he would think if he knew I was.

After a while, I close my eyes, and soon, slumber drags me under.



IT’S THE BEST NIGHT’S SLEEP I’VE HAD FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, and when I wake up and check my phone, my heart thumps wildly.

It’s a text message from the lawyer telling me it’s all over. My divorce is final and I’m single again.

I’m flushed and excited for the future. Eli is still asleep next to me. I’m reluctant to wake him, but I’m desperate for a pee, so I untangle myself from him and slip off the bed.

When I return to the room a few minutes later, having had the presence of mind to also brush my teeth, I find myself alone.

Frowning, I think it is not like Elijah to just get up and leave, but when he comes running back into the room a moment later, smelling like mint, I giggle.

“I see.”

“Back at you,” he replies with narrowed eyes. “Are you free?”

“Yes. How did you know?”

He waves his hand at my phone. “When you moved, I woke up and picked the phone up to see the time. It was still unlocked and on the text...

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have read it."

"I'm glad you did."

Our gaze locks and then he swoops in, crushing his body to mine.

It seems as if time has stopped, neither one willing to break the silence as we stand there, the embers of our mutual need and longing blazing brightly in the lightening room.

As if pulled in by an invisible force, Elijah moves his mouth to mine, brushing his lips lightly over mine. The electricity between us is palpable.

His fingertips skim lightly over my neck, sending shivers of pleasure down my spine. His other hand reaches out to cup my face. My heart skips a beat as he runs his thumb over my lips, teasing me with its warmth.

He brushes his lips against mine again in a gentle kiss. He deepens it, one hand still cupping my face while the other trails down my body, exploring and caressing my curves.

I respond eagerly to his touch, my mouth opening to his. His tongue explores hungrily, our kiss becoming more and more passionate.

Elijah breaks away, gazing down at me with a burning desire in his eyes. He steps away, leaving me bereft without his touch.

He moves towards the bed, slowly undressing himself, letting me watch. When he is naked, I moan with desire. He is a god. His body is hard and tanned, and his cock is twitching, eager to be inside me.

I follow him, my eyes locked onto his. I step closer, my body trembling with anticipation.

He grabs the hem of Kaleb's tee, which I sleep in every night now. He pulls it slowly over my head before his strong arms wrap around me. He lowers me into my bed, his body pressed against mine. He steps back, taking his cock in his hand.

"Would you?"

Nodding eagerly, I rise to my knees. I've wanted his cock in my mouth since I first saw it. Reaching for him, I replace his hand with my own and lean forward, my mouth open, smiling wickedly up at him. His eyes are heated when he runs his hand into my hair, and I close my mouth over him slowly.

He groans and closes his eyes. "Fuck, Morgan."

If possible, his cock grows harder in my mouth. I tug gently as I graze my teeth down his long length, opening my mouth wider to take in his girth. When my fingers reach the base of his cock, I feel his skin heat up and throb

under my touch. I cannot wait for him to pound me into the mattress with it.

I suck him off a few times before I pull back. He smiles and fists his hand tightly in my hair, drawing my mouth back to his cock. It's the only demand he has made of me. I shiver with delight and give him a blow job he will never forget. I suck him like a fucking lollipop, moaning and tasting the precum seeping out, lapping it up as I tug him into a state of sheer yearning.

"Should we call the others?" I murmur, pulling away, not wanting him to come just yet. I want to ride him first. My arousal builds the longer I'm with him. It's accelerated, as if my body knows this is fate.

"Not yet. They can have you later. Right now, I want it just to be about us. Is that okay?"

I nod, letting him push me back to the bed before he joins me. His mouth moves down my neck and over my shoulders as he kisses and licks me eagerly. His hands explore my body carefully, kneading and caressing, worshipping me. I arch my back, moaning in pleasure, my body responding to his touch. I feel as if I'm going to explode with my craving for him. My need is overwhelming.

Elijah leans down, his lips covering one of my nipples as his tongue flicks and teases it. I gasp in pleasure, my body bucking under his touch as he moves from one breast to the other, his hands cupping them into soft mounds for his mouth to devour.

After an eternity, he moves lower, his hands and lips tracing a path down my stomach, over my hips, and finally to my waiting core. He teases me with his fingers, his tongue flicking and circling my most sensitive spot until I'm gasping with pleasure.

"Elijah!" I cry out, feeling the need descend fully now that my man is ready to enter me. My body requires him. My soul needs him inside me.

He braces himself, his eyes boring into mine. He enters me, his enormous cock pushing its way into my tight pussy, filled with my juices, coating him as he buries deeper. His movements are slow and steady as he sinks into me until he is balls deep. My body trembles as I feel him settle inside me.

"Perfect," he murmurs. "This is perfect."

He pulls his hips back, withdrawing his cock almost entirely before he slowly sinks into me again, my pussy encasing him and drenching him. He does this a few more times before he increases his pace, his thrusts becoming faster and more urgent. My lust clouds my thoughts. All I can think about is him fucking me, easing me, biting me. It's as if my skin is on fire; the

intensity of the pleasure is almost too much to bear.

He feels it too.

Suddenly, his movements become frenzied. My orgasm builds higher and higher until it finally crashes over me like a wave. My body trembling with pleasure as it shakes me to my very core, I scream, "Elijah!"

I follow it up with a loud moan that reverberates through my body. He responds with a loud growl. The moment is upon us. I need it more than anything. I slam my hips against him, meeting his thrust for thrust.

The slurping noise as he pounds my pussy is the only noise in the room, along with our ragged panting when he places his mouth on my neck, sucking my skin harshly into his mouth.

I cry out, begging him to fuck harder. "Claim me, Elijah. Make me yours, forever."

His grunt vibrates through my body as he slams into me again. I squirm underneath him, but it feels so good. I climax hard, my pussy clutching his cock like a vice.

When the orgasm wave crashes to shore, I shove him over to ride him relentlessly, my breasts jiggling from the action. He sits up, and I wrap my legs around him, working my hips frantically. I bury my face in the crook of his neck and scrape my teeth over him. He grabs my arse, forcing me to ride him harder. Grunting, he unloads into me, his cock throbbing deep inside my pussy. I moan before I kiss him, driving my tongue into his mouth so we can taste each other.

He collapses back to the bed, with me slumping on top of him, both of us panting and exhausted.

"I love you," he whispers huskily, his voice full of emotion.

Smiling, I snuggle closer, nestling in the warmth of his embrace, his love easing my sudden and forceful lust momentarily. However, this is just the beginning.

"I love you too," I murmur, my voice full of contentment.

He kisses me again, our lips meeting in a tender embrace. We lie there for a few more moments, savouring the feeling of being together when the other guys join us, brought to me by my moans and their Commander's claiming of me and mine of him.



## MORGAN

Feeling the cool cotton sheets against my skin, I lay back in my bed and close my eyes, feeling Elijah release me from his sensual hold. The nerves kick in when I remember that the four of us have never been together at the same time before. Will I be able to pleasure each of them equally? I don't want any of them to feel let down, and I'm growing increasingly conscious that I don't know the etiquette. Will one feel left out?

Dylan approaches me first when Elijah lifts off and edges to the side of the bed. I beckon him next to me, feeling the heat of his body against mine. He has an air of confidence that I find both alluring and intimidating.

He stares at me with a reverence that sends shivers down my spine, and all my anxiety melts away. His hands move across my body, his fingertips tracing the contours of my form. He looks deeply into my eyes and smiles as if he can read my thoughts. "I guess everything is good then?"

"Yeah, sorry for scaring you."

He scoffs. "Please, you didn't scare me."

"Oh, okay," I joke and cup his face. "I'm sorry, anyway. Momentary lapse of my senses."

"PTSD," Elijah says. "And we will always be here to help you through it."

Dylan nods slowly and gently draws me onto his lap so that I'm straddling him and so the other men have access to me. He moves with a grace and intensity that makes my heart beat faster. His lips find mine, and we move together in perfect harmony, taking our time to explore each other.

I can feel the heat radiating from his body and the electricity of our



connection. With each passing moment, I feel myself slipping further and further into a deep lust, coupled with a state of pure bliss. I move slowly over him, rubbing his engorged cock with my pussy, dripping cum all over him, savouring the way each of the men's gazes has settled on me. I feel a surge of arousal as I imagine what each of them is thinking and a jolt of excitement as I anticipate what is about to happen. I deepen the kiss. It quickly turns passionate, and before I know it, I'm pulling him closer and devouring his mouth. His hands move to my waist. I can feel him hardening even more against me. I explore his muscular torso with light fingertips. His skin is perfection to the touch, and I quickly become lost in the sensation of him. Each touch feels like a new discovery, a deepening connection with him. Kaleb moves nearer to us. I feel his presence behind me. His hands trail lightly up my sides. I feel the heat emanating from him. I turn my head, capturing his mouth with mine, his hardness growing against my back. We kiss, full of yearning for each other. I can't help but moan in pleasure as his hands tangle in my hair.

I hold my hand out for Kaleb. I take his massive cock in my hand and jerk him off as he releases me from the kiss. Dylan's hands move to my waist, and he pulls me in to him, pressing his lips to mine in a kiss that deepens with each passing moment.

I bring them to a state of profound arousal. Rising up so Dylan can guide his cock into me, I push down, settling over him with a gasp into Dylan's mouth. Fingers tweak my nipples, and Elijah joins in, running his hands down my spine. I moan as the four of us move together, our bodies intertwined in a fervent embrace. I am lost in the sensation of it all as I ride Dylan's enormous cock, coating him with arousal, purring as I pull away from the other men to focus on him. He growls, his hands exploring my body, learning every curve and crevice with an intensity that only serves to arouse all of us further.

The pleasure builds inside me as their hands move over my body, tangle into my hair, massage my clit and pinch my nipples.

I am lost in the moment.

They are too.

The only sounds are our heavy breathing, an occasional moan from me and grunts from them. My climax is ready to explode. I want to kiss Dylan at the exact moment my pussy clutches his cock. Burying my face into his neck, I nuzzle him, letting him know I'm ready. His hands fists in my hair, holding

me close, and that's when my orgasm hits me, driving through my body as every nerve ending pings relentlessly. My pussy tightens around his cock, and he drags my mouth to his. He groans and releases his cum into me, his cock pulsing and connecting our bodies in the same way our souls already are.

"Fuck, I love you," he pants when I pull back.

Dylan rocks us gently with a wicked smile. "Mine," he growls.

"Yours," I purr in response, stroking his face.

I'm starting to wane. The lovefest is already taking its toll on me, but I don't want to stop. I want to keep going.

"Do you need to rest?" Kaleb asks.

I shake my head. "No, not yet."

"Are you sure?"

I nod.

My brain is filled with the fog of my lust, and words are becoming more difficult.

I close my eyes and I lean my forehead against his with a happy, tired smile.

Kaleb lifts me off Dylan's cock, and he scoots out of the way. Kaleb lays me down, kissing me gently, sucking my lips into his mouth, knowing that I'm all out of energy but still wanting to carry on. His hands roam my body. I can feel the pleasure intensifying with each touch. My skin is sensitive to the touch now, hot and feverish. The cum of the other men pools out of me as I moan when his fingers enter me, sliding easily into my wet pussy. The pleasure is intense. I'm barely able to comprehend what is happening now, just that I need it. I need him.

"Take me, please, Kaleb. I need you," I rasp, my mouth dry.

"Yes," he growls softly. He looms over me, his mouth going to mine to kiss me. He wastes no more time with foreplay. I'm already warmed up and ready to go. All I need is his dick pounding into me. At that moment, I feel completely exposed. Naked, vulnerable and in the throes of my desire, I am at their mercy. But there is nothing to be afraid of. They love me and worship me as I do them.

Kaleb enters me without ceremony, knowing what we need from each other. He thrusts quickly, his muffled groan of satisfaction as I soak his gorgeous cock with cum, rings in my ears.

"Fuck, Morgan," he rasps. "Fuck, yes. This is so perfect."

“Mmm.”

I wrap my legs around him and cup the back of his head when he drops his mouth to mine. He kisses me gently, licking me before he bites my bottom lip gently. Crying out, I climax swiftly, knowing he will too. His heart is hammering in his chest, beating in sync with mine. I squirm, riling him up further. He pounds into me, thrusting hard one last time, grunting as he comes inside me, his dick throbbing. My pussy clutches desperately at it, never wanting to let him go.

Panting wildly, Kaleb wraps his arms around me and rolls us to the side. I snuggle into him and drift off to sleep, feeling a sense of satisfaction and gratitude. I have just experienced something incredibly special, something that I will never forget with the men I love. I sink into a deep sleep at peace with the world.



## MORGAN

I wake up to a soft glow in the bedroom. I'm wrapped up in my bed, nice and cosy in my old blanket. I'm lucid after the three cocks I had earlier which wore me out. I'm not used to taking so many dicks one after the other.

Taking in the scene that confronts me with a smirk, I find Dylan standing there with the two other men, all of them watching in silent anticipation.

The room is lit by soft candlelight, and the air is filled with the sweet scent of sex and love. The only sound is the music playing softly in the background.

"That's not creepy or anything," I admonish. "Stop watching me sleep."

"You are too gorgeous not to watch," Dylan says, the charm oozing from every pore in his body. He crosses over to me and unwraps me, his lips just inches away from mine as he looks deep into my eyes. Our bodies are pressed together.

His hands move slowly up and down my body, exploring every inch of my skin. His touch is gentle yet passionate, and it sends shivers down my spine. He reaches out to something next to me. I gasp when he draws an ice cube around my nipple. It peaks instantly against the chill.

"Ooh," I moan and arch my back, wanting more.

He chuckles softly and slides the ice, tracing it over my lust-fevered skin.

The two other men are watching intently. I can feel their eyes on me as Dylan's hands move lower and lower.

He runs the ice over my mound and rests it on my clit. I writhe on the sheets underneath me in delight.

“Ah!” I cry out when he moves the ice lower and slips it inside my pussy.  
“Fuck!”

“Good?”

“Mmm.”

I wiggle as the ice starts to melt in the core of my heat.

“More?”

I nod, closing my eyes as he reaches for more ice cubes.

He runs two over my body, tracing them over my nipples before he sucks the peaks gently, slowly moving the ice up to my neck before they slide down again, over my nipples, over my stomach and mound, resting on my clit before he inserts them in my pussy.

“Yes!”

His fingers join the ice cubes, thrusting lightly, his breathing getting heavier. He withdraws and leans over me. I open my eyes when I feel his face close to mine. He presses his lips against my mouth and uses his tongue to move the ice cube from his mouth to mine.

I suck it, relishing the cold and wetness in my dry mouth.

Dylan kisses me, his lips caressing mine in a way that makes my entire body tremble. His tongue darts in and out of my mouth, exploring and tantalising me. I feel my desire growing with each new kiss, my body becoming more and more aroused.

The gazes of the other men are on us, watching and admiring. I look over at them to see they have their cocks in their hands, jerking off as they watch Dylan cool me down in the most sensual way ever.

When Dylan pulls away from me and leans over to the bedside table, I snicker when he waves the huge dildo in front of me. “Officer Dildo at your service, Ma’am.”

“Oh, yes, please!” I giggle, needing the release now that I know I’m going to get one.

Kaleb chuckles and moves in closer to watch. Dylan places it between my breasts and runs it slowly down my body. I moan and writhe in full arousal, my body trembling with the sensual pleasure weaving their way through my muscles and veins. The men around us are transfixed, watching intently as Dylan places the tip of the dildo on my clit and increases the pressure. I gasp and buck as it hits me right in my core. The orgasm starts to build quickly. He circles it several times, bringing me to the edge before he removes it.

“No!” I cry out. “More!”

“Eager little kitten,” he murmurs, placing it back on my clit.

I pant and wriggle closer to it. He pulls it back again.

“Fucking hell!” I growl.

He bites his bottom lip sexily and returns the dildo to my clit. This time he plays with me long enough for my climax to hit me full-on. I scream when it rips through my body, gushing cum. That’s when he thrusts it inside me. I nearly sob with how good it feels after his teasing. The ice cubes have melted now, so he is free to ram it as high up as it will go, the thickness at the base stretching me wide as I encase it and lock onto it tightly.

“Feel good?”

“Fuck, yes.”

“Can I have you now?”

“Please.”

He removes it carefully and slowly before he replaces it with his cock. He kneels between my legs and impales me on his perfect dick, ramming me hard. I cry out, feeling another orgasm building already.

He pounds into me eagerly, quick to come to his own release as I scream my way through another climax. He shoots his load, grunting heavily before withdrawing and inserting the dildo again.

“Fuck,” I groan. “Fuck.”

The men around us climb into my bed and take turns using the dildo on me until I’m weeping and begging for mercy. I feel like a goddess, and I’m so grateful to have had the chance to experience something so beautiful with Dylan and the other men. This is gorgeous and perfect. This is love.

When I’m completely spent, and my need for their dicks has abated for a time, the men disappear and return to carry me up to the bathroom for a warm bath.

I sink into the pool of heaven and sigh deeply. I close my eyes as Elijah washes my body and my hair. I have never felt more loved and cherished in my entire life.

“Could get used to this,” I joke lightly.

“Do, because this is how we treat the love of our lives,” Eli says.

I reach out to cup his face. “You are all perfect. I love you all so much.”

“And we adore you.”

I smile and let Kaleb help me out of the bath with promises of food and lots of it.

They’re not wrong. There is a feast waiting for me.

Dylan has stripped off the soaked sheets from my bed and remade it to my liking, making sure the blankets are ready to pull over me.

Kaleb sits next to me, feeding me pizza and fries until I'm too tired and too full to take another bite.

They clear up as I watch them, unable to believe my luck. How did I find these men? It must be some kind of miracle.

When they are finished, they curl up with me, staying close so that when the need comes for me to feel their love, I only have to hold my arms out for them to be filled.





## KALEB

“Ready?” I call out down the hallway a couple of weeks after the first time we all had Morgan together. I am fulfilled and content, knowing I’m with my true soulmate. I can’t keep my hands off her, but she is happy to keep up with my increasing demands for her. She craves me, craves all of us. She is just as excited to get her hands on us as we are with her.

“One minute!” she shouts back, her voice tinged with panic.

Rushing down the hallway to her bedroom, bursting in without asking, to find her in the shower room, glaring at something in her hand.

“What is it?” I ask, my heart thumping wildly.

She looks up. “Nothing. Just give me a fucking minute.” She glances at her phone. “Well, thirty seconds now.”

“Morgan?”

She waves the white stick carefully in my direction. “I need to be sure.”

“Oh,” I murmur and back out to give her the privacy she needs.

“Don’t go! Not now!”

I freeze, my hand on the door.

Elijah joins us impatiently. “We need to go; Dylan is waiting for us.”

“Wait,” I murmur.

He flicks his gaze to Morgan and then goes as still as a statue.

“Well?” I ask after thirty seconds have definitely passed.

She places the stick down in the sink and takes a deep breath. When she turns to face us, there is a smile on her face and tears in her eyes. “Positive,” she croaks.

“Yes!” I shout and get to her first, knowing how much this means to her. We all do. I don’t give a flying fuck if it’s mine or not. I just want this for her and for us so badly that it only hits home how much now that it’s happening.

“Not so tight,” Eli growls, shoving me away from her so he can hold her tenderly. “We need to be extra cautious now. No sex until the baby is born.”

“Oh, fuck right off,” she growls, pushing him away as I gape at him in horror.

He can’t be fucking serious.

“I mean it,” he says defiantly.

“I think you’ll find that we have the majority vote for fuck off, so tough titties for you,” I point out, knowing I have Morgan’s backing. She looks just as thunderstruck by Eli’s statement as I am.

“Humph,” he mutters, knowing he has lost this one and can either not touch her but be left out or join in.

Her relieved expression when she looks at me makes me laugh softly. She is insatiable, and I adore her.

“Come now. We have an anxious guy waiting to tie the knot with you,” I say, taking her hand.

She nods excitedly. “Do you know where we’re going?”

I nod but say no more as I lead her out to the car.

She climbs in the backseat with me while Eli drives. I keep hold of her hand, needing to touch her all the time, or I feel like dying. Her anxiety is peaking, but I stroke her palm with my thumb to calm her down. It works. She responds to our touch perfectly, as we do to hers.



ABOUT HALF AN HOUR LATER, WE ARRIVE AT OUR DESTINATION. SHE STARES out of the window and gasps.

“It’s beautiful!”

The sun sets over the lake, casting a golden hue across the tranquil waters. She hastily gets out of the car and runs towards Dylan, her white dress billowing around her as she looks at him with so much love, it makes my heart happy. We join her as my mum steps up, officiating the ceremony as Morgan wanted. She grins, so happy on this special occasion.

The three of us stand around her, our eyes shining with love and

admiration.

Morgan looks each of us in the eye, her gaze lingering on the man she has chosen to be her first husband. Dylan smiles back at her, his eyes crinkling with joy.

My mum does a small reading that Dylan chose for the occasion before she asks Morgan to state her vows.

Nervous, she licks her lips and grips Dylan's hands tightly. She speaks in a steady, clear voice. "Today, I make a commitment to you all. I vow to love, honour and cherish each of you. I will be your companion, confidant and friend, and always be here for you. No matter what happens, I will stand at your side, eager to lend a hand or an ear. No matter how far apart we may be, I will always be here for you. Today I commit myself to you, and I will never break this vow."

I sniff, feeling a bit emotional myself.

Tears spring to Dylan's eyes.

"I will never take the love you have shown me for granted. I will always strive to make you feel safe and appreciated, and I will never forget the importance of making time for us. I promise to be loyal, honest, and faithful to you always. I will always be loyal to our marriage and trust in our love. I will never forget how special our relationship is, and I will always do my best to protect it. I vow always to be kind and understanding and to make sure that our relationship is based on mutual respect, understanding and kindness. I will never take our relationship for granted, and I will always strive to make it better. I will love you with all of my heart, mind and soul. I will never forget the way you make me feel and the way you light up my life. I will never forget the way you make me laugh, the way you make me feel safe, and the way you make me feel loved."

I know I'm next. The nerves flutter in my stomach, but when Dylan finishes his vows, she turns to me.

I clear my throat and grip her fingers tightly. "Today is a special day, not just because it marks the beginning of our journey together as husband and wife, but because it marks a new chapter in my life – one I wouldn't have been able to write without you. I have never felt such an incredible connection to anyone before you. You have truly made me a better person, and I am forever grateful for the love and joy you have brought into my life. When I met you, I knew that you were something special – you were the kind of person I could trust with my heart and soul. I could open up to you and

share my hopes and dreams without fear of judgment or ridicule. I promise to always be there for you, no matter what life throws our way. I vow to support your dreams, comfort you in times of need, and be your biggest champion. I will be by your side through the highs and lows, and never forget the vows we made today.”

Tears pool in her eyes when she smiles at me, her lips quivering as she tries to hold herself together to get through the entire thing. She turns to Elijah, the anticipation of his words lingering in the air.

Elijah is chomping at the bit to claim her this way, so I release her hands.

He grabs her and draws her close to him, his hand stroking her belly lightly. Dylan makes a noise of surprise and then steps up behind her to wrap his arms around her and kisses her neck gently.

He steps back with a chuckle when Elijah glares at him.

“Sweetheart, I love you now, and I will love you always. From this day forward, I will be your biggest champion and your loyal companion. I will always remember the vows we made today, and I will never forget the power of our love. In sickness and in health, in good times and bad, I will always be there for you.”

I expect more, but that is it. I realise that it’s perfect for him and probably the most profound thing he has ever said. I exchange a glance with Dylan, trying not to snicker. Not out of fun, but nerves. I’ve taken down badass criminals, faced down guns and knives, and fought to the death on one occasion, but I’ve never been as nervous about any of that as I was today.

I pull the small black velvet bag out of my pocket and turn it upside down. Four rings clunk out into my palm, and I hold it out wordlessly.

We exchange rings, each of us taking one. Dylan places Morgan's ring on her finger and she slips ours onto our fingers in turn.

Kaleb’s mum clears her throat to get our attention and then says, “I now pronounce you three husbands and a wife. Four hearts. You may now seal your commitments with a kiss.”

We step forward and embrace Morgan, showering her with kisses. Tears of joy roll down her cheeks.

Full of joy and happiness, we walk towards a future full of hope and happiness, arm-in-arm with our beautiful wife as we head back to the car, so we can drive to Morgan’s favourite restaurant, the place where all our lives changed forever.



## EPILOGUE

### Dylan

I watch Morgan snoozing in her bed. Her uber bed. The entire ground floor bedroom has been turned into a giant bed for this creature who is growing our child inside her with pillows and cushions and blankets strewn everywhere. We have no idea whose child she is carrying except that it is *not* Adam's.

We cannot wait for her to give birth, which is imminent. She is about a week away and has decided that now is the time for her to go and see Adam, even though Elijah expressed his wish for it to be sooner. Adam Happs has been incarcerated about an hour's drive from here, and we need to get a move on in case of traffic.

Seeing as I'm the least likely to offend the sleeping pregnant lady, I've been handed the short straw to wake her.

"Kitten," I whisper, leaning down next to her and placing a soft hand on her arm. "It's time to go."

"Fuck off," she growls.

I press my lips together, trying not to laugh. She *will* kill me.

"Don't you want to show your ginormous belly off to Adam?" I ask.

Her eyes fly open at the magic words. "Hell, yeah," she says and holds her hand out for me to heave her to her feet. She is gorgeous. I want to ravage her, but she has given us the red light for all that nonsense—her words, not mine. I reach out and run my hand over her belly, and she smiles indulgently. "Let's go. What are you waiting for?" She bustles off, leaving me behind to

catch up – which isn't hard, given her condition.

Falling into step beside her, taking her hand, I give it a kiss. "I love you."

"Adore you," she purrs but then abandons me as Kaleb is waiting by the door with snacks.

She grabs the bag of Doritos on her way out of the door to the waiting SUV. Elijah helps her in. It was just meant to be the two of them, but when she beckons me over, I go.

"You sure?"

"Yeah," she replies. "Your calming influence may be needed at some point."

Taking that, I slide in next to her, and Elijah sets off. She turns to wave at Kaleb, and then she snuggles into me, handing me the Doritos to open for her so she can stuff her hand in and consume the entire large packet before we've even hit the outskirts of London.

She is a goddess.

## **Elijah**

I'm petrified.

I wanted this over months ago, but she was determined to wait until the last minute to go and see him. I think it's her hope to pop the baby out all over his feet or something. But if that's what she wants, she can have it. I'd hand her the moon if she asked. Not that she would, and it's one of the most glorious things about her. She is humble and appreciative of any and all things she is given, no matter how small.

The drive to the prison is quiet and reflective. I can feel Morgan's anxiety from here, and it's winding me up. I'm glad that Dylan is here. He is definitely needed to stop us from riling each other up to the point of no return. I want this to be as stress-free as possible, but to me, that means not coming. That is, without a doubt, something that I won't suggest in a million years. She *will* kill me. She has been waiting for this moment, and I know her mouth is watering to finally tell Adam where he can go.

"Are we nearly there?" she asks a bit later. "I need to pee."

"About ten minutes," I murmur. "I can find somewhere to stop."

"No, keep going. I'm sure they have toilets at the prison for visitors."

"I'm sure they do," I reply, trying to stay on her good side by being quiet



and supportive. She is a hellcat right now. Her nesting instinct is driving us crazy. All of the rooms have been spring cleaned to within an inch of their lives, and all the furniture moved around more than once. I can still feel the bruise on my shin from walking into my bed in the middle of the night when I came in from work because it wasn't where I'd left it. I smile fondly, and she catches it in the rear view mirror.

“What are you grinning at like an idiot?”

“You. I love you.”

“Oh.” She calms down and preens slightly. “Do we have any more snacks?”

Dylan lets out a loud guffaw and hands her a big bar of chocolate which she rips open and devours as if it was her last meal.

I shake my head. I can handle her not saying she loved me back and instead asking for snacks. I'm secure enough in our love to know that right now, snacks are king.

“We're here,” I mutter as the vast grey building looms into view.

The tension goes up another notch as she sits up and glares at it grimly.

Once we've signed in and pulled into the car park, I step out and open the door for her. She takes my hand, and I haul her out of the back seat, unable to resist running my hand over her bump and cupping it underneath. I lean in to kiss her briefly, but she deepens it, needing it for courage.

“If you don't want to do this...” I can't help myself.

“No, I'm going in.”

“But if it gets too much, we can leave.”

She fixes her gaze onto mine and nods.

Then she pulls away from me and walks forward, her head held high.

She is a goddess.

## **Morgan**

The clang of steel gates and the shrill sound of keys being jangled together bring the reality of my situation sharply into focus. Suddenly, my heart starts to thump wildly against my chest. I'm finally here, at the prison, to confront the one who has caused me so much pain, who has left a path of destruction in his wake.

My hands tremble as I take a deep breath and step through the doorway, nearly stumbling in my haste. I have been looking forward to this moment for weeks, and yet here I am, standing at the threshold, about to set foot into the place where the man I had loved, and then hated, is being held, wishing I was back at home.

“You’re here now, Mor. Just do it.”

My legs feel like lead as I waddle down the long, oppressive hallway. Every step takes me further away from the light and closer to the darkness. It’s like being in a nightmare, walking ever closer to a monster I wished I could forget. Well, after today, I can, and I will.

The thick door of the room where I will see him looms before me. I hesitate, my heart pounding in my throat. I’m shaking, but I force myself to take another step forward and through the door. I’m determined to see this through, no matter how terrifying it suddenly is.

I push open the door a bit further to accommodate my enormous belly, steeling myself for what I’m about to face. My main reason for waiting this long was pure panic in case Adam did something to me, or hurt me, or the trauma did something to my baby. I wanted to ensure that if something happened, she would be okay.

She.

I can’t believe we’re having a girl. It’s a dream come true. One that was denied me for so long.

All because of *him*.

I don’t know what he did, or didn’t do, that made us not get pregnant but whatever it was, he clearly doesn’t have a problem with *her*. I still don’t know her name and nor do I want to. I don’t care enough to know.

I see him sitting on the other side of the glass, with the little holes in the middle for speaking, looking just as arrogant as he always did.

I stare at him for a moment, our gazes locked, my emotions churning. I want to scream and rage, to let him know the depths of my pain and anger, but I’ve come here for a different purpose. I have come to thank him.

Taking a deep breath, I step closer and sit heavily in the chair opposite him. Feeling his hatred and contempt radiating off him like heat, I refuse to be intimidated. He can’t hurt me anymore. I’m here to set myself fully free and to thank him, not to be cowed by his presence.

“You’re fat,” he says, his voice gritty and dry.

I nod. “Yep. Bet it really pisses you off to see me like this after you

worked so hard to keep me thin and pathetic.”

He sneers, finally showing me his true colours. It’s all I needed.

“Thank you, Adam.”

He scoffs in disbelief. "Thank me? For what?"

I feel the weight of my words as I say them. “For being a criminal, for being a cunt, cheating, asshole criminal. And a bad one at that. Thank you for getting caught and for giving me my freedom. For being a part of my life and then leaving it so I could find my true loves.”

I put my hand over my stomach, feeling the warmth of my unborn child. “For this,” I add.

His face darkens, and his fists clench. I know that if he could reach me, he would kill me, and that's fine because the feeling is mutual.

“Goodbye, Adam. I hope you fucking rot in here with the rest of your gang, but I hear Cyrus Blackstock is out for blood...so maybe you won’t make it that long.”

And with that, I stand up and turn, walking away, feeling the last of the weight lift off me as I leave him behind for good so I can focus on my new life with my baby and my adoring men.

Smiling, I shove open the door and stroll out, well, okay, waddle out into the sunshine, seeing Eli and Dylan anxiously waiting for my return.

“Let’s go home,” I say as I feel the first contraction rip through my belly like a surge of electricity. “We have a baby on the way.”

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Eve is a British novelist with a specialty for delicious romance, with strong female leads, causing her to develop a Reverse Harem Fantasy series, several years ago: The Forever Series.

She lives in the UK, with her husband and five kids, so finding the time to write is short, but definitely sweet. She currently has over fifty books in her catalogue. Eve hopes to release some new and exciting projects in the next couple of years, so stay tuned!

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## **AFTERWORD**

*Disclaimer: This book is based on my contemporary omegaverse novel, Tying the Knot, but adapted and rewritten for the contemporary romantic comedy market.*